

Hills is in top five cities for mom/infant health

By MARY RODRIGUE
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Farmington Hills ranks in the top five cities in Michigan on maternal and infant well-being, reported Hills Mayor Nancy Bates to the Commission on Children, Youth & Families at its June 1 meeting.

In a study produced by Kids Count in Michigan, an offshoot of the Michigan League for Human Services, Farmington Hills ranked number one statewide in prenatal care.

The statistics were compiled

using 1998 figures. The Lansing-based Kids Count in Michigan provides a demographic profile of children across Michigan, county by county. This latest report called "The Right Start in Michigan's Largest Cities" focused on cities. Kids Count is a non-profit organization that promotes social well-being.

Farmington Hills ranked in the top five cities in 1998 for five of seven indicators and improved on four of those five indicators from 1990 to 1998. In births to women under age 20, it dropped from 30 in 1990 to 18 in 1998 -

the second best ranking in Michigan.

It also ranked second in births to unmarried mothers - a drop from 51 to 53 in the first eight years of the decade; and a second place ranking in births to mothers with less than a 12th grade education (from 60 to 24). In 1998, there were 863 births in Farmington Hills. The source for information is the Division for Vital Records and Health Statistics, Michigan Department of Community Health.

The organization's message points include:

That maternal and infant well-being is the bedrock of community health - the early years shape the potential of a child's life in profound ways.

Cities as a group had lower levels of maternal and infant well-being than the rest of the state - more babies were born pre-term and at low birthweight in urban areas, their mothers more likely to have been unmarried or teens, have less than 12 years education or received late or no prenatal care.

Much of the wide variation among cities is tied to the economic situation of families in those communities.

Cities have experienced greater improvement than in the rest of the state on measures of maternal and infant well-being.

Despite their generally poorer status, cities as a group improved on all eight indicators from 1990-98. Other areas of the state lost ground on three areas: low birthweight, pre-term babies, and non-marital births.

Mayor Bates presented Bev Papai, executive director of the Farmington Community Library and a commission member, with

a full copy of the report.

In other commission news, Todd Lipa, director of the Farmington Hills Youth & Family Services program, reported that he had visited all 13 elementary schools in the district and spoke to almost 1,000 fifth graders about the middle school after-school program. As of Thursday, 104 incoming sixth graders had signed up for the program.

A youth center open house is slated for the end of August at all four centers.

Lipa also reported that a fifth center may open in September at the Salvation Army building at Shilawassee and Inkster roads to serve the southeast part of the city.

"We're going to meet with Clarenceville school officials to see the possibility of obtaining some funding," Lipa said. "We're looking for transportation to that site."

It was the last meeting of the commission before a summer break. The next meeting will be held Sept. 7 at Farmington Hills city hall.

Livonia's Spree on its way

By RALPH R. ECHTINAW
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The Spree summer festival and civic birthday party returns to Ford Field June 20-25 as Livonia continues to celebrate its 50th year of cityhood.

Experienced Spree-goers will be comforted by the things that haven't changed, excited by what's new and won't miss what's missing too much, if Spree organizers have done their jobs well.

Old favorites

What hasn't changed is the carnival, unless you count the addition of two rides to bring the total to 60 (one ride for each year of cityhood).

Taste of Livonia is back with the same low price (\$5) but with a different lineup of food service businesses.

The musical entertainment is top notch as summer festivals go and includes Livonia's Steve King and the Ditties, an old favorite that has been absent from last year's Spree. Returning musical acts include 3 of 9, Art of Fact, New Odyssey and Espresso.

Family Fun Day provides games and activities for children Saturday afternoon.

The Sunday night fireworks return as usual. Spree organizers have never messed with the fireworks, said board Secretary Bill Fried.

And of course, the Robinson Racing Pigs are back. (Spree organizers heard plenty of squeals the last time they tried to have a festival without the porcine mammals, Fried said.)

What's new

The lumberjacks of the last three Sprees have been axed in favor of the Golden Dragon Chinese Acrobats, in the first year of a three-year contract.

New musical acts include Jamie Leigh and Luck of the Draw, the Tommy C Band, the Livonia Symphony Orchestra, the Bugs Beddow Band and Jack Dalton's Dixie Land Band.

Budweiser will give a beer-brewing demonstration, but consumption of the beer is illegal. (They might distribute "non-alcoholic brew" to make up for it.)

What's missing

Discontinued activities include the petting farm and pony rides and the Hearts of Livonia Casino Night.

Twisty the Clown is gone after more than 10 straight years at the Spree. Twisty's absence lands a double whammy on the Spree because the clown's alter ego, Ray Wojciechowski, was the longtime games marshal for Family Fun Day. Organizers had a hard time replacing him in that capacity.

Grape Shot and the Red Garter Band, popular with the crowd last year, are not returning although Spree organizers tried to get them. Both bands were already booked by the time they were asked to perform at Spree.

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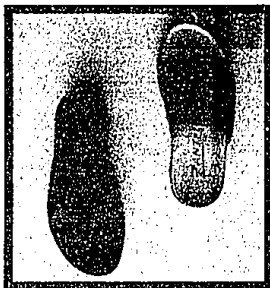
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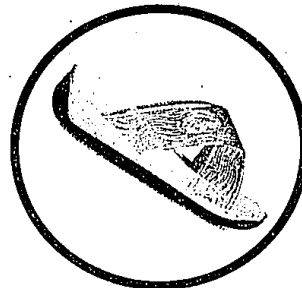
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