

# Vagnozzi begins 70-mile campaign walk to Lansing

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Farmington Hills city councilwoman Vicki Barnett called it "an Aldo thing."

And really, there's just no other way to explain why a 76-year-old man would take it upon himself to walk from Farmington to Lansing, a journey expected to take five days.

Democratic candidate Aldo Vagnozzi donned his walking shoes early Friday morning to launch this unique campaign venture, arranged to promote his candidacy for the 37th District State House seat.

He kicked off the event at Anna's Cafe in downtown Farmington, displaying a sense of humor that he says often prompted his late wife Lois to comment, "Don't laugh, you'll only encourage him."

"If you want to find out who your friends really are, hold an event at 7:30 in the morning," Vagnozzi said as he milled about talking with supporters gathered in the Farmington Road coffee shop.

Some wore his trademark blue and white "Aldo" t-shirts; everyone was wearing a coat to ward off the early morning chill. Aldo told them his heavy-soled shoes have already seen quite a bit of action.

"I've hit 1,500 doors already," he said. "That'll put me in shape for the rest of the campaign."

**Walks the talk**

His last run for state house, against then-incumbent Andrew Ruczkowski, was also based on shoe leather. Supporter Mario Weigold believes that says a lot about the candidate himself.

"I like to say he walks the talk," she said. "It's time for a change in Lansing, and he walks the talk."

Last time around, he picked up 48 percent of the vote against a two-term incumbent. At this time, he has no competition for the Democratic nod; three candidates - John Akouri, Valerie Knol and Terry Sever - will face off in the August Republican primary.

In addition to their obvious political and philosophical differences, Vagnozzi is also a few decades older than his potential opponents. That issue, while not at the top of the list, is yet another reason he's taking old Grand River on foot to Lansing.

"It points up how vigorous I am," he said, then grinned and added, "I thought it would be better to do it earlier (in the campaign), to show I know where Lansing is."

He'll see the State Capitol building during the last two miles of his walk, along Michigan Avenue. That was five days ahead of him Friday morning as he rallied supporters at Farmington Hills and Farmington city halls and Farmington Health Care Facility on Grand River,



Aldo Vagnozzi

where he talked about his belief in quality nursing home care.

"The party in Lansing has neglected our nursing homes," he said in a campaign statement issued at the kick-off. "I would support legislation requiring increased staffing, criminal background checks of employees, air conditioning of the homes and family councils."

Along the way, Vagnozzi said he would speak on other issues, like local control, balancing the tax burden, roads and education. And he has about 70 miles in which to make his points.

"We mapped it out a couple of Sundays ago," he said. Some of the \$5,000 in campaign pledges he's collected are based on his mileage, as calculated by a pedometer he'll wear.

Asked whether she had any doubt about Vagnozzi finishing his journey, Barnett said, "Heck no!"

"This kind of event synthesizes Aldo's philosophy, his vitality and his approach to government," she added. "He's a populist."

A populist and something of a humorist.

"This is how Julius Caesar started," Vagnozzi joked. "He started his campaign walking the Appian Way."

Don't laugh.

You'll only encourage him.

Updates on Vagnozzi's walk to Lansing will be posted on his Web site, [www.aldovalgnozzi.com](http://www.aldovalgnozzi.com)

# Harrison sworn as Farmington's newest official

BY SUE BUCK  
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Farmington Mayor Jim Mitchell called the oath new Farmington Councilman Michael Harrison took May 6 "ceremonious."

Still, it held as much excitement for Harrison as the oath he took April 16, the day after he was appointed.

The earlier oath came between council meeting dates and allowed Harrison the authority to immediately do council business, including reviewing the proposed budget April 30.

Harrison, 55, a self-employed marketing and promotional products consultant, replaced Councilman Bill Hartsock who married recently and moved to Farmington Hills. He served on council for more than 28 years. Harrison will serve out the unexpired term, to November 2003.

"I want to say thanks to my fellow council members for the confidence they expressed in making this appointment," Harrison said. "I told each of them they've done their part; their process is over. Now it's up to me to prove that they chose the right person."

He thanked his friends, who he said had been very supportive and his "wife and best friend" Joan.

"We've been married too long a time to think either of us could pursue an undertaking like this without each other's knowledge and understanding of the demands that will be put

on me for the next months or years," Harrison said.

Citing the city's new and unique challenges ahead, he added, "I've been part of the Farmington community for a long time but have never enjoyed it as much or was as proud of it as I am right now. My involvement with the city has always led me to believe that we are truly blessed to have the talented and dedicated administration we have here in Farmington."

Harrison called Hartsock's 28-year role in local government unparalleled.

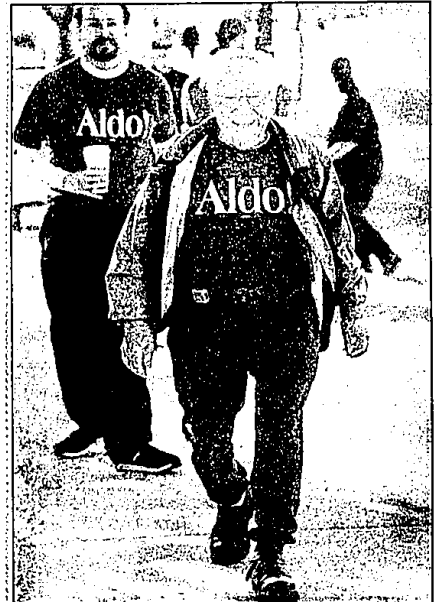
"Even though I believe we both have about the same shoe prints on a path I can only hope to follow," Harrison said. "I'm honored to accept this challenge and I am proud to be a member of this team."

Hartsock extended his best wishes to Harrison during the public comments section, having occupied a seat in the back of the room throughout the meeting.

"I publicly apologize to council for putting them in such a difficult position to make an appointment," Hartsock said, referring to public scrutiny over the process. "I read the stories with great interest and I shared in your pain."

The council and audience laughed.

The council took heat from the media and the public for not holding interviews, not releasing the names of candidates and also for not allowing any public comment the night Harrison was appointed.



Sole man: Aldo Vagnozzi begins his walk to the state capitol building in Lansing, followed by supporters including Ryan Gesund who is running for Oakland County Commission.

## National Hospital Week May 12 - May 18

During a year in which the nation's health care resources have been challenged as never before, our communities' generous acknowledgement of National Hospital Week is a source of gratification to the Botsford General Hospital family.

I would like to add my voice to that of the local city councils in recognizing the contributions made by Botsford's dedicated employees, physicians and volunteers who provide care to the community 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Botsford's fine reputation for providing quality health care is the result of the pride and passion demonstrated by employees from every corner of our organization.

Their jobs are diverse but as a team, our employees form a community-based hospital - recognized as the cornerstone of health care in this country. They come to work each day because they love what they do and receive satisfaction from seeing the good results that come from their efforts. Their commitment is unflinching. Even though we ask them to perform difficult jobs, they remain dedicated to providing quality care - often going above and beyond the call of duty for patients and their families.

Long days in a stressful environment are their norm. Yet, Botsford employees are generous, active and engaged community citizens who dedicate time and resources to support community events including holiday and back to school projects, health awareness walks and health outreach and education programs. During off-duty hours, the community continues to draw on their talents as they lead Scout troops, volunteer at local schools and coach youth sports teams.

I am proud to lead an organization with employees who are so committed to their community. Most readers of this newspaper are patients, friends or neighbors of Botsford employees. During National Hospital Week, would you please join me in saying: "Thank you for the important job you do."

Gerson J. Cooper  
President and CEO

Botsford General Hospital  
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