



On the move: Alternative Academy students packed up last week for the school's move to larger quarters in Ten Mile School.

## Alternative Moving Day



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL TRELSER

## Alternative Academy moves into spacious digs

BY TIM SMITH  
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Farmington Alternative Academy soon will have a new home and identity to match, with the impending move to nearby Ten Mile School.

Teachers and students at the academy spent most of last week packing up for the move from seven second-floor classrooms at the Farmington Training Center. At the renovated Ten Mile

School, the academy will be housed in a much-larger space, with 10 classrooms plus an office, said Principal Dianne Duthie.

"The kids are helping do this," Duthie said Wednesday, "which is important. They are taking ownership, which sometimes is as important as doing a math problem."

The principal said there has been a buzz in the air over the move. "It's exciting to have our

own identity and our own facility," Duthie said. "Everybody's almost euphoric over it."

Duthie said district personnel were expected to come in this weekend and move furniture and boxes. Meanwhile, when students return from the winter break on Monday, Feb. 26, they will convene at their new location, at 32789 10 Mile Road, near Power Road.

The alternative academy this year has an enrollment of 63 stu-

dents, ages 16 and above, mostly from Farmington, Harrison and North high schools, Duthie said. Students not comfortable in the "traditional" high school setting are placed into the academy.

Making a move possible, Duthie explained, was the renovation of the Ten Mile facility, part of the 1997 bond issue improvements approved by voters. Also, the second floor at the training center is scheduled for renovations this spring and summer, necessitating the mid-year switch.

When the dust settles, Farmington Public Schools' staff development facilities at the training center will be expanded.

Departments such as athletics and physical education, special education, social work, career development and bilingual education also will move over from Ten Mile School to the training center.

## Court from A1

development for downtown. Lauhoff said "bringing more things downtown" would promote spin-off business.

"The court is moving out, Farmington schools expressed an interest in the space and Oakland Intermediate Schools expressed a need for space," Lauhoff said. "So they worked out a cooperative agreement."

The Farmington Hills Planning Commission was scheduled to discuss the site plan for the planned courthouse at its Thursday night meeting.

Shelley Yorke Rose, director of communications for Oakland Schools, said talks are "pretty serious" about obtaining the building, although the intermediate school board has no timetable for a decision. "It looks like it may be a viable property."

With a facility such as 47th District Court, Oakland Schools staff development programs, services and workshops would be much more accessible.

"We are looking at that property as part of a program of greater outreach and accessibility to all quadrants of Oakland County, particularly the south-west quadrant," Yorke Rose said. "Traffic today and the demand on teachers, administrators and everybody involved makes it hard ... to get out here (Pontiac) in a timely fashion."

Reasons for such inaccessibility include heavy traffic congestion, road construction and fast-growing population in communities such as South Lyon, Novi, Walled Lake and Wixom, Yorke Rose added.

## Officials say sled hill partnership works

BY TIM SMITH  
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It was 1991 when public debate over closing down the landmark sled hill at Shiawassee and Farmington roads prompted an emergency meeting between Bill Costick, Bob Deadman and Mike Flanagan.

Costick and Deadman were, respectively, city managers for Farmington Hills and Farmington at that time, while Flanagan was school district superintendent.

Apparently, several lawsuits over injuries sustained on the hill led to the debate and the presentation of a plan to the Farmington City Council to put evergreens and other landscaping on the slope - thus prohibiting the kind of traditional winter activities that made it so popular with area families.

That evening, recalled current Farmington City Manager Frank Lauhoff, "We heard quite a few people stand up and talk about the history of the sled hill. ... That night, council turned to Bob Deadman and said, 'We're not going to close the hill.'"

Soon after, continued Lauhoff, an agreement was signed by Costick, Deadman and Flanagan on behalf of the three public entities.

"That agreement remains a blueprint of cooperation a decade later," said Lauhoff during last Tuesday's annual joint governmental meeting of the cities and

schools, held at the Farmington Training Center.

Lauhoff brought up the saga to note how well the school board and city councils have worked ever since to keep up an area landmark, and to reiterate how the three groups have worked this winter - when the sled hill was probably used the most since the agreement was signed.

The hill is owned by Farmington Public Schools and is staffed by the Farmington Hills Special Services Department. The city of Farmington makes sure safety equipment (hay bales and protective fencing) is installed and maintained every winter, with the school district helping wherever it can.

"This is probably the busiest year since this whole agreement was put in place," Lauhoff said.

