

# The Farmington Observer

HomeTown News...  
It's all about you!

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Staff photo by Bill Bresler  
**Campaign trail starts here: John Akouri speaks with supporter Madiha Hindo after his speech Monday night.**



Staff photo by Bill Bresler  
**Supportive: Hani Gharbieh offers congratulations to newly-announced state senate candidate John Akouri.**

## Akouri from page A1

they were in the United States to observe Arab-American leaders in politics, government, law, business and other areas.

"For me, I really felt the power the Arab-American community wields in this part of the U.S.," Rashad said of the event. "I wish he can do well. He seems to be doing very well."

Abdelli said she was happy to see the American political process unfolding. "I believe the Arab-American community is not well represented on the American political map. We're happy to see the process from grass roots level up."

As the delegation moved on to Washington, D.C., Tuesday, Akouri expressed pride in his

heritage as an American of Lebanese descent but pointed out that many other cultures and nationalities will be represented in the new 14th District.

Looking at a table of Akouri's friends seated after his announcement speech, Khal Hanna pointed out the group was about as diverse as the United Nations. He called the candidate universal.

"I love his world opinions," said Hanna, who works for the Arab-American and Chaldean Council.

He also described Akouri as being in the mainstream and "very honest." During his press conference, Akouri aligned himself more in the middle of the

political road.

"I think you're going to find I'm a moderate, mainstream Republican."

His first campaign speech called for a return to "core family values," strengthening of education and conditional support of term limits. Term limits leaves Sen. Bill Bullard out of the picture in the fall of 2002, thus providing Akouri with an opportunity to run. Akouri said term limits should be re-examined "down the line" with an eye toward lengthening terms.

He also came down firmly on the side of home rule, stating no one knows better what's best for cities than the officials elected to represent them. Akouri said he

would convene a citizens' summit, work for more public-private partnerships and work to reduce the size of government.

"I'm tired of hearing what's wrong with Michigan. I think it's time we started talking about what's right with Michigan," Akouri said, to a round of enthusiastic applause.

"You have to believe in me. You have to believe that together, we can win this race."

Because the target is the Nov. 6, 2002, election, campaign efforts will probably be low-key through this fall, Akouri said. A fund-raiser will likely be held in September or October, he said, and the campaign team is putting together a Web site.

## Bates from page A1

abatement efforts. "I love being mayor," said the mother of three. "There is tremendous participation by so many. It makes being mayor a pleasure and honor."

Bates said her favorite job as mayor could be working with the youth council. "They're so much fun. I had one stop in the other day and he couldn't really say what he wanted, and finally he said, 'Can I have a hug?,' she recalled.

"The young people have no voice, they really need to be heard," Bates said. "The 18-to-26 group have the worst voting record in America; they're never connected to government while

they're in school; I think that is crucial, to connect them while they're still in school."

Bates said she's proud to have received the George Romney volunteer award given by Farmington Youth and Family Services.

Vice-chairwoman of the SEMCOG Transportation Committee, Bates has been elected to serve on their executive committee. She also serves as vice-chairwoman on the National League of Cities human education development committee.

"I do track legislation really closely. I try to get local input on things that are really going to impact our community," Bates said.

To further illustrate, she notes that legislators who represent the area are invited to the first city council meeting each month, to present legislative updates.

"I think it's always important that the mayor and the council treat citizens respectfully. I think we should be responsive, and they should expect we will try to help them with their problems. I think Farmington Hills has a really open government," Bates said.

The mayor said she may spend a maximum of \$5,000-\$6,000 on the campaign, for yard signs and mailings.

Bates, elected by 80 percent of voters in 1999, is limited to two

terms by city election laws. "I would look forward to serving two more years and that would be the end of my public service. I will remain connected to the Farmington Foundation and other groups in the community," she said.

The mayor also cited the hours she puts in; more than 40 per week at her city hall office, and at openings and public events.

Ronald Oliverio has filed sufficient petition signatures to challenge Bates in the November election. The filing deadline for candidates for mayor and city council is 4 p.m. Aug. 28.

## Youth from page A2

on is deemed more effective than spending later, on jails or law enforcement programs for troubled youth."

"It's given me a lot of opportunities to be in many leadership roles; it's important to me that the funding be expanded," said Kichen, who will be a Michigan State freshman later this month. "It was a great experience meeting new people and getting involved in new activities," he said.

Kichen joined the program at the beginning. "In middle school I was trying to find my niche. I wasn't really an athlete; I was trying to find something I could belong to. It helped my social life and helped me be more com-

plete," he said.

He told the congressmen, "Although some of my friends did engage in drugs and alcohol, fortunately I never found myself to be at that risk. However, I was looking for something that would help me fulfill a sense of completion."

Bates testified: "David went from a quiet, shy 13-year-old to a very poised, accomplished young man." She said one reason the program has brought out leadership skills in some youths is that Lipa has encouraged participants to decide what program activities should be scheduled.

Kichen's involvement in the Youth and Family Services program led to Bates naming him to

her Mayor's Youth Council. He was also one of two youths selected to serve on the National Board of Directors for the Institute for Children, Education and Families.

A production assistant at WXYZ-TV this summer, Kichen plans to study political science and communications at MSU.

In her testimony before House Appropriations Committee, Bates said, "Surveys done by the Farmington Public Schools in 1993 indicated our youth had easy access to alcohol and drugs, and of greater concern, they were using them."

"It was discovered that many middle school youth were going to empty homes after school, where there was no adult supervision," she continued.

To launch the program, Farmington Hills was awarded a Title V grant of \$384,000 for three years. "With a \$200,000 match from the city, we were ready to initiate an after-school program," she testified.

Authorities planned to serve

500 youths over three years. The program now operates at four centers where 4,000 youths are registered. It no longer receives a federal subsidy. The \$260,000 annual budget is made up of contributions from the Farmington Hills/Farmington Community Foundation, a park millage, the City of Farmington and contributions from service clubs, corporations and parents.

"There is time for homework to be completed, for socializing and for exercising," Bates continued. "Their grades are better with the assistance of tutors and state of the art computers, their conduct is improved and they are safe from harm's way."

"The bottom line is it works," Bates said.

During the summer, the Youth and Family Services program offers activities from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Friday is water park day. During the school year, the program operates from 2:30-5:30 p.m.

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