

Officials want fair Internet tax

By JONI HUBBARD
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Farmington Hills city officials think it's time to take a hard look at the "rules of the road" for business on the information superhighway.

Citing the need for a level playing field, Farmington Hills City Council members unanimously approved a resolution Monday urging the federal government not to extend a moratorium on taxing Internet businesses. The Internet Tax Freedom Act, passed in 1998, established the three-year tax free zone, and now officials have heard talk about extending the time limit.

Congressman Joe Knollenberg, who represents Farmington Hills in the 11th District, was "very supportive" of that resolution, according to spokesman John Akouri. He believes it will allow time to study how Internet business affects Main Street USA.

"Brick and mortar businesses have been around a long time, some of them for centuries," he said. "The Internet hasn't."

Akouri said Knollenberg plans to evaluate the results of a study to be

Please see TAX, A4

IN THE PAPER TODAY

ENTERTAINMENT

Music awards: This year's Detroit Music Awards attracted national celebrities and honored local ones, including Scott Forbes of Farmington Hills. /E1

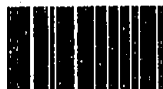
Benefit: Cabaret Calypso: A New and IMPROVED Comedy written by Debbie Tedrick of Farmington Hills. /E1

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Event this weekend: A banner over Grand River Avenue in downtown Farmington announces the annual Festival of the Arts, beginning Saturday night at the William Costick Activities Center.

STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BAZLER

Arts Bringing them home

■ The annual Festival of the Arts begins this Saturday with a gala kickoff. Activities continue throughout the week and during the following weekend at the William Costick Activities Center on 11 Mile.

By JONI HUBBARD
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While some art festivals draw famous-name painters or sculptors, the Farmington Festival of the Arts brings home the opportunity for cultural appreciation.

"It brings the arts to a community level," said Farmington Hills cultural arts coordinator Nancy Coumoundourous. "These are the artists who live next door, whose work we don't always see."

The Farmington Community Arts Council will launch its fifth annual festival with a gala Saturday night, followed by a week of activities at the William B. Costick Center, 28600 11 Mile Road in Farmington Hills. Officials in both Farmington and Farmington Hills have been extremely supportive, Coumoundourous said.

Hills Mayor Nancy Bates said the city has provided the use of the Costick Center, staff time and publicity for the festival. Cultural arts activities are supported by the city's voter-approved parks and recreation millage.

"It's an entire community event," she said. "There's something for everyone, from youth to the old."

Community residents have built the festival from the first event in 1995, as a way to showcase the arts. Coumoundourous said it's impossible to estimate the number of hours volunteers spend putting the whole thing together. Planning for 2001 will begin at the end of this year's festival, with a wrap-up meeting designed to pick out what worked and what didn't.

Activities they will evaluate will include concerts, theater, dance, poetry readings and hands-on experiences. Along with local artists' works, the PTA's "Reflections," a collection of 70 student art works from across the U.S., will be among the exhibits.

More than 20 organizations are expected to participate.

Please see ARTS, A7

Bidi cigarettes fuel debate, prompt ban

By TRACY EIKENHAUER
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They come in fun flavors and sizes, but bidi cigarettes still can kill.

Bidis (BEE-dees) are small, unfiltered cigarettes with flavors such as chocolate, strawberry and vanilla. They sell for \$1.50 to \$4 for a pack of 20.

Please see local reaction A5

Imported from India and other southeast Asian countries, bidis are filled with tobacco flakes, hand rolled with tendu or temburni leaves and tied with a string. These smokes, shaped curiously like

marijuana cigarettes, are attracting America's youths in droves.

That's why there's support in Congress to ban them.

On Feb. 10, Rep. Elton Gallegly, R-Calif., introduced a bill to prohibit the importation of bidi cigarettes. Currently, the bill resides in the House Ways and Means Committee.

Bidis have been making local news lately. In response to Chicago banning bidis in December, on March 28 the Warren City Council voted unanimously to try banning bidis in that municipality. The council is waiting for ordinance language from the city attorney's

Please see BIDS, A5

Special program helps students

By TIM SMITH
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Pupils in Kathleen Sadoway's first-grade classroom at William Grace Elementary School were stationed at computer terminals along one wall, busily taking advantage of modern technology and interactive reading materials. Adrian Williams drew a picture of a fish on her screen to go along with the theme of her story about an aquarium.

Watching her with great attention was Jonathan, one of eight severely multiply impaired children who are enrolled in the SXI program at William Grace. The program is headed by teacher Vilas Undarya. Jonathan then was over to another terminal, where Zac Cichen and Danielle Irwin are clicking their way through an Arthur the Aardvark story.

Even though Jonathan is a youngster with special needs, he easily co-exists with the other children, who are part of the Farmington district school's general education program. It is a scene played out in other classrooms in the building. Teachers, paraprofessionals, parents and the youngsters themselves work hard to break down barriers.

"They accept him," Sadoway said of Jonathan. "... He's not at the extent of the other kids, but he's come a long way. You model what you see."

■ "... He's not at the extent of the other kids, but he's come a long way. You model what you see."

Kathleen Sadoway
—First-grade teacher

Away from the computer, Jonathan and Adrian continue their collaboration, this time with a note pad, pencil and ruler. Jonathan's job is to count the number of boxes on a piece of paper and then total them up. He counted up to 10 and correctly jotted down that number, with Adrian looking on.

Down the hallway in a third-grade classroom, reading paraprofessional Nancy Benglian leads a roundtable discussion of the children's book "Mitten on the High Wire," written by Emily Arnold McCully. Benglian asked students to discuss the book as though they were in a talk show. One student would need to portray the host, another the author, others the audience members.

Participating in the discussion was another SXI student, Lisa. She quickly raised her hand when Benglian asked for a volunteer to play the role of the



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BAZLER

Helping: Adrian Williams helps Jonathan with his math.

Please see SPECIAL, A10