

Mercy auction moves forward

BY JONI HUBBED
STAFF WRITER

Organizers for the annual fund-raising auction at Mercy High School say they probably won't replace a "Lunch with Governor Granholm" item withdrawn last week from their catalog.

Fortunately, they've got more than 500 other items for bidders to choose from.

Sr. Regina Marie Doelker, who has faced a barrage of press coverage this week, said the important thing now is for parents, students and other school supporters to focus on the purpose for the "Night with the Stars Auction," held Feb. 22.

The event will include live and silent auctions, a strolling buffet dinner and entertainment provided by the Mercianes, Mercy Mimes and Mercy Pep Band. The all-girls parochial school is located at Middlebelt and 11 Mile in Farmington Hills.

The school serves more than 900 young women from more than 60 communities.

"As we move forward, this is important for all of us to get behind," Sr. Doelker said of the event.

She explained the auction is the school's largest parent fund-raiser, required to meet a \$1,600 per stu-

dent shortfall between the cost of education and tuition parents pay. Students also host a "Sweepstakes" fund-raiser in the spring, selling 51 tickets that are good for 25 cash prize drawings.

"Night with the Stars" remaining auction items include weekend vacation getaways, jewelry, restaurant certificates, gift baskets — even time at a bed and breakfast inn on Mackinac Island.

A few contributors were unhappy with the decision to withdraw the Granholm lunch, which came after some parents, students and the Stop Granholm Church and Truth Project protested citing Granholm's position on abortion.

A spokesperson from the Governor's office said while Granholm is personally opposed to abortion, she does not wish to impose her beliefs on the entire state.

Sr. Doelker has high hopes of mending fences not only among parents but also students who have spoken out on this issue.

"We really do need the support," she said.

For more information about the auction, call Erin Porth, Mercy's Special Events Coordinator, (248) 476-8020, ext. 253.

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Hills business receives national award

BY PAUL R. PACE
STAFF WRITER

James Akouri said he didn't look back when he decided to start his own cellular phone service business in Farmington Hills in 1995.

Focusing his attention on making customers happy with their phones and calling plans made his business a success, he said this week.

Akouri was recently named the No. 1 agent in the state in his class by Verizon Wireless. He is an authorized Verizon dealer and his business, Cellular City, is located in the shopping plaza on the northwest corner of 12 Mile and Orchard Lake in Farmington Hills.

The 35-year-old businessman said word of mouth among clients has been the key to business growth. His crew of five also deserves credit for the honor, he said.

He noted about 70 percent of the Red Wings use his phones and plans are built the best of a former.

"We really do need the support," she said.

Akouri does most of the cell phone plans for employees of Farmington Hills, West Bloomfield and Southfield. The award is based on several factors, but gaining new activations and



Jim Akouri and his crew: Monica Naoum, Mike Cameron, Bob Moultry and Nick Casali are tops in Verizon's view.

upgrades is among the top criteria, he said.

"We stay on top of everything we do," Akouri said.

The cell phone market has evolved greatly just in the years he's been involved in the market since 1992.

What was for years a growth market has changed to upgrading, he said.

But the difference between buying a phone and a calling plan from his business, as opposed to a mall store, is personal service, he said.

"If something goes wrong with your phone, come in and we'll take care of it," he said of staffers Nick Casali, Bob Moultry, Mike Cameron and Monica Naoum.

"My style is there is never a 'no' answer with a client," Akouri said. "We do whatever we need to do to make them happy."

He said treating customers well is how his business has maintained its success.

"This is the best product I could sell," he said of Verizon.

As far as the future, Akouri said cell phones are obviously here to stay and many young people are forgoing even having "land lines" in their homes and relying on cell phones as their only phone.

Transmitting data such as e-mail and the Internet access through cell phone is also gaining in popularity and will only become more evolved, he said.

"As Verizon grows, I see us growing, too," Akouri said.

Call Cellular City at (248) 848-8800.

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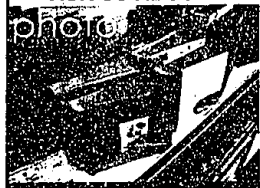


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Hills Nature Center opens Feb. 22

Enjoy the natural beauty of Heritage Park indoors when the city of Farmington Hills and Farmington Public Schools host the grand opening of the new Nature Center from noon-4 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 22.

The Nature Center is located in Heritage Park on Farmington Road between 10 and 11 Mile Roads.

Inside the 2,325-square-foot Nature Center, visitors will find:

■ A large diorama of life in Heritage Park, including trees, native plants, a pond, and wildlife;

■ A hands-on area, where children can touch, see, hear, and smell nature; two large

aquariums that house a variety of native species of fish;

■ A bird-viewing area that offers an up-close look at our feathered friends;

■ An interactive computer weather station and a computer microscope;

■ A nature library packed with information about our community's natural surroundings.

Joe Derek, City Naturalist, and other city and school representatives will be on hand to provide tours and answer questions. Refreshments will also be provided.

The Nature Center was developed by the city of Farmington Hills and the Farmington Public Schools,

with a grant for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

In addition to welcoming visitors of all ages, the Nature Center will offer nature classes and programs, and will provide a hands-on educational experience for school groups.

The Center will be open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday from 10 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Wednesdays from 10 a.m.-7 p.m., and Sunday from noon until 5 p.m. It will be closed on holidays.

For more information, call the Costick Activities Center at (248) 473-1800.

Once open, the Nature Center's phone number will be (248) 477-1135.

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