

CHAT ROOM



MARY RODRIQUE

Bad 'car'ma revers auto angst

My 'car'ma is very bad. Vexing vehicles have been emitting bad vibes all summer. After spending thousands of dollars the past two months to keep a sagging fleet of cars road-worthy, I'm ready to throw in the rear axles. Surrender to the orange and white construction barrels.

It started as summer dawned and the air conditioning in the 1997 Plymouth Voyager, also known as "The Green Bubble," creaked out. The first few sweltering days of summer made the van feel like a greenhouse — too hot and humid for man or beast, except maybe an iguana. A visit to the car repair shop uncovered the awful truth — the compressor was shot. We were looking at a \$1,000 repair bill. Several phone calls to other repair shops later — we hauled The Green Bubble into the first place and bit the bullet.

No break on brakes

Just a few weeks later, in the daily grind of stop-and-go construction traffic along I-275, I felt a grind of my own. Pushing the brake pedal down created a crunchy sound. But didn't we just get new brakes last year? Yep, my husband pulled the receipt from our files. With old bill in hand, he took The Green Bubble back to the brake place. A half hour later, a mechanic named Vern called with a litany of problems. "Rotors, brake pads, leaks, tears..." You name it. The Green bubble had it. But what about the new brakes just a year ago? Vern knocked \$20 off the \$1,000-plus repair bill.

Another grand down the drain for the not-so-grand Green Bubble we had bought brand new a mere four years ago. My automotive angst revved like a racing engine.

Meanwhile, our older model Dodge Spirit was having a crisis of its own. It too suffered from no air conditioning. But that problem was electrical, not compressor-able, thus the damages were in the \$200 range.

The Green Bubble had to revisit the brake shop a few days after the first visit produced a rattle to rival a pneumonia patient's cough. Just some tightening here and there nipped that in the bud.

Perhaps our teenage daughter was feeling left out. Although she's been driving for two years, she momentarily forgot that you're not supposed to turn the wheel when pulling out of the garage. She claims she was trying to avoid a friend's car parked on the other side of the driveway. Scraping the side of the garage as she exited in her Mercury Topaz left a crumpled paper looking dent in her front tire well. Oh well. She decided it was a dent she could live with.

Another car-isis

Just two days after The Green Bubble came back from its second visit to the brake shop, my husband and I decided to go out to dinner at a casual restaurant close to home. Finally, a chance to unwind. Hail! Should've known better!

After dinner, we walked out into the sweltering heat and humidity, put the key in the ignition and...nothing. Not a click. Nor a whir. I looked down at the clear plastic carryout box holding my piece of peanut butter pie. Over the next half hour, standing next to the van as jumper cables tried to revive the cursed vehicle, I watched my pie melt into a little puddle of goop.

When the engine finally belched back to life, I jumped into my daughter's car to ride home with her — she having been summoned by cell phone to come to our aid. Good decision on my part. Fifteen minutes later, I watched as four sweaty neighbors pushed The Green Bubble up our driveway with my husband behind the wheel. I asked if any of them had a stick of dynamite. Unfortunately, no.

A couple days later, my daughter had a tire blow out along a busy stretch of roadway, but was able to coast into a parking lot where Dad came to her rescue. Of course you can't buy just one new tire. It's that whole balance thing.

And since the new battery was installed in The Green Bubble, the panel lights on the dashboard flicker

■ A recent graduate of the OCC culinary program won a national cooking contest. Her prize — a course at Le Cordon Bleu and apprenticeship in New York.

By MARY RODRIQUE
STAFF WRITER
mrodrique@oe.homecomm.net

It was a grand day for Farmington Hills chef Valerie Boguslawski.

The schoolteacher and recent graduate of Oakland Community College's culinary arts program topped the competition at the final cook-off of the Alize Culinary Mentorship Challenge in New York City on Aug. 16.

Boguslawski's recipe entry, Alize Triple Grand Terrine, was chosen by a panel of top-notch women chefs and restaurateurs as the ultimate winner after being served at a three-course luncheon at Verbenae Restaurant and Courtyard Garden.

"I still cannot believe it," she said this week. "I was competing with two young women who both had restaurant experience. I'm honored."

Paris bound

She wins a scholarship to the famed culinary school, Le Cordon Bleu, in Paris, France and a month-long apprenticeship to Verbenae's owner and executive chef, Diane Forley, in New York City. Boguslawski can choose any six-week curriculum at Le Cordon Bleu. She's opted for pastry making.

That will be followed by the apprenticeship at Forley's three-star Manhattan eatery.

Kobrand, the makers of Alize, a beverage which combines French cognac with fruit juice, sponsored the competition for women chefs. Joining Boguslawski in the Big Apple were fellow finalists Liz Young of Brooklyn, N.Y. and Pamela Neitenbach of Kahului, Hawaii. The three prepared, plated and presented their dishes to the panel of judges for a final tasting.

Top culinary judges

Judges included Anne Rozensweig of Inside, Gabriella Hamilton of Prune, Amy Sherber of Amy's Bread, Victoria Burghi of Union Square Cafe, and Heather Carlucci of Veritas. The menu began with Neitenbach's Alize Nut Duck Sausage, which was followed by Young's Pan Seared Scallops. But it was Boguslawski's complex, decadent terrine dessert that was unanimously chosen the winner after the votes were tallied.

Boguslawski made four terrines — each featured ribbon sponge cake encasing layers of vanilla, chocolate and cran-raspberry Bavarian cream. The sized concoctions were drizzled with raspberry sauce and served with chocolate curls.

