

TODAY'S TECHNOLOGY

Can't go a day without your PDA? Does it seem like a cell phone is surgically attached to your ear? Do you have TiVo? The Farmington Observer is looking for tech-savvy residents to document how the microchip revolution has changed their ways. We'd like a volunteer to keep a week-long diary of high-tech habits for a story on the local impact of the Internet and other technology on daily life. If you're interested in participating, e-mail Joni Hubred, Farmington Observer community editor, at: jhubred@homecomm.net

IN THE PAPER TODAY

ARTS

Multi-media exhibit: The Birmingham Society of Women Painters shows still life, abstract paintings, portraits and landscapes in the Livonia Civic Center Library. **B1**

Classic drama: Farmington Players perform *The Rainmaker*, a play about life and love in the drought-stricken Midwest during the 1930s. **B1**

AT HOME

Thinking of spring: It may be winter, but it's still fun to read about gardens. **/C1**

HOMETOWN LIFE

Bit of history: The Palmer Sherman home served as an alternate stop on the Underground Railroad. **/C5**

INDEX

Apartment/G5	HomeTown
At Home/C1	Life/C5
Automotive/H	Jobs/G8
Classified/E,F,G,H	Obituaries/A4
Classified	Opinions/A6
Index/G3	Real Estate/G3
Crossword/G4	Service Guide/G12
Arts &	Sports/D1
Entertainment/B1	

CHILD CARE NEEDED
In my Plymouth home. Must be reliable & have references...

I was able to fill this position by placing my ad in your paper.
C.M. Plymouth

CLASSIFIEDS WORK!
1-800-579-SELL

'It's a major concern to us'

Parents, officials work together to keep kids safe

By PAUL R. PACE
STAFF WRITER
ppace@homecomm.net

While Farmington Hills police have boosted patrols and are following up on tips about a man accosting girls in the area, school officials and parents are taking extra precautions with their children.

Farmington Hills Police are seeking the public's help in locating a man believed to be involved in several incidents police believe are related.

The most recent occurred around 8:45 a.m. Wednesday near Hillside Elementary School.

According to Police Chief

William Dwyer, the 9-year-old girl told police she was walking to school and a man in a black Ford Explorer pulled up next to her and rolled down the passenger window to talk.

Aware a vehicle matching that description had been tied to earlier incidents, the girl immediately ran off and the vehicle disappeared down another street, said Dwyer.

"The girl was able to give us some excellent information," Dwyer said, including the fact the white male had a gold earring in his left ear. She also provided more detailed descrip-

Please see **CONCERN, A3**



Sketch of suspect

Child watch program volunteers needed

Farmington Hills Police are partners with the Michigan Community Child Watch program, which helps kids learn how to be safe and where to go for help.

But the program could use more volunteers, police say. Residents willing to volunteer put signs in their windows so kids can detect a safe haven if they are ever in a

frightening situation. Farmington Hills Police Officer Bonnie Unruh of the crime prevention unit oversees the Child Watch program.

Children in the Farmington school district and in nearby communities learn from a Child Watch school program to look for the blue

Please see **WATCH, A3**



STAFF PHOTOS BY BILL BRISLER

With pride: Alex Shillingford carries the flag at the head of the Alameda Winter Olympic parade.

Alameda students celebrate Winter Olympic glory

By SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER
sbuck@homecomm.net

Kindergartners at Alameda Early Childhood Center held their handmade torches with tissue paper flames high Monday as the school and the rest of the country looked forward to the Winter Olympics.

Other children chanted "USA, USA, USA," as they watched Barbara Humphries' and Kathy McIlroy's kindergarten classes parade through the school corridor.

The school plans a number of activities that will duplicate Olympic events - speed skating, luge, ice hockey and ice dancing on paper plates.

Please see **ALAMEDA, A5**



They love a parade: With flags and "torches" Alameda students march through the halls of their school to celebrate the opening of the Winter Olympics.

