

## Mom lights fires with tales of Olympic torch run

BY SUE BUCK  
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Fran Card was a natural to carry the Winter Olympics torch Jan. 6 in Flint.

"I've been a competitor all my life," said Fran, 57. "I make competition out of everything."

The mother of Hershey Card, a Farmington High School technology teacher, she visited her son's classroom Feb. 8 as well as the classrooms of her grandchildren, Ali, 6, a student at Alameda Early Childhood Center, and Benji, 10, who attends William Grace Elementary.

Fran and her husband, Ron, live in Okemo, where she is chief administrator for Christian-Cradle, an adoption agency in Lansing. An agency social worker and a young man named Jeff, who she helped place for adoption 17 years ago, nominated her for the honor.

"Now his mother works for me," Fran said. "She worked for me for 10 years. They live right in our city. They know I really love the Olympics."

Fran said rules and regulations stipulated how she should hold the torch, prevented her from wearing any advertising on her uniform and from relighting the flame.

The National Olympic Committee determined she would run her two-tenths of a mile on Longway Blvd. in Flint.

"They can put you anywhere within 200 miles of your home," Fran said. "The two-tenths of a mile is about as long as your torch will hold fuel. I had about half of my fuel left."

Fran's cheering section held a banner which read, "Promote Adoption. Our hero, Fran Card."

"I practiced for six weeks," she said. "I

never was a runner but I started running every single day, three months before."

As Fran practiced in her neighborhood, she took along items that weighed the same as the torch (3 1/2 pounds) and held them high. First she ran with a pipe wrench, but switched to a fire extinguisher when she found that to be top heavy.

The wrench also had a bit of an image problem.

"Running down the street with a pipe wrench, I didn't know what people would think," Fran said.

In addition to sharing her experience, she gave students interesting bits of information about this year's Olympics, held in Salt Lake City, Utah under the theme, "Light the Fire Within."

Torch relays have been held since 1936. This is the first year glass was used in the torches, she said.

"This year it started in Atlanta," Fran said. "It's gone to 46 states. They always light it in Greece, and it's flown to whatever country is having it. It will be extinguished at the end of the game."

The mother of seven children is also a speed skating competitor in Senior Olympics. Fran and her torch drew interest from faculty and students at Farmington High School.

"Everytime I watch the opening ceremonies, I bawl my eyes out," said math teacher K. Sturm, who has participated in a lot of athletics. "For me to see this is, 'Wow,' Sturm said.

Students were equally impressed. "It's inspirational how she got nominated to carry the torch," said senior Stephanie Yacoub.

"I think it would be a big honor to carry



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRIDGEMAN

**Torch-bearer: In a reversal of roles in the old school standby of "Show and Tell," Farmington High School teacher Hershey Card brought his mom, Fran Card to school on Friday. Students met and spoke with Card, who carried the Olympic torch for 2/10 of a mile on the streets of Flint. Later in the day Card made stops at Alameda and William Grace schools.**

the torch," said senior Kristen Balla.

Although she said she doesn't keep many material things, Fran wouldn't consider parting with the torch or her running gear. She learned that the torches are selling on E-bay for up to \$6,000.

"I'm keeping the torch for the kids to fight over when I die," Fran quipped.

## Comerica branch plans expansion

BY SUE BUCK  
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Comerica Bank has received approval for plans to expand its branch at Grand River and Drake for private banking and investment services.

Architects are proposing an addition of 8,900 square feet to the building's present 13,562 square feet. They came before the Farmington planning commission Feb. 4.

The parking lot will have more than the required spaces at the west side of the building, Tiseo said. Employees will be instructed to park in the furthest spaces allowing customers the nearer, more convenient spots, he said.

"We will maintain the existing drive," Tiseo said. "The existing stormwater retention basin will be expanded. We aren't doing

anything to the main branch bank, the drive-in or the ATM. It will stay as it is."

Landscaping will also be provided, as well as a berm.

"Landscaping is something that is very touchy with the bank," said Gary Gozmannian, project management director for Trammell Crow Company. "We don't want a lot of bushes or anything like that. Landscaping has to be very low or minimal for security reasons. We don't want hedge rows of yews or anything like that, that people can hide behind."