"There was only half of one cake left over," she said. "And the wait staff was digging into it with spoons."

She was one of more than 200 chefs to submit original recipes to the competition.

Boguslawski, on sabbatical from a 30-year teaching career, is a member of the Herb Society of America, a club whose members prepare gourmet



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BREWER

Takes the cake: Valerie Boguslawski made several practice runs of her Alize Triple Grand Terrine in her Farmington Hills kitchen before heading to the Big Apple for the Aug. 14 competition. She won the grand prize and rave reviews from judges and others who enjoyed a luncheon at Verbenae, a three star Manhattan restaurant.

meals each month. In the '80s, she won a AAA-sponsored amateur cooks contest for a meal made with all-Michigan ingredients. Earlier this year, Bogus-

lawski earned a culinary degree with a pastry-baking certificate from OCC.

Edison workers spruce up center in Day of Caring

For the sixth consecutive year, Detroit Edison employees donated their time and talents to the St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center, as part of United Way Community Services' Days of Caring.

The day included a lunch for the children provided by employees, several tasks including planting trees, striping the basketball court and painting a

mural. The mural is the creation of Durwood Coffey, a DTE Energy graphics department employee, who is also a professional artist.

The newly renovated Learning Center was in need of a little pizzazz, so instead of painting ordinary solid colors on the wall, Coffey decided the walls should reflect what learning is all about — a little history, a little science,

some biology and a little sports. In addition, the kitchen, where residents learn basic life skills, will also be the home of a mural by Coffey.

Intriguing mural

On Wednesday, Detroit Edison employees completed the work by painting in the sketch by Coffey.

"We are so grateful to the Detroit Edison employees for their many years of service to the center. The mural has already created commotion among the children. I can't wait to see their faces when it's completed," said Jean Vickers, executive director for the center.

United Way's Days of Caring program was developed so that corporations and individuals could see firsthand how their contribution to United Way was being put to use.

Days of Caring opportunities coincide with United Way's annual campaign, which will kick off in metropolitan Detroit on Sept. 17.

The St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center in Farmington Hills is funded by United Way Community Services and supports children and families through life crisis by offering a comprehensive network of services designed to enhance individual and family strengths. Today, the center is proud to be a leader in the rehabilitation of children with special needs and provides services to more than 1,000 infants, youth and families in crisis annually throughout southeastern Michigan.



Planting: Pam Dakesian and Jim Grech were part of the crew planting trees.

Details: Artist Durwood Coffey points out details to painting crew members Jerry Brown, Ted Wright and Debbie Rodriguez.

Youth assistance works to strengthen families

BY CARA PLOWMAN
STAFF WRITER
cplowman@oe.homecomm.net

Farmington Youth Assistance pro-



FYA Director: Susan Hoffman

gram director Susan Hoffman has the job everyone in her office wants, and she knows it. She said she beat out 300 others vying for the position.

The work isn't easy, and Hoffman has been dispelling misconceptions about the FYA since she was hired a year and a half ago. Hoffman's office listens to problems that children and parents have, but if FYA doesn't provide therapy, she said.

The program is free and confidential. It's a means to prevent conflicts and increase welfare within families. The FYA staff provides short-term didactic case work, services and counseling for families and individuals.

Hoffman, who is a certified addiction specialist, welcomes children and parents into her cozy office to talk about their problems and figure out what needs to be done.

Art from children she has encountered adorns the walls, including life-sized self portraits hand drawn by two boys in the program.

Hoffman said FYA aims to educate not just troubled youth but parents as well. The staff assesses each case, talk with the child and the family and figure out what is the best route to recovery.

"In this office kids get a lot of education about alcohol and drugs and so do

their parents," said Hoffman, who is from Farmington Hills. FYA sees about 100 youth a year, she estimated.

On average, youth stay for six months to a year. "If their needs are more than that, we refer them to another agency," Hoffman said.

Been around the block

Dana Reiman, 24, shares the small office with Hoffman. Reiman started at FYA in March. Originally hired as a secretary, she has advanced to office manager and program coordinator.

A Canton resident, Reiman has spent a lot of time volunteering around the area. Her most memorable experience came from two summers at HAVEN, a Pontiac shelter for abused women and their children.

Working at FYA has become an addiction of sorts for Reiman. She loves the response Hoffman gets from the kids.

"When they first come in I feel so bad for them. They're petrified I don't know what to say. You want to go hug them," Reiman said, adding that Hoffman has the gift of being able to talk to kids in a way that makes them open up to her.

Oakland County Youth Assistance boasts a 92 percent success rate with the children.

"It's an opportunity to work with

kids and parents and make a difference," Hoffman said.

There are many facets of FYA, including Mentor Plus, where adult volunteers are matched with a child age 5 to 14 for a year. Family education programs, scholarships, after-school tutoring and trips to camp are also sponsored by FYA with the intention of stamping out youth delinquency.

Many of the cases Hoffman sees involve minor offenses, but she did relate some serious problems that children in her office have faced, like depression, substance abuse, and truancy.

A recent program developed to stop under-age smoking had groups of children meeting for 10 cessation classes.

Hoffman hopes to start introducing more FYA programs to children in elementary schools, in order to prevent problems before they start.

"If we can get the kids at that age, we can help them so much more."

She plans to stay at FYA for as long as possible. "We have so much fun. We're like a big family. This has been the most fulfilling job I've ever had."

The Farmington Youth Assistance program is always looking for adult and youth volunteers and mentors. To join, call (248) 489-3434.