Schools create voluntary retirement plan

By SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER
sbuck@homecomm.net

Hoping to minimize or even avoid teacher layoffs in the Farmington School District, the school board Jan. 31 approved a voluntary severance/retirement incentive plan.

The plan is endorsed by both the school administration and the Farmington Education Association, the teachers' union.

The district needs to cut about \$5.2 million from its budget this year. An undetermined number of employees may face layoffs.

A teacher buyout plan was last offered in 1990, according to both Sue Zurvalec, assistant superintendent for staff and community services and Tom Chrzanowski, FEA president.

At that time, about 60 teachers retired under a similar plan which topped out with a \$21,000-\$22,000 lump sum, Chrzanowski said.

"I don't know if we will get 60 people this time," Chrzanowski said. "We're not trying to push anybody out the door."

Officials elected to tap into their fund equity balance, to make the one-time payments, Zurvalec said. The board of education prefers to maintain a fund balance of 8-12 percent. The incentives are a way to try to avoid layoffs, hire new teachers at a lower wage scale and take into consideration the cost of unemployment benefits, she said.

"The savings will come in the long-term downsizing of the staff," Zurvalec said.

Please see **PLAN, A2**

S&P report on 2000 data doesn't surprise FPS official

By JONI HUBRED
STAFF WRITER
jhubred@homecomm.net

Nothing much about this year's Standard & Poor's report surprised Farmington Schools Superintendent Bob Maxfield.

For one thing, the data is old, and local school officials have already identified the problems indicated - like making improvements in the area of minority student achievement. Maxfield also appreciates the effort involved in the contracted report compiled by the internationally renowned financial firm, which normally evaluates businesses and governments and issues bond ratings.

Standard & Poor's describes their "School Evaluation Service" as "a powerful decision-making tool for taxpayers, educators, school boards, and state and local education policy makers and administrators." After analyzing academic, financial, and demographic indicators and trends, the firm presents what it calls "impartial" findings.

"It is an earnest effort to provide taxpayers an accumulation of data regarding school districts," Maxfield said. "I think they're at least attempting to get accurate information."

The study was contracted by the State of

Michigan, at a cost of \$12 million over five years. The data runs approximately two years behind the report, which can lead to some errant conclusions.

In Farmington Schools, for instance, the vast majority of students weren't taking the Michigan Educational Assessment Program tests, until the state offered a scholarship as an incentive. Now, participation is more than 90 percent, but those numbers won't show up on the evaluation until next year, Maxfield said.

As a result, one of the "Challenges and Concerns" is "well below-average MEAP composite participation."

Maxfield is also concerned that one of the Detroit area daily newspapers has used some of the data to create a "teacher staffing efficiency" chart that appears to be based almost entirely on teacher-student ratios.

A more accurate picture of any district would include a look at what its initiatives are and what programs are in place for kids who aren't achieving. Moreover, a data-driven "snapshot in time" can't reflect an important aspect of any school - "How do you feel when

Please see **SCO REPORT, A5**

Dentist returns from Barbados to face charges

By PAUL R. PACE
STAFF WRITER
ppace@homecomm.net

The Farmington Hills dentist on the lam from police was back in custody Saturday, returning from a 20-day trip to Barbados, according to Farmington Hills Police.

Donald Quinn, who failed to appear for a court hearing on Jan. 24 in 48th District Court in Bloomfield Township, was arrested by U.S. Customs officers Friday evening as he exited an airplane at Philadelphia International Airport.

Police Chief William Dwyer said Quinn's Detroit travel agent alerted authorities to his whereabouts after seeing his story on television. He purchased a round-trip ticket.

He is currently being held by authorities in Philadelphia and is expected to face an extradition hearing to be brought back to Michigan on Monday.

Because Quinn failed to appear for the single misdemeanor stalking charge, he forfeited his personal bond of \$5,000 and the judge raised his new bond to \$250,000, cash or surety.

Dwyer said the department is still wrapping up its investigation with the Oakland County Prosecutor's Office to bring possible criminal sexual assault charges against Quinn, who has

Please see **CHARGES, A2**