

Longacre benefits from auction proceeds

BY JONI HUBBARD
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"And a good time was had by all" would be a fitting epitaph for the third annual fund-raising auction for the Longacre House, held Sunday night.

Some, however, had a better time than others. "It got a little crazy," said Farmington Hills Youth and Family Services Director Todd Lipa, who took top honors in the bachelor auction bidding war.

Former Hills Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi, congressional press aide John Akouri, Mike White of Dynasty Funding and 89.6 FM country radio host Kevin O'Neill put themselves on the block at the close of an event organizers are calling highly successful.

"We surpassed last year," said Jeff Ferreri of the Longacre House. "We definitely had more attendees and more in overall sales."

Final dollar amounts are still being calculated; the money will go toward maintaining the historic Longacre House, which provides cultural, educational and social activities.

Lipa commanded the largest bid, but explained it was a col-

laborative effort. His assistant, Alice Toroyan, had collected donations from a few people, pooling more than \$400. As successful bidders, the group will travel with Lipa to Canada, via limousine, for a night on the town.

"It was an interesting experience," Lipa said. "I thought the Longacre House did a great job the way they set up their auction. It was done really well, and they had a lot of enthusiasm. We all got a lot of laughs."

Akouri said he didn't start to feel butterflies until he actually had to walk out through the gauntlet of bidders, which included men and women.

Caught off guard by the other candidates' decision to bring gifts, he came up with a handful of Hershey's chocolates.

"I brought my date Kisses," he said.

He and O'Neill, who are friends, plan to double up when they take their dates out for dinner and a movie at the Civic Theatre in downtown Farmington.

Vagnozzi, who at age 75 claimed more experience than the four other bachelors combined, also had high praise for the event and its purpose.

"I think the auction was worth it. It's a needed institution," he said.

The idea of offering himself to the highest bidder, however, gave Vagnozzi pause. "I'm not so sure I liked the idea of selling myself," he said, adding with a laugh, "And I thought I was worth a lot more!"



Sold! Bernie Brandon, Todd Lipa and Terry Deichert celebrate the auction's success.



STAFF PHOTO BY JULIE LEXER

On the block: Pictured with Francesca Romeo, the brave volunteers for Sunday night's bachelor auction were (clockwise from bottom left): John Akouri, Todd Lipa, Mike White, Kevin O'Neill and Aldo Vagnozzi.

Chamber plans move

BY TIM SMITH
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The chamber of commerce is headed for the Hills.

A five-year lease agreement is imminent that would result in the organization moving in June from downtown Farmington, said Carleigh Flaharty, president of the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce.

Flaharty told the Farmington City Council that the chamber would move into a 2,400 square-foot facility east of Orchard Lake Road and south of 10 Mile. The chamber has, since 1994, worked out of a 650-square-foot office in the Farmington Training Center, leasing it from Farmington Schools.

"We're in the process of signing the lease, the documents are on my desk right now," Flaharty said. "Our hope is to be moving in June."

She assured the council that the move won't harm the chamber's service to downtown merchants. "We're very much committed to downtown Farmington."

For example, the chamber will continue its key role with the Farmington Founders Festival and its involvement in applying with the Downtown Development Authority for a National Main Street grant.

Meanwhile, the new spot also will better accommodate the chamber's staff, which has more than doubled since 1994, Flaharty said.

The lack of space was one problem with the Farmington Training Center. But Flaharty added that it wasn't the

most-visible facility, on Thomas Street (one block north of Grand River).

School district officials notified the chamber last year about plans to renovate the training center, including construction and asbestos removal.

"We looked at some alternatives about possibly relocating on a temporary basis," Flaharty said. "But we decided to go for a permanent relocation, and a task force was formed."

Flaharty said the chamber would still host meetings pertaining to downtown merchants within the city, either at the training center or another facility.

That was good news for Roger Ratkowski, owner of the Pasta Stop, who doesn't think the chamber's move to Farmington Hills will make a difference in how Farmington businesses are served.

"Yes, it was easy for us (to have the chamber in close proximity), but it's still close enough," Ratkowski said. "And Carleigh stays on top of it. ... Now, if they moved to 12 Mile or 14 Mile, I'd think differently about this."

Sorry to see the chamber leaving is councilwoman Mary Bush, also a downtown Realtor. But she sees the move as an opportunity to bring together businesses in the two cities. "I don't think it will have an impact."

City Manager Frank Lauhoff said he isn't concerned about the move.

"It doesn't matter where they're at," he said. "They're doing a great job and will continue to do a good job."

(The bargains are in full bloom!)



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Explosion from page A1

After talking with the parents, police were given consent to search the home. In addition to evidence of the explosion, they found and confiscated other fireworks.

Dwyer said in addition to their injuries, both boys may face criminal charges, ranging from misdemeanor to felony levels.

He said his department takes these incidents seriously and urged parents to pay attention to indicators their child might be headed for trouble.

"Parents should be aware of what their teens have in the home. It is a major concern that can't be addressed reactively by the police department."

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abused, police reports said. The charges against Success provide an almost-ironic twist, considering his late 1980s public persona and statements about feeling "like a prisoner in my own home."

In recent years, Success has traveled to give religious seminars in Michigan prisons. But in the late 1980s, he was prominently in the spotlight, organizing a peace march through Farmington, which took place in October 1989.

At that time, Success was a minister at Berea St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Highland Park. The march was organized in protest of continu-

ing racial slurs directed toward his biracial family. The minister is black; his wife is white.

"It's not a black-white issue," he said then. "It's a right-wrong issue. I feel like a prisoner in my own home to a great degree. I feel like a foreigner in Farmington."

The Successes, and their neighbors, were victimized by harassing telephone calls, spray-painted racial epithets and even brick-throwing.

In July 1989, the Farmington City Council did allow the Successes to have a stockade-style fence constructed around their back yard.