

Citizen of the Year



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BEZELER

Citizen Avery: Lincoln Avery chats with Jaycee John Mazuchowski at Thursday night's ceremony honoring Avery as Jaycees Citizen of the Year.

Avery honored for life of service

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Longtime Farmington area volunteer Lincoln Avery was honored for decades of service Thursday, as the Jaycees named him Citizen of the Year.

"We were very impressed with his lifelong commitment of service to the Farmington area," said Jaycees Treasurer John Mazuchowski. "There was a lot of enthusiasm from the community for his nomination."

Part of that enthusiasm came from Farmington Public Schools Superintendent C. Robert Maxfield, who wrote a letter of recommendation for Avery's nomination.

"From the school district's perspective, he provided important encouragement and support for the significant improvements that are evident in the exterior appearance of all our buildings," Maxfield wrote. "As he works through his various projects, Lincoln consistently demonstrates respect for all, kindness and quiet persuasion that is difficult to resist!"

More than 100 people paid \$38 each to attend a Thursday dinner to honor Avery, 69, at

the Glen Oaks Country Club in Farmington Hills. Among the attendees were Avery's wife, Mary, and their children, Charles and his wife, Kathleen, of Dublin, Ohio, Andy and his wife, Nichole, of Wilmington, Ohio, Molly, a teacher at Gill Elementary, and her husband, Kevin Gray, soon of Farmington Hills, and Cynthia Vaughan, a niece from Illinois.

"Citizen of the year honors an individual," Avery said in his acceptance speech. "However, the award really recognizes a family. After all, community involvement is really a family affair."

The Averys came to the Farmington area 44 years ago. He was a teacher and a principal in the Southfield schools for 34 years.

Avery was a charter member of the Farmington-Hills Beautification Commission in 1985 and chaired that body for 10 years. He is presently serving as vice chair and member of the annual awards breakfast committee.

Avery is likewise president of the Farmington/Farmington Hills Optimist Club and has been active with the club for 10 years. He co-chaired the club's essay contest program for organized adult observers for

the junior golf tournament and has represented the club at zone, district and international meetings.

He currently co-chairs the Farmington Public Schools Beautification Committee. Four years ago, Avery was a member of a group that took on the project of constructing a butterfly and hummingbird garden in the neglected Coatick Center courtyard. He coordinated the planting of annuals with senior citizen volunteers from the center and a class of fifth graders from Gill Elementary.

Avery has also been an assistant scout master and president of the Wooddale PTA. Last January, he and Mary provided the antique car that appeared in front of the Civic Theater during the evening of the gala re-opening.

Professionally, he was president of the Southfield Education Association and president of the Region 7 Oakland County Michigan Elementary and Middle School Principals Association.

Avery said he is grateful for the award and the ceremony Thursday night.

"I was overwhelmed by the turnout," he said. "It was very special."

Civic from page A1

Civic on Sept. 1, 1999, and then Phase 1 work began. Under Clark's supervision, the lower 274-seat auditorium was completely re-done with cushioned, stadium-type seating, a new-and-improved movie screen and a revamped concessions area and lobby.

A gala grand re-opening took place in January 2000, and then the second phase started last fall. The upper auditorium, which seats 135 movie patrons, remained open except for a few days due to the construction, said Clark, president of MKA.

Attendance building

"I'm very satisfied with it," Clark said. "But more importantly, the show is satisfied with it. That's showing up in the city's net growth in attendance."

Lauhoff said about 650,000 people attended movies at the Civic during 2000, but attendance is steadily growing. Because of that improvement, the second-run movie house now is being given the chance to show movies currently running at the

megaplexes, such as "What Women Want."

Clark said other upper level improvements made possible in Phase 2 include rebuilt floors and ceilings, new wiring and piping, bathrooms and enhanced heating, ventilation and air conditioning.

Money for Phase 2 work was provided by the city's 2000-01 capital improvement fund. In efforts to be as patron-friendly as possible, Clark said the theater offers hearing-impaired customers a special headset to listen to movie audio, fed via a microwave system.

For wheelchair-bound patrons, or those who have difficulty walking upstairs, the hydraulic-powered elevator is expected to meet their needs. The elevator holds up to 700 pounds and is accessible from inside the lower auditorium.

Upstairs, 10 seats in the first row can be removed to allow for wheelchairs; Clark emphasized that an intercom system on both levels provides handicapped customers a chance to communicate with theater workers if they

need to use restroom facilities, buy refills of popcorn or leave early.

New look

The construction of the elevator was a temporary inconvenience for next-door neighbor Skip Rosenthal, co-owner of Books Abound. But Rosenthal, who was at the elevator unveiling, said his business actually gained due to the project.

Workers matched the elevator's outer structure and tan brick exterior of Books Abound, and the parking lot was resurfaced.

"This is a great improvement," Rosenthal said. "I think you can see our entrance in the back better now, and the city replaced our awning. It's very visible."

Holly Mansell, recently hired manager of the Civic's daily operations, said she is receiving "wonderful feedback, the patrons just adore it."

But she also enjoys the historic environment.

"I'm a history buff," Mansell said. "This lets people know the world changes, but it doesn't have to be forgotten."

Beechview plans Black History programs

Two special programs honoring Black History Month are set to take place in February at Beechview Elementary School. Both programs are sponsored by the Beechview PTA.

