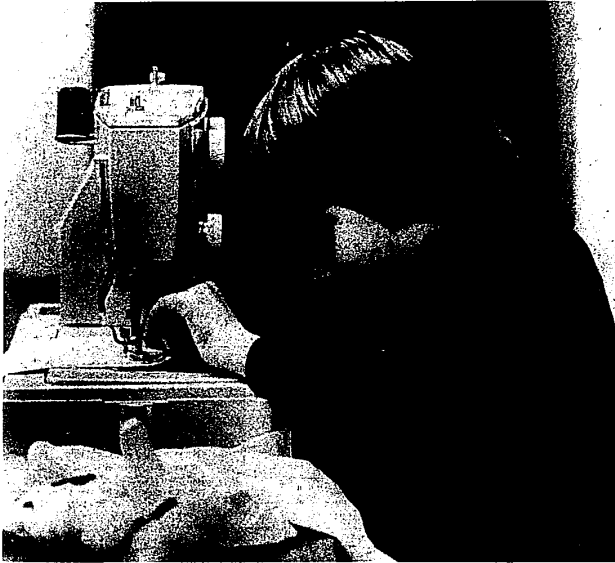


Pulling strings

Children transform scraps into a mystical puppet world

It's a child's world of fantasy at the library



Holidays, puppets and children complement each other with the same thoroughness as good stories, firelight and warm drinks on a winter's night.

It's through the inventiveness and enthusiasm of the children enrolled in the Farmington Hills Community Library's puppet making program that pieces of cloth and ribbon combine with stories to produce a tiny other world.

The five fifth and sixth graders who enrolled in the program plan on sharing their tiny friends with others during the library's Christmas party, 2 p.m. Saturday.

In the course of learning to make the puppets, under the direction of librarian Denise Moll, the children chose the scripts and their own parts for the show.

"THEY DECIDED among themselves who gets which puppet," said Ms. Moll.

Once they decided on the roles they'll assume during the play, the young puppeteers went to work designing their characters.

The Three Bears, Hansel and Gretel and the Snow Maiden, will make their appearance on the library's puppet stage under the direction of their young creators.

Each of the participants gets to keep two of the puppets he made for the show. Some of the puppets enjoy dual roles in the proceedings. The children in Hansel and Gretel appear in a crowd scene during the Snow Maiden.

Another backstage secret shared by the puppeteers is that the dialogue their audience will hear was taped a week in advance to facilitate a smooth-running show.

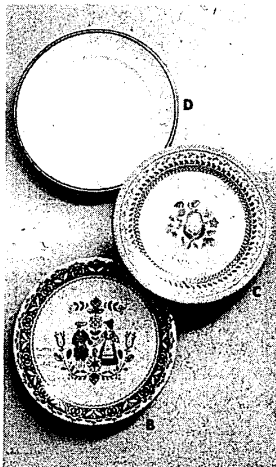
So as the curtain rises on the stage, the cloth and yarn creatures who were stitched together by children will take on a life of their own.



What's a poor snow maiden to do (left)? Young puppeteers at the Farmington Hills Community Library will find a solution for the maid during their Christmas play Saturday. Ron McCoy (top left) is busy putting the finishing touches on his puppet. Christy Rowe (right) cuts another piece of cloth that will take on tentative life during the production. (Staff photos by Harry Mauthe)



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Licensing confronts Hills' businesses

While Farmington Hills officials view a new business licensing regulation as an effective organization tool, the owners of businesses and commercial outlets may see it as one more government hassle and money-making venture—when they hear about it.

Although Hills city council members approved the regulation outlining the fees and procedures for licensing businesses in the city, the business people haven't gotten the word.

"It sounds to me like a duplication of services," said Tom Spatz, owner of Conrad's Market on Orchard Lake Road, who had not heard about the regulation until contacted by the Observer.

As a meat market, Conrad's currently is licensed with Oakland County and also must pass inspection with the state health department.

Kathryn Beene, owner of Topp's Motel on Grand River, had not been informed of the regulation, which will require an initial \$30 application fee and fire code inspection.

"You don't have any choice," she says. "We just got a new tax bill, and that went up."

THE CITY anticipates receiving about \$45,000 in the first year directly from application fees, according to City Mgr. George Majors. But he hopes that money will offset the increased costs of inspections. Since one building code inspector was transferred to the fire inspection department, he doesn't anticipate increased staffing.

But annually inspecting every business in Farmington Hills, with follow-up inspections on those who fail to pass the code, will put an increased load on the department.

"The main thing is to get a list of all the businesses," says Majors. "We'd like a master list from which we can make sure the fire inspectors get to all the right places."

The regulation also will help to keep track of occupancy changes, Majors says. And he believes the city may be able to help the businesses.

"The police department might want to visit to help them with burglary protection to develop a program where we look over the lighting, locks, and security of a business."

"Prevention is a lot less expensive for us."

THE REGULATION also may allow the city to minimize business personal property tax delinquencies, since taxes must be paid prior to the issuance of a license. Whether the city chooses to strictly enforce the regulation—closing a business if it fails to obtain a license—remains to be seen.

The application fees range from \$40 initial \$30 and an annual \$25 for auto dealers; initially \$30, annually \$15, and \$2 for each lane over four for bowling establishments; and annually \$10 plus \$2 per machine for coin-operated devices.

Businesses should receive a letter notifying owners of the fee regulations shortly, according to Michael Dorman, assistant to Majors.

Hudson's the Christmas Store