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## IN THE PAPER TODAY



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRONKLE  
**Expanding:** The Farmington Hills senior adult program is offering fall evening classes. Above, Angie Tsou practices tai chi. See *Hometown Life*, Page C-1

## OPINION

**Kevin's Law:** The state's failing mental health care system would get a much-needed boost with a bipartisan proposal. /A8

## ARTS & LEISURE

**Pontiac's summer treat:** Arts, Beats and Eats, a free annual festival featuring food, a plethora of live musical acts and arts and crafts booths begins this weekend in downtown Pontiac. /B1

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# Mother heard nothing of abuse



BY KEVIN BROWN  
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The mother of a Cameroon teen who alleges abuse and rape in a Farmington Hills couple kept her a virtual slave in their home says her daughter never told her anything was wrong the few times they spoke on the telephone.

Gilbert on Tuesday in Pontiac. "The only complaint was that she was not going to school."

"I told her to be patient; your aunt has a plan for you," she said.

Following the mother's testimony, closing arguments from the three attorneys in the case began. After jury instructions from Oakland Circuit Judge Alice Gilbert, the case against Evelyn and Joseph Djoumessi, charged

with abusing Fru's daughter Pridine, was expected to go to the jury late Wednesday or Thursday.

Under normal circumstances, the Observer would not name the girl, who was underage when the abuse occurred. However, Pridine Fru has indicated a willingness to be identified in the media.

In 1996, Pridine was sent to live with the Djoumessis, who were relatives. Now 18 and in foster care, she has charged Joseph Djoumessi raped her in 1998, in the summer and around Christmas. The teen said both Djoumessis struck her, and that Evelyn once hit her with a shoe.

The Farmington Hills couple is being tried on charges of conspiring to kidnap, kidnapping and child abuse. Joseph Djoumessi also faces two counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct and third-degree criminal sexual conduct.

Under questioning from Assistant Prosecutor Cheryl Matthews on Tuesday, Justina Fru said Evelyn Djoumessi helped pay her way to Michigan to testify in the trial.

Fru said she learned of trouble between her daughter and the Djoumessis when she got a call from Evelyn Djoumessi in February 2000.

Please see TRIAL, A6

## New kids on the block



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRONKLE  
**The best time:** New students Tudor Crihalmeanu and Bilal Lsmail make a quick escape down a slide during a game of tag during recess on their first day of school.

## Languages aside, kids are the same

BY SUE BUCK  
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Bridget Dean, bilingual coordinator for the Farmington Public School District, is all talk ... and action, too.

As someone who speaks Spanish, French, German, Japanese and English, Dean knows how to get her point across.

"Japanese was the most difficult to learn because of the writing," Dean said.

So Dean, who also works with staff development, can relate when she sees the school district's recently immigrated children struggling to communicate.

Since transferring three years ago from the Novi Public School district, where she taught foreign languages and English As A Second Language, Dean devoted her efforts to removing language barriers for children whose hometown can be halfway around the world.

A Farmington Hills resident, Dean likes the district support ser-

Please see ESL, A3



**First day:** Ke Da and Chuan Yi Chen, cousins whose homeland is China, are freshmen at Harrison High School. Naoki Yamada, new to the district this year from Japan, is learning to speak English as he attends East Middle School.



## Language barrier begins to break as school year starts

BY SUE BUCK  
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Naoki Yamada, 14, keeps an electronic translation dictionary in his pocket. His family bought it for him.

He slips the learning tool out and places it on the table. It is a visible sign of his commitment to mastering the English language.

A new East Middle School eighth

grader, Naoki already knows some English. The personable teen smiles and makes eye contact with his visitors who want to know so much about him, about his life in Japan, about his impressions of American lifestyles.

As he answers questions posed to him in Japanese by Bridget Dean, the bilingual coordinator for the Farmington Public School district, the language barrier breaks away.

Foreign words and unrecognizable phrases blend together on both sides of the table. Dean translates, Naoki responds.

Naoki, and other recently immigrated children new to the school district will become well-known this school year as their assimilation is chronicled in the Farmington Observer.

Tudor Crihalmeanu, a Romanian student at Beechview Elementary, and Ke Da and Chuan Yi Chen, Chinese cousins at Harrison High School, will also be featured. Each was interviewed Monday, the first day of school, with Dean's assistance.

**The connection is made**

Mariko Yamada, Naoki's younger sister, age 11 and in the sixth grade.

Please see STUDENTS, A3

## Hills mayoral candidates make choice clear

BY KEVIN BROWN  
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Farmington Hills mayoral candidates Nancy Bates and challenger Ron Oliverio will offer a clear choice to voters in the Nov. 6 election.

Bates wants to see the Eleven Pines and 14 Mile Road "triangle" projects through to completion, while Oliverio questions these plans, and a need for continued development in the city.

Bates is a strong supporter of continued city involvement in an after-school program for middle school students.

Oliverio maintains the city shouldn't be involved in such programming; that schools, churches and synagogues can

organize them.

"I'm not a bomb thrower," said Bates, adding she offers quiet, strong leader-

ship; deals with constituents in a respectful manner, and is accessible.

Mayor since November 1999, Bates said she is seeking a final 2-year term. She highlights her experience in starting two businesses, including Artstart Preschool, and her legislative background. "I think my ability to read and track legislation is a benefit to the community," she said.

Oliverio, 46, is director of Bonal Technologies, and a former senior vice president for First of Michigan bank

Please see MAYOR, A2



Ron Oliverio

**Seven candidates have filed for three seats on the Farmington Hills City Council, including the three incumbents. See A2.**



Nancy Bates

