

There's a reason cable channels can't be sold 'a la carte'

HUBRED
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let's face it. Most of us crave 1000 channels but when it comes right down to it we watch only five or six.

No lots of cable subscribers have been asking us why they can't subscribe to only those channels they really want or use. The answer is simple. The FCC doesn't require that cable operators sell channels that way, so operators choose not to. They tell us that

if they sold their channels a la carte, the over all price would be higher.

If Bright House (formerly Time Warner) sold their cable that way, the prices would go up. Rather than paying an average of \$3.49 per channel, the subscriber would be paying a per-channel rate that would compensate for the lack of sales of other channels.

In an effort to keep everyone happy, the cable company selects channels that will appeal to a large number of viewers and sells them through "tiers" in an effort to keep prices reasonable, while making the most number of chan-

nels available. If cable companies did choose to sell cable one channel at a time, some people would save and some people would end up spending a lot more. Selling cable through tiers is a way to compromise and sell groups of channels at a time to appeal to a larger audience.

The local cable company must offer a basic tier of programming which includes, but is not limited to, the local broadcast networks and local access channels negotiated by the local government. The Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission negotiated with Time Warner (now Bright

House) to ensure that your government access channels (Farmington Hills Channel 8, Novi 13, and Farmington 15), the public access INEQ TV-12 and the local school channel 10 are included in the basic tier. So really, if you only want 20 channels you can opt for this tier at \$11 a month.

Time Warner can include any channels it wants to include within the basic tier, but it can't force the customer to buy more than one tier of programming in order to receive the basic tier. But, there are those news, sports and weather junkies out there who just have to have more.

That's where the expanded basic tier comes in.

In fact, more than 90 percent of Bright House subscribers opt for this service tier with 77 channels at \$37.75. That beats the national average of \$5.57 per channel with 59 channels at \$33.75.

For more information about SWOCC Studios, call (248) 473-2800.

Caren Collins is the Executive Director of the Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission (SWOCC). The next Cable Access Committee meeting is Tuesday, April 8 at 7 p.m. at SWOCC Studios. The next SWOCC meeting is Wednesday, April 30 at 5:30 p.m. at Novi City Hall.

fast fare. Like ... cold pizza.

One guy rolled in with one of the biggest trucks I've ever seen. He got a little upset because we were using a grease-cutting detergent, similar to what one might use to wash dishes. He was afraid it would ruin his Teflon wax job, which was probably a reasonable concern. It would have been better expressed before we washed his truck.

I guess if you want to be really cautious, you could post a sign listing the type of soap you're using. But the bigger lesson here lies in car wash pricing.

We charged vans and trucks the same as we charged the Corvette owner, who didn't cringe when I hopped into her car and moved it forward along the circular drive. I'd recommend charging a little more for larger vehicles, simply because they require more water, more soap and more time.

And when it comes to Saturday morning car washes, time is of the essence. People have things to do on Saturdays, and while most are willing to wait, there's no sense imposing too much on their patience.

Everyone who came through Saturday made an important contribution. The goal is to raise money to refurbish the island within the circular drive at the House's front entrance.

Executive Director Denise Taxen would like to spruce it up, maybe even install a fountain, so it can be used for weddings and other gatherings, like Cafe on the Porch, which the Blue Circle will sponsor in July and August, or Chef's Cookouts, held throughout the year.

That's what you have to remember about car washes. No matter how sore and tired you get, no matter how many cars are backed up, no matter how hard you end up working, you're doing it all for a good cause.

I guess it's just about the most important lesson of all. Next to staying on the same side as the hose.

Jon Hubred is editor of the Farmington Observer. She welcomes your comments in person or by mail at 3341 Grand River, Farmington, MI 48315; by phone, (248) 477-5450; by fax, (248) 477-9722; or via e-mail, jhubred@hometownlife.com.

ENGAGEMENT



Miller-Pratt
Steve and Sally Miller of Farmington and Hill and Joan Pratt of Sterling Heights announce the engagement of their children Steven Miller and Christine Pratt.
A May wedding is planned.

Nardin Park presents concert May 4

Nardin Park United Methodist Church in Farmington Hills presents Laughton and O'Meara at 4 p.m. Sunday, May 4. Trumpeter Stuart Laughton is the co-founder of Canadian Brass and performs using 12 different trumpets. Organist William O'Meara has performed

at recitals and festivals throughout North and South America and Europe. A pre-concert reception will begin at 2:15 p.m. until the time of the concert. Admission is free.

Nardin Park is located at 29887 W. 11 Mile Road. Call (248) 476-8860.



Trumpeter Stuart Laughton and Organist William O'Meara perform May 4.

AT THE LIBRARY

The Farmington Community Library offers many programs just for teens.

TEEN TIME

Teen Time members will

meet 4-5 p.m. Tuesday, May 6 at the Farmington Branch Library and 4-5 p.m. Friday, May 9 at the Farmington Hills Library.

The Teen Time program is a group of teens who gather once a month to write

reviews of their favorite books, music CDs or other media for the Mixed Media teen 'zine - a publication distributed to all the media and high schools in the Farmington/Farmington Hills area.

For more information call Beth Tacy at (248) 553-6870.

MOVIE NIGHT

Teens can enjoy movie night 7-9 p.m. Monday, April 21 at the downtown Farmington Library.

BOOK DISCUSSION

Teens will discuss All Alone in the Universe by Lynne Rae Perkins 3:30-5 p.m. Tuesday, April 29 at the Farmington Hills Library or The Body of Christopher Creed by Carol Plum-Ucci 3:30-5 p.m. Wednesday, May 14 at the downtown Farmington Library.

FLYING FIGHTER JETS

Retired pilot Milton Riggs will build a presentation for teens and adults about his experience flying fighter jets during the Korean War at 7 p.m. Monday, May 12 at the downtown Farmington Library.

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