

IN THE PAPER TODAY



Hangin' in there: Greg Hartman, 19 of the North congregation, is the first in his group to scale the ropes.

Teamwork: Two church youth groups came together recently at the Boys Republic ropes course to learn team building skills for an upcoming project. See the story and more photos in our award-winning HomeTown Life section. /C7

ARTS & LEISURE

Music: Enjoy cool night music in Pontiac during a three day festival. /B1

Salute to America: The Detroit Symphony and U.S. Army Field Band and Soldiers' Chorus Salute America in concerts July 1-4. /B3

INDEX

Apartment/G4
At Home/C1
Automotive/G11
Classified/E,F,G,H
Classified
Index/G1
Crossword/G3
Entertainment/B1

HomeTown
Life/C7
Jobs/G8
Obituaries/A7
Opinions/A10-11
Real Estate/E1
Service Guide/G10
Sports/D1

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Appeal revives drilling lawsuit



BY HEATHER NEEDHAM
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A gas company that four years ago wanted to drill for oil in Farmington Hills may have a second chance because of a recent court ruling in its favor. A Michigan Court of Appeals ruling last week paves the way for West Bay Exploration Co. of Traverse City to reapply for

an oil drilling permit. In 1997, the company sued the city after the council turned down its application. The court overturned a lower court decision that dismissed West Bay's lawsuit.

The ruling states that Farmington Hills made a "final decision" on Dec. 15, 1997, when it denied West Bay's application to drill for oil. This gives West Bay the legal right to appeal.

"They denied us our right to drill there,"

said Gary Gottschalk, vice president of West Bay, referring to a 3-acre site on Nine Mile east of I-275. "We met every single ordinance requirement in terms of setbacks and safety."

If approved, West Bay would have drilled two wells on the land and routed the natural gas to an industrial site eight miles south in Plymouth Township. In 1997, company officials estimated the gross revenue would have been \$40 million.

Hills city officials disagree with the court's ruling. City Attorney John Donohue said the city's stand has been that it

Please see WEST BAY, A2



A piece of the rock



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL DRENNER

In memory: Workers Ron Brown (left) and John Paull lowered a granite monument into place at Memorial Park in Farmington Hills early this week. The monument will bear a plaque that will give residents an opportunity to memorialize their loved ones.

Hills invests more in 4th fireworks

■ Steve King and the Ditties will kick off the 4th of July celebration at Founders Sports Park next week, followed by a spectacular fireworks display.

BY HEATHER NEEDHAM
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People love to watch brightly colored explosions in the sky when they celebrate the Fourth of July.

In keeping with that tradition, Farmington Hills will present its annual fireworks display at dusk Wednesday, July 4, in Founders Sports Park, located on Eight Mile between Gill and Halsted, next to the ice arena.

David Boyer, special services director, said he expects more than 10,000 people to congregate in the park and surrounding areas along Eight Mile to watch the fireworks.

"We've spent a little more money on a better show and would like to see people come out," said Boyer. The city spent \$20,000 on this year's fireworks display.

Before the fireworks local band Steve King and the Ditties will perform 1950s tunes at 7 p.m. The show will run until the fireworks begin at approximately 10 p.m.

Parking is available on site at Founders Sports Park, but spaces will fill up early. Parking is prohibited along the numerous side streets feeding into Eight Mile, but is allowed at most businesses along that road. Police will be on hand to direct traffic.

Though public fireworks displays such as at Founders Sports Park July 4 are legal in the hands of qualified professionals, individuals may not use certain fireworks in Michigan. These

Please see FIREWORKS, A2

Groundbreaking launches FHS stadium project

■ Donations from alumni and the community are still being sought to fund improvements to the Farmington High stadium.

BY SUE BUCK
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It's more than a groundbreaking this weekend for the many volunteers who just last fall brainstormed improvements for the outdoor athletic facilities at Farmington High School.

A steering committee spawned from those meetings has been getting together every two weeks to come up with more concrete plans. The multi-phase renovation will include an updated and inviting entrance to the football/soccer stadium, brick pavers at the entry area, additional seating for capacity crowds, water/toilet facilities for the team rooms and improvements to several athletic fields, surfaces and press box.

A plaza will also be developed where students can eat lunch outside. This was the first year that highschoolers weren't allowed to leave the campus to have lunch elsewhere, said Bob Washer, chair of the Falcon Society.

The society has been working for months to raise money for the

Please see STADIUM, A2



STAFF PHOTO BY HILARY KOSKOFF

Flying high: Members of the Falcon Society prepare to break ground for the FHS renovation project. Front left to right: Debbie Lukasik, Secretary, John Barrett, principal, Bob Washer, chairman, Phyllis Surman, CO-chair dinner dance, and Sue Boskey, treasurer. Back row left to right: Doug Szop, football backers president, Cindy Walsh, CO-chair dinner dance, Denise Albrecht, business donations chair, Chris Janowicz, volleyball backers, Geary Tudball, band patrons, Alan Helisek, soccer backers, Debbie Washer, chairman's wife/ assistant.

