

## Cheer Club

The holiday season is here and so is the Farmington Observer Cheer Club. This is our first year, and we hope many in the community will join us in helping the Farmington Area Goodfellows by bringing donations of new toys (unwrapped) and canned or boxed food to our office at 33411 Grand River in downtown Farmington, during business hours. You may also make a cash donation (checks made payable to Farmington Area Goodfellows).

The items will be collected until Wednesday, Dec. 12, when we turn them over to the Goodfellows. They'll distribute the items to needy people in Farmington and Farmington Hills, to make sure every child has a good Christmas.

So if you're out doing your holiday shopping and have a few minutes to look for another toy or maybe a gift of warm clothing, your thoughtfulness will be appreciated.

Happy Holidays! Please keep our Cheer Club in mind.

## THE WEEK AHEAD

**Deck the halls: Join the Farmington Area Jaycees for their annual Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony at 6:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 1, at the Warner Mansion located on Grand River just a few blocks west of downtown Farmington. This event is free to all and the traditional hot chocolate will be flowing. For more information on the Jaycees visit their Web site at www.fajc.org or call (248) 477-JCCS.**

## INDEX

- Apartments/E6
- Arts/C1
- Automotive/B8
- Classified/E,Q,H
- Index/E4
- Crossword
- Puzzle/E8
- Jobs/Q2
- Malls/C8
- Movies/G4
- New Homes/E1
- Obituaries/A4
- Real Estate/E1
- Service Guide/G5
- Sports/B1
- Tests/D1
- Travel/C8

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'And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself...'



Santa was here! The City of Farmington Hills' annual lighting ceremony, held Tuesday includes - as always - a visit from the Jolly Old Elf, Santa Claus himself. After Mayor Nancy Bates, with the help of a crowd of kids, threw the switch on the Hills' municipal campus tree lights and unity candle, Santa visited with dozens of children. Among them were Jamie LeBlanc and Taylor Spear, who tell Santa Claus that they've been good for a whole year.

STAFF PHOTOS BY BILL BRADLER

## Council denies rezoning

**Hills officials said 'no' to a rezoning request that would have resulted in more than 70 condo units on 7.5 acres at 10 Mile and Middlebelt Roads.**

BY KEVIN BROWN  
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Condos at the southwest corner of 10 Mile and Middlebelt roads could work, but not with too many units.

That's what the Farmington Hills city council members told developer Jeffrey Kaftan on Monday. They voted 6-1 to deny a rezoning that could have allowed more than 70 condo units on 7.5 acres.

The council vote followed the city planning commission's rejection of the rezoning request Oct. 18 and concerns spoken at the podium Monday from more than a dozen neighbors.

Backers of the rezoning plan said there is commercial development - more intense than condos - at the other three corners on that intersection.

Attorney David Nykanen, representing one of the property owners seeking the project, said condo development was a logical compromise for the land now zoned for single-family detached homes.

He suggested that a council rejection of the condo development could force a lawsuit. Mayor Nancy Bates countered, "If you think suing the city is faster than putting together a FUD (planned urban development), I can assure you it would not."

Bates suggested that a FUD plan worked out between the developer and the city could lower condo density and make the project more acceptable to city officials and residents. The special planning designation gives officials more control over development, by allowing them to negotiate certain aspects of the project.

But several residents said only single-family houses would do. "You guys pass it, but we have to live with it,"

Please see CONDOS, A2

**'There's no protection for the natural features of the land.'**

Jerry Ellis 11/25  
-Hills councilman

## Local suburbs still segregated, but increasingly diverse

**By JONI HUBRED**  
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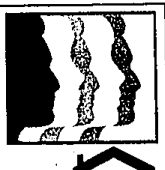
Detroit may be the most racially segregated city in the nation, according to the 2000 census, but local suburbs are experiencing - and struggling with - an increasing diversity.

In Redford, officials have established neighborhood meetings to get residents of diverse backgrounds talking to each other. In Canton Township, a controversy over the observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day led to the founding of a human rights commission. The cities of Livonia, Farmington and Farmington Hills have established similar groups.

And the need for them has never been greater, because suburbs - although still primarily homogeneous - are dealing more and more with diversity.

Farmington Hills grew by 10 percent overall, but the city's ethnic diversity grew more dramatically. The city's African-American population shot from 129 to 5,699, and the number of residents claiming Asian ancestry nearly tripled, from 2,870 to 8,188.

Other Observer communities experienced an increasing diversity, even when their population remained the same: The fastest-growing community, Can-



## THE SUBURBAN DREAM

ton, experienced a 32-percent increase in population, while African-American, Asian and Hispanic populations doubled. Plymouth Township grew by 20 percent; its African-American population nearly tripled, from 288 to 822.

Livonia, dubbed one of the whitest cities in America, experienced a slight decrease in population, but slight increases in diversity. The same was true in Garden City, Plymouth and Westland.

Also, while percentage increases range into triple digits, they still don't translate into large numbers. All suburbs remained between 85- and 98-percent white.

Karen Bolsen, co-chairwoman of the Farmington Hills/Farmington Multiracial/Multicultural Council, said the group has become more proactive. She believes cities benefit from building understanding before problems arise.

"You presume there are less issues because of that," she said, "but when issues do arise, you have a network of resources to help resolve them before they become volatile."

## Increasing diversity in Plymouth, Canton affect school district

**By TONY BRISCATO**  
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A quick look at the population figures of Plymouth-Canton Community Schools indicates it's a mostly white school district located in the affluent western suburbs of Wayne County. A place where there might be little thought to diversity, when you consider the 2000-01 Pupil Headcount Report from the Michigan Department of Education attests the district is nearly 85 percent white.

However, despite the overwhelming numbers, the community is growing, and the diverse population it's attracting is becoming significant. There are approximately 600 students, representing more than 30 languages, who are trying to learn English in the state's seventh-largest school district. And the numbers are constantly growing.

"The highest population of those students live in south Canton, where there is more affordable housing for people getting started," said Sue Shepard, the coordinator of the English as a Second Language-Bilingual department. "We live in an area many people want to be, where there

is shopping, safe streets and employment. Many of those who come here, know others who have moved here, people they can communicate with."

Shepard began the ESL program in 1991 with about 100 students. Now, that number is six times higher and climbs steadily by about 20 percent each school year.

"Language is everything, and everything depends on communication," she said.

The ESL program attempts to start the English-learning process early, working with elementary students a couple of hours a week.

"The younger kids learn faster because they make friends more quickly and the level of the English language is lower," said Shepard.

Middle and high school students have ESL classes.

"The older the student, the harder it is to learn English," she said. "It's harder to jump into school and be successful because you need skills besides just English."

With the influx of a diverse population comes the need to understand others in order to live, work and play together.

Within the past couple of years,

Please see SUBURBAN, A8