

# Riparians: Rouge is river for all

BY PAUL R. PACE  
STAFF WRITER

While about 1,500 homes in Farmington and Farmington Hills about the Rouge River, nearly everyone in the two communities has an impact on the river's well-being, says Spencer Brown.

The president of the Farmington Riparian Stewards spoke to residents Monday who are interested in learning more about the efforts to keep the Rouge River and its tributaries healthy.

He was joined at Farmington Hills city hall by Hills City Councilwoman Vicki Barnett and Hills ZBA member Joe Mantey in a public discussion about the Rouge and volunteer efforts to maintain one of the communities' most valuable natural resources.

Brown said anyone who cares about the Rouge is welcome to join the group. Members can learn how to take care of the river and its streams and learn to solve erosion issues.

The Rouge and its tributaries cover 434 square miles and reach out into several different communities, Brown noted. Run-off from all those areas affects the quality of the watershed.

"Every storm drain and retention pond all ends up in the river sooner or later," Brown said.

Joe Mantey, who serves as a consultant on riverways, also spoke about the Rouge's history in the area.

Mantey said as the Farmington community was built, the Rouge was affected.

"Many riparians are concerned with erosion," he said. While concrete has been used to stall erosion, the proper step is installing native plants with deep roots along the banks to absorb the energy of the river's current and keep soil from eroding, he said.

Mantey said 2003 marks the 30th year of the Clean Water

Act, which requires each state to come up with a plan to clean up its waterways. The effort traces down to the local level to educate people who live near and use rivers and streams.

Barnett pointed out that former city officials decided to use the Rouge as a source to carry storm water and built around the river in an effort to preserve its natural beauty.

But fertilizers and other pollutants, such as oil dripping from cars, have harmed the river and its ecosystem.

Barnett remains confident rivers and creeks state-wide will be better for future generations.

"This is going to be an ongoing process," she said. "I want you to think of this as an ongoing homeowners association."

Barnett also said people need to change their mindsets about using harsh chemicals and extra water to keep their lawns green.

She said natural plant species can be used to make lawns appealing without resorting to chemicals.

Farmington Hills Naturalist Joe Derek said there is some momentum starting among homeowners to use native plants in their lawns. Specialty nurseries should carry the plants.

Barnett also said certain road, home and business developments are engineered to flood, because storm drains can only handle so much water. To avoid overflow, some parking lots have restricters in place to cause flooding during heavy downpours.

"Hines Drive (in Livonia) is designed to flood," she said, adding the area has 1,000 retention ponds.

Brown said more details about the Rouge and workshops and information can be found on the Friends of the Rouge Web site at [www.therouge.org](http://www.therouge.org)

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## Alum returns to help with musical

BY JOHNN KUBRED  
STAFF WRITER

This year's Clarenceville spring musical has been like "old home week" for one of the directors involved with the production of "Once Upon a Mattress," which opens April 10.

CIS alumnus John Maxwell is co-directing the play with vocal director Troy Nelson, who teaches at Clarenceville Middle and High schools. A 1995 graduate, Maxwell is currently artistic director for Planet Ant Theater in Hantranch.

"I was back in town after being gone for six years and came to see my brother (in last year's musical 'Anything Goes')," Maxwell said. "I thought I might be able to help out."

Nelson welcomed the helping hand, particularly since Maxwell has an extensive theater background. After minor-ing in theater at Northern Michigan University and being involved in shows there, he worked at Shadowbox Cabaret in Columbus, Ohio before returning to the Detroit area.

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"It's really been great having him back," Nelson said, "and it's really great for the kids. He's infused a lot of excitement and given them support technically, based on what he's done."

The musical relates the story of Prince Dauntless the Drab, whose mother decrees no one in the kingdom may marry until a bride is found for him. When a potential wife catches the Prince's eye, the queen - who really wants to keep her son single - devises an amazing marriage test, which involves a pea and 20 mattresses.

The cast and crew includes both middle and high school



Prince Dauntless (Steve Wagner) and Winifred (Ashley Laabs) rehearse a scene.

students, and is 80 members strong. The combined secondary schools have a student population of about 900.

"We do a spring musical every year, and since 1994, we've been doing a District musical, rather than a high school production," Nelson explained, adding the younger students benefit from working with the older students. "It's been great for our program. It's really an exciting thing that a sixth or seventh grader can be involved in the high school musical."

Students start asking about getting involved in November. Shows are selected to include as many kids as possible.

"We look for those musicals that can use a larger cast, one the kids can enjoy and the community will enjoy attending," Nelson said.

Currently, a group of volun-



King Sextimus the Silent (Matt Tuomi) tries to make a point to the Jester (Heather Kilpatrick) and the Minstrel (Justin Tedin).

teer dads are building sets and art students will provide the finishing touches. By the time the curtain goes up, they will have spent 60-70 hours creating set pieces.

Lead players include Steve Wagner-Prince Dauntless, Ashley Laabs-Princess Winnifred, Christina Pacitto-Queen Aggravain, Tom Pavlovich-Sir Harry, Shyann

Sublette-Lady Larkin and Matt Tuomi-King Sextimus the Silent. Another 19 students have larger roles, and the chorus includes 42 singers. Joe Waeschle directs the 11-member orchestra.

The show plays at the Schmidt Auditorium April 10-12, with shows at 7:30 p.m. For ticket reservations, call (248) 473-8926.

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