

Residents form hands-on help group for the Rouge

BY PAUL R. PACE
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A group of concerned Farmington area citizens are forming a volunteer group to conduct hands-on remedial work of the Rouge River and its many branches.

The Farmington Riparian Stewards is looking for people interested in helping - even if residents don't live off the Rouge.

While the Rouge Rescue Day has volunteers spending a day cleaning up small segments of the river, the Riparian Stewards are different, said organizer Spencer Brown.

The Stewards will organize smaller groups that work more frequently on individual properties along the river.

Also, members want to go beyond debris removal and get into practical erosion control and planting techniques that will have a more lasting effect on the ecology of the river.

Brown said he started sending out letters to residents living along the Rouge in Farmington and Farmington Hills in late

March. Of the 300 letters he sent, he has received about 32 back, with people giving a \$5 donation to help pay for start up costs and mailings.

"There are actually about 1,500 (residences) along the river, but a lot of them are just (on) small streams," said Brown. "We want to stick to the main body."

The first of goals for the group are:

- Educate riparian property owners and others about their responsibilities and opportunities for enhancing the ecology of the Rouge and demonstrate how these things can be applied at specific locations.

- Assist each other in meeting these responsibilities.

- Coordinate the efforts with the two cities' department of public works, the Friends of the Rouge and other agencies like the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and the Oakland County Drain Commission.

The nonprofit group is also looking for people to achieve the goals while on dry land.

"Right now we've got two pocket



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL DREHNER

Help wanted: Spencer Brown, Betty Cook and Joe Mantey hope to convince other folks who live along water to work together to improve the water and surrounding habitat.

ets of members on 11 Mile and Farmington Road in Farmington Hills and some in Farmington," said Brown.

He noted he asked people to tell him what is wrong with their properties and most complaints involved log jams and erosion.

Brown said he is especially looking for folks who have expertise in the field of rivers, like people who coordinate the Friends of the Rouge and the Wayne County Department of the Environment.

"Basically, I'm an interested layman," he said of why he helped start the group. "I've

attended meetings and seminars on these types of thing."

He mentioned one member has engineering experience in the field.

"Anybody who wants to join is more than welcome, said Brown. He can be reached at (248) 426-8722.

The Friends of the Rouge are hosting a stream bank stabilization course at the downtown Farmington Community Library from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday, June 29. Attendance is free of charge, but call Sally of the Friends at (313) 792-9621 if you plan to attend.

Residents return with complaints

BY PAUL R. PACE
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Residents in the Oxford Estates subdivision once again stormed the Farmington Hills City Council Monday, demanding action be taken on a neighbor whose home has been under construction for the past four years.

One resident promised angry homeowners in the upscale subdivision off Drake Road, south of 12 Mile, will return to every council meeting to complain until the project is completed.

The city has been embroiled in lawsuits with Betty and Ajay Shah on Winchester Court for more than a year. The next court hearing is June 6, at which the city will answer to claims of trespassing on the Shahs' estate to deal with soil erosion issues.

City attorney John Donohue told the audience the waiting will likely continue while the city battles out court proceedings that have been mired in adjournments in recent months.

"Our hands are tied until then," he said. "We have worked with your association attorney. We're forced with a unique situation."

He said he will ask the court order the family to move out if they are living in the basement, a violation of city code.

Frustrated with the issue, council members said they wanted to have a report of the timeline of the situation and review building policies that allowed the matter to escalate.

"I don't want to see this happen again," said councilman Jerry Ellis. "Let's see what we can do."

Donohue said evicting the family won't solve the problem of the home not being completed, but hinted someone could be hired to finish it if the court ordered it.

Residents speak

Resident James Simpkins, president of the homeowners association for Oxford Estates, spoke in a prepared statement for the roughly 60 residents who stood in support afterward.

He said the Shahs are living in the basement.

"We feel we have every right to come before you," he said. "We've gone to mediations to no avail. We want you to cease giving temporary living permits."

"We feel this has been going on for too long," he said. "We want the landscape completed and the front of the house done."

Betty Shah said she did not see the meeting, but said a neighbor has been against her family moving there from the beginning.

Shah and her neighbors have claimed being threatened with their lives.

Shah said neighbors are telling contractors not to work on her home or are telling them the family can't be trusted to pay.

"How can I finish this if they are chopping off my legs?" Shah said by phone.

She said her home is being singled out unfairly by the city, and added the city gave her a permit for her and her family to live in the home while the work was being finished.

Shah said her plumbing is nearly done, and she is waiting for cabinets to be delivered before she contracts work on the outside of the home.

Film makers invited to compete on 'Grand' scale

BY SUE BUCK
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A small group of local film makers has organized a short film and screenplay competition for Detroit talent.

In addition to prize money, the winning contestants will have their films showcased Saturday, June 16 at the Grand Cafe, 33316 Grand River. The event is open to the public.

Lance Kawan, owner of the Grand Cafe and an award-winning screenwriter, is leading the panel of judges, which also includes Natalie Milbrodt and Jaron Curry. All are from the

Film makers can submit their projects of 20 minutes and less or their screenplays of no more than 30 pages for a \$25 entry fee or both for \$40.

Farmington area.

"The goal of the contest is to foster the filmmaking talent in the Detroit area and give this growing community an accessible forum for participating and enjoying these great films," Milbrodt said in a release.

Winners of both contests will be posted on the contest Web site.

"Getting your work in front of

an interested audience can be one of the most challenging aspects of being an independent filmmaker," Kawan said. He has participated in national film festivals for years.

Film makers can submit their projects of 20 minutes and less or their screenplays of no more than 30 pages for a \$25 entry fee or both for \$40.

"We didn't want to be pro-

hibitive with our formal guidelines," Kawan said. "Exciting work is being done on film, video and digital media, so why limit our search to just one?"

The screenplays will be judged based on their content as well as their technical proficiency.

"We're expecting some very polished, professional projects as well as some inventive, but rougher, work from beginners," Milbrodt said.

The deadline for submission is June 1.

For more details visit the Grand Cafe or visit www.sara-jadfilms.com

RUMMAGE SALES

MOM TO MOM SALE

The Farmington YMCA will hold a Mom to Mom sale 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Saturday, May 18 at the Y. For more information call (248) 553-4020.

UNITED RUMMAGE SALE

First United Methodist Church of Farmington will hold a rummage sale 9 a.m.-8 p.m. today, May 16 and 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Friday, May 17. The church is located at 33112 Grand River.

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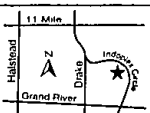
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