On Monday, Feb. 12, Beechview students will be transported back in time and transformed into the "Underground Railroad."

They will follow the slave journey to freedom, traveling from classroom to classroom, meeting characters such as Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth and Fred-

erick Douglas, as well as storytellers and plantation owners.

The event begins at 9 a.m. in the gym, otherwise known as the "Beechview Plantation," where two girls will tell their family story of how they came to be where they are today.

All of the children will end up in the school "Safe House" at 11:30 a.m. for a concluding program. Parent chairwoman Adriane White and 25 other adult volunteers spent months assembling the program.

Beechview students will enjoy

all-school assemblies featuring guest storytellers Audrey and Robert Allison on Friday, Feb. 16, at 9:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.

They will blend the art of telling heartwarming tales with beautiful music and unique instruments. Those include the didgeridoo, steel drums, conga, udu, cacia, djembe, mbira, berimbau and balafone.

Beechview Elementary is at 28850 Westmeath, north of 11 Mile between Orchard Lake and Middlebelt roads, in the Kimberley Subdivision.

BUSINESS NEWS

Ford Motor Co. officials apparently are talking with prospective new car dealerships about purchasing the former Jack Demmer Lincoln-Mercury on Grand River in Farmington.

"There's a lot of interest," said Farmington City Manager Frank Lauhoff.

But it could take several months before a new owner is

found, said Lauhoff, adding that Ford is not interested in re-leasing the facility.

Lauhoff said a plus is the fact Demmer spent \$1.5 million last year to upgrade the dealership.

Jack Demmer Lincoln-Mercury left Farmington in December to take over much larger Krug Lincoln-Mercury on Michigan Avenue in Dearborn.

Susan M. Wagner, former Farmington resident and now resident of Chicago's Lincoln Park, has been elected as member of the law firm of Bell, Boyd & Lloyd LLC.

Ms. Wagner received her B.A. with high honors from the University of Michigan and her J.D. from the University of Michigan Law School.

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Main Street from page A1

five people that come to it usually. I feel it's very informative."

A member of the DDA also attends the business association meetings.

"We have a two-way street going," said DDA President Ben Oglesby. "The theory is to help keep the communication going."

The organizations both have the goal of promoting downtown Farmington, but the business

association focuses on retail concerns and promotions. The Authority funds promotions, but also takes on projects like the Masonic Plaza garden renovation, parking and "streetscape" improvements.

Monday night's informal discussion centered around how the organizations could better work together. While each has a certain role to play, all are concerned about vacancies, like the empty Shoe Carnival building on Farmington Road.

DDA board member Bob Heinrich suggested the authorities could create a network of partners about the community, with a packet of information about the community. A promotional video already exists. An investment also has to be made in basic maintenance, he said.

Family from page A1

For more than 10 years, the Rescoes and others on Highview, Pershing and Clairview to the east, have watched one proposal after another creep through the city's planning process. At one point, they petitioned for public improvements like paved streets and city water and sewer, but were told to wait to see how the development panned out.

Blanche and her husband, Stewart, have only signed an agreement with one developer, several years ago, because it looked like a "done deal."

"We were living without water for a while," Stewart recalled. "We were convinced it was a sure thing, so we didn't want to put any money into the house."

Frustrated by the uncertainty, the couple moved out of the house, which Blanche's parents took over. After Blanche's father passed away in 1997, they moved back, sinking thousands of dollars into the home to make it habitable. They'd like to build an addition.

But their plans are on hold again, while city officials consider another proposal for commercial development. The Gateway proposal has received approval for zoning as a Planned Unit Development; however, develop-

ers have to come to a written agreement with city officials.

Phoenix Development and Grand Sakwa Properties have option-to-buy agreements with 119 property owners. The Rescoes' attorney advised them not to sign.

"It favored the developers in every way," Stewart said. "The only thing we would consider is a straight 30-day closing real estate deal."

Even that would be a tough pill to swallow. Blanche has lived in the Highview neighborhood virtually all of her life; her parents and grandparents own property in the area. She remembers a childhood spent chasing through the woods behind her home, playing by the creek that now occasionally floods out the side yard. Some of her childhood friends still live in the neighborhood.

Rescoe's uncle, in his late 70s, lives in a dilapidated house half a block away. The thought of losing his home has been very upsetting.

"This is all he's known," Blanche said. "It really disturbs him."

The Rescoes have gotten used to seeing plans come and go. They'd like the city to buy part

of the land out of the 80-plus acres planned for commercial use and designate it as park land. They see a lot of natural beauty every day, from blue and grey herons to red-tailed hawks and deer.

"I know what other people see, but I look past that to what this neighborhood was like years ago," Blanche said. "You just wouldn't believe it."

City manager Steve Brock said officials are discussing some "civic space" as part of the Planned Unit Development agreement.

"There will be plenty of space that will act, look and function as park space," he said, adding what has yet to be determined is whether the city will actually own the property.

If the current development deal goes through and all their neighbors sign, the Rescoes will probably sell, even though they'd rather stay in their neighborhood, on a street where the quiet atmosphere is only occasionally interrupted by people trying to beat rush-hour traffic.

Their daughters just want to keep the only real home they've ever known.

"They like a lot what they have now," Blanche said. "They