The single story brick building will incorporate a variation of the existing brick. "We located the original brick," Tiseo said. "It will be a combination of these two. It won't look like it was a mistake."

## Chili Cook Off planned at Page's

Farmington Hills Special Services joins Miss Farmington - Oakland County in hosting this year's 7th annual Chili Cook Off on Sunday, March 3 at Page's Food & Spirits in downtown Farmington.

Celebrity judges from the metro-Detroit area will be on hand along with UPN 50's Harry

Hairton serving as the head judge.

This year's proceeds will benefit the Farmington Area Mayor's Youth Councils as well as the Miss Farmington - Oakland County Scholarship program.

For more information call (248) 471-9042 or (248) 473-1850.

## Harrison grads open recording studio

BY PAUL R. PACE  
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Recording studios are usually reserved for musicians backed with big bank accounts to make them sound good.

But for the average singer or the professional, a new Farmington business allows everyone from wannabe singers to professional musicians a chance to record and mix their music on a CD for a reasonable price.

Farmington Harrison graduates Brian Lebovitz and Robert Houchins ('88) opened Studio 7 Productions in the Village Mall in downtown Farmington last fall.

The small, downstairs studio specializes in making CDs for average singers who might want a recording of their voices over popular songs or for the professional who wants to mix his or her voice to existing tracks.

The company currently charges

\$35 per song for one-hour of studio time and a CD. There is no set limit on taking studio time.

"We have a lot of fun with it," said Lebovitz of Farmington Hills. "I always thought it would be cool to do this."

While the studio doesn't have room for a full band, it can mix an unlimited number of tracks digitally, Lebovitz said.

Houchins, a Redford resident, has experience behind the engineer board from work he has done in his home studio. The musician spent time in Los Angeles after graduation, playing professional rock music.

While he currently works as a service technician for a computer company during the day, Houchins mans the controls of the recording studio in his free time.

Lebovitz is learning the engineering job from his friend. He also runs his other company, Visibles, which produces promotional

products, from the office.

He and Houchins said they work closely with the musicians to get recordings up to professional-sounding standards.

"We perfect it and burn it on a CD," Lebovitz said.

He said some small ads and word of mouth are helping the business grow. Jan Brachel, choral director at North Farmington High School, taught Houchins while he attended Harrison High School. Now, she's directing her music students who are interested in hearing how they sound to the studio to record their music.

"Houchins is teaching all these kids wonderful things," she said. "They spend so much time with each student. (Houchins) is an expert singer himself. He knows what he's doing."

Brachel said more students are writing music than she has ever seen now that they can get a professional recording of their compo-

sitions.

"It's affordable and fun," she said of her students' experiences in the studio.

Houchins said he enjoys the recording business.

"I'm meeting all sorts of different people," he said. "Even rappers. I enjoy helping them out with their projects."

The two businessmen also perform digital photo reproductions and CD duplication at the office.

• Studio 7 Productions is located at 33335 Grand River, lower level. Call (248) 888-6833. Visit the Web site at [www.studio7pro.com](http://www.studio7pro.com)



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRIDGEMAN

Recording artists: Robert Houchins and Brian Lebovitz own Studio 7 Productions.

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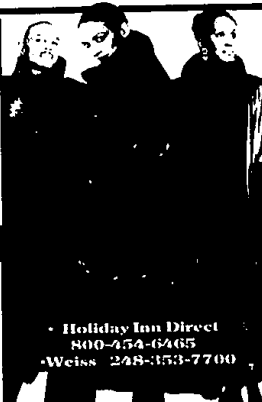
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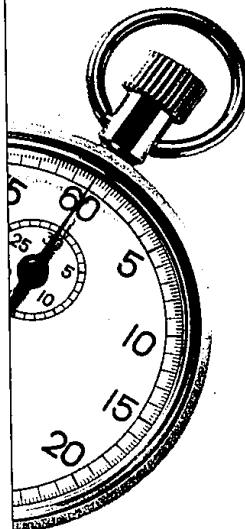
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