

FARMINGTON  
**Observer**

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## Festive food

One way to  
avoid a holiday  
headache is to  
plan a brunch  
instead of a formal dinner. B1

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**Cities: Stop mid-year budget cuts**BY JONI HUBBARD  
STAFF WRITER

Farmington City Clerk Patsy Cantrell gets a little worked up when she talks about state revenue sharing.

News that Gov. John

Engler's last-minute budget cuts were enacted by the state legislature Friday wasn't as bad as it could have been, she said. But it's still far from good news.

"We started with a threat from the Governor to com-

pletely eliminate state revenue sharing," she said. "We heard about cuts ranging from 20 to 30 percent or more."

The 3.5 percent reduction is drawing fire from local officials in both Farmington and Farmington Hills, primarily

because of the 11th hour timing. Officials say they're getting tired of having to adjust their budgets mid-year in order to help balance the state's books.

Friday was a little soon to calculate the actual financial

impact, because Cantrell doesn't know yet the base figure used for the reduction. State revenue sharing accounts for about 19 percent of city revenues.

While budgeting is compli-

PLEASE SEE BUDGET, A9

Our Towns



LETTERS TO Santa

A It boys and girls, naughty or nice, know Santa Claus will soon be checking his Christmas List - and checking it twice. That means Farmington youngsters need to get their letters to the Jolly Old Elf written and on their way to the North Pole.

Once again, the Farmington Observer is asking youngsters to send us their letter to Santa along with a school picture to appear in the Observer before Christmas Day. To make sure we have time to forward the letters to the North Pole, get the letters to us by no later than Monday, Dec. 16. Individually post-marked letters should be sent to Santa, care of the Farmington Observer, 3341 Grand River, Farmington, MI 48335.

## Poet published

Betsy Besl of Farmington Hills has her poem "About Ladies" published in the new book, "Blow-drying the Frog & Other Parenting Adventures."

The book is published by the Welcome Home publication and the Family and Home Network, a nonprofit organization.

The book is a collection of the best of humorous real-life stories from the monthly Welcome Home.

The publication is written by and geared toward parents.

Besl said it was a nice surprise to have her poem chosen for publication.

To learn more about the book and even order a copy, check www.familyandhome.org.

## Santa luncheon

If you missed Santa's visit to downtown Farmington on Saturday, you can still catch him before his busy season starts on Christmas Eve.

Santa will be having lunch with boys and girls at the Longacre House.

There will be two sittings offered from 11 a.m.-noon or 1-2 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 14.

Tickets are \$12 and include a craft activity. Lunch will be typical "kid fare."

All children must be accompanied by an adult.

For more information and to reserve a seat, please call (248) 477-8404.



Marco Conte hopes he'll be able to open a restaurant in another location.

**Marco's hopes to find new location**BY SUE BUCK  
STAFF WRITER

Though Marco's Restaurant will close its doors Jan. 1, owner Marco Conte hopes that customers won't say goodbye, but "Til We Meet Again."

That's because he's exploring other options for a restaurant location, possibly in Farmington Hills.

He's operated the restaurant located off Grand River for more than 13 years.

"It's just a goodbye from this location," Conte said. "I've had some offers for partners who would like to see us have another restaurant."

He won't name the source of monetary help. "It's big businesses in the area who we do a lot of parties for," Conte said.

The restaurant will close Jan. 1, after a big New Year's party.

"We just can't seem to make it," Marco said. "It's been difficult for a

PLEASE SEE MARCOS, A7

**Senior bus service a godsend**BY PAUL R. PACE  
STAFF WRITER

The city of Farmington Hills senior transportation service is a godsend to hundreds of seniors and those with disabilities in the area.

For Farmington Hills residents Lowell Bond and his wife Luwana, the service "came to their rescue" when it came time to take Luwana to her therapy sessions in Royal Oak and Birmingham, after she suffered a stroke earlier this year.

A neighbor told Lowell about the transportation service that only asks for a \$1 donation each way to take seniors to their medical appointments and back home.

"They do an excellent job getting her to her therapies on time," Lowell said. "I think they do a great service to the community," he said.

Fran Bracciale, transportation coordinator,

PLEASE SEE VANS, A8



Anne Kloy, George Soler and Jack Davis are on their way home.

**Family's loss becomes fight to save others**BY PAUL R. PACE  
STAFF WRITER

Jason Starling was gifted. The junior at Farmington High School, who excelled in advanced placement courses at school, often tutored seniors.

He was a typical teenager who loved his family, listening to his favorite bands on his headphones, playing football for his school, mak-

ing his friends laugh.

He was working at the Ram's Horn to get his own car.

But the 17-year-old's decision to get high on an October evening cost him much more.

His mom, Pam Starling, went to his bedroom to wake him for school on a Friday morning after he complained of feeling ill the previous day.

PLEASE SEE OVERDOSE, A5

**City authorizes 'flashy' speed trailer**BY JONI HUBBARD  
STAFF WRITER

Motorists should be on the lookout for a new and improved speed trailer in Farmington in the coming months.

City officials approved funding for the trailer Monday. The current model simply displays a vehicle's speed as it approaches.

Public Safety Director Gary Goss says there'll be no ignoring the new warning for those who are violating posted speed

limits.

"It's going to flash red lights at you as you're going by," he explained. "There won't be any mistake."

Goss said the old trailer is in "kind of bad shape," but the department will fix it up and use it in other parts of the city. It couldn't be stationed on Grand River, because its radar unit would detect traffic coming from both directions.

The new trailer will measure speeds only from on-coming traffic, Goss said.

PLEASE SEE TRAILER, A10

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## LOOKING AHEAD

Gifts for decorators  
in Thursday's At Home,  
we'll share some gift  
ideas for those into home  
improvement.



World of Floors

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