"Literally tens of thousands of people have used this hill. ... You can tell by the way it looks, and we have a dozen police reports to show why it looks that way."

"But we've only experienced four or five injuries this year, all minor in nature."

Lauhoff reported that all three groups continue to keep up the end of the bargain, adding he didn't think any changes to the operation of the hill are necessary.

"It's been a great relationship," Lauhoff said, recommending no changes to how the hill is being operated and maintained.

School board President Frank Reid said a lot of this year's problems stemmed from an unexpectedly heavy snowfall in December, which led to three snow days and many students using the hill without adult supervision. The latter had a lot to do with the cities paying attention to higher-priority issues such as removing snow.

Another "emergency" meeting of sorts between the three groups followed in early January, with a determination made to be more visible with extra patrolling by school district staffers and police officers and the elimination of a sledding trail.

"Some of the other problems (vandalism-related) were more 'night-time' problems, because it's an attractive place to come at all hours of the day," Lauhoff said. "Although it says 'closed' it's pretty hard to close a hill."



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL TRELSER

Remember when? Sara Urevig pulls little Hannah Nelson back up the sledding hill. The fence keeps people from being hit by runaway sleds and also offers a good handhold for the long climb.

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## Bosch from page A1

proposed.

"This is really a good news story," said Stewart Mandell, an attorney with Dykema Gossett, which represents Bosch.

He told officials the company has more than doubled its original plan to add 450 new jobs, and now employs 1,100. Bosch attorney Luke Baer said the company has targeted the Farmington Hills office for 30 percent of its world-wide sales by 2010.

"The city of Farmington Hills is very significant to us in North American and is very visible and has high significance to us world-wide," he said.

The company values the abatement, because it faces a difficult economic environment because of a downturn in the automotive industry, he said.

Bosch added significant testing facilities and a number of high tech jobs with the expanded facility, Baer added.

Growth Authority, which targets tax relief to some high-tech companies. Hills officials have long objected to the state's tax incentive program requiring a local contribution, particularly the state's unwillingness to consider public improvements as part of that contribution.

However, councilman Jerry Ellis pointed out the proposal had exceeded all of its original goals, which included the creation of new jobs and increasing property tax revenues.

"If that isn't positive for this community, I don't know what is," he said. "They shouldn't be penalized for doing better for this community than they said they would."

The Bosch request would apply only to personal property, not real estate. Those tax revenues would be greater than originally projected.

The city's Economic Development Commission recommended the amendment. Chairman John Anhut cited Bosch's contributions to local charities as one

example of its corporate citizenship.

"I think when we have dedicated people like that in Farmington Hills, we should be proud of that," he said.

The Bosch project will help balance the city's tax base in line with the EDC's goals, which is a 65-35 split between residential and business properties, he said.

Councilwoman Vicki Barnett said she didn't like tax abatements in general, because they create competition among cities and "force corporate welfare to the city level." She urged state lawmakers to remedy those two problems and said she supported the abatement because Bosch had been a good corporate citizen and did what it said it would do.

Mayor Nancy Bates cast the lone protest vote, citing her concerns about how tax abatements contributed to urban sprawl and business "pirating" among cities. "It's nothing against Bosch Corp.," she said. "They are an

## CHAMBER CALENDAR

Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce Calendar of Events for February and March.

### FEBRUARY

■ Feb. 20 - Board of Directors Meeting, 7:30-9 p.m. at the Chamber office.

■ Feb. 22 - Oakland Chamber Network Mixer, 5-7 p.m. at the Palace of Auburn Hills. RSVP to the Auburn Hills Chamber of Commerce, (248) 853-7862.

■ Feb. 26 - Workforce Development Committee Meeting, 3:30-4:30 p.m. at the Chamber office.

■ Feb. 27 - State of the Cities Breakfast, 7:30-9:30 a.m. at Vladimir's in Farmington Hills.

### MARCH

■ March 1 - Morning Connection, 7:45-9 a.m. at the Reliance Group, 23937 Freeway Park Drive.

■ March 13 - Ambassadors Club Meeting, 8:30-9:30 a.m. at the Chamber office.

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■ March 15 - Governmental Affairs Committee Meeting, 8-9 a.m. at the Chamber office.

■ March 15 - Membership Committee Meeting, 8:30-9:30 a.m. at the Chamber office.

■ March 20 - Board of Directors Meeting, 7:30-9 a.m. at the Chamber office.

■ March 26 - Workforce Development Committee Meeting, 3:30-4:30 p.m. at the Chamber office.

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