

# One person's garbage is another's treasure trove

By Mary Rodriguez  
staff writer

Pam Oppeneer gets a lot of second looks when she drives through Farmington.

That's because Miss Oppeneer, 27, earns a living in a field still dominated by men. For the past four years, she has been collecting the city's garbage.

"I'm happy. I get along with everybody," she says, careening through city streets.

The city of Farmington contracts its refuse pickup from the Gus McCreary Trucking Company, where Miss Oppeneer is employed.

Six hours a day, six days a week she collects Farmington's waste and takes it to a dump in Salem Township.

She started the route as a one-woman operation, but her staff has grown to four. She drives a fully automated truck now while three men and a woman follow behind loading garbage.

"Usually, I just work with two guys. But I get more help for the summer,"

she said because of increased seasonal refuse, most of it grass clippings.

"It's pretty routine except for Saturdays when I have to do all the dumpsters in the city."

Miss Oppeneer, who lives in Novi, has found all kinds of treasures on the job.

"You name it, it's there," she said.

"I HAVE A whole collection of cameras that work. The kids give me things, too," she said, pointing to a half dozen tiny stuffed animals hanging from the rear-view mirror.

"This is just the latest batch," she says.

Miss Oppeneer has no qualms about picking up garbage.

"I was looking for a job and this was it," she says matter-of-factly.

"I get along with everyone. I respect them, they respect me."

She meets her crew daily for breakfast at 7 a.m. and starts combing the city at 8:30. Most days, she finishes before 4 p.m.

"I only know of one other woman who does this for a living," she said. "She just runs the business, though. I'm the only woman I know who goes to the dump."

The dump is where she gets the most razzing from other drivers, most of it good-natured.

"I'm well respected there," she said. "If anyone tried to mess with me, I know I'd be protected by the other drivers."

"They watch out for me."

The other female on the crew, Sherry Thompson, also of Novi, was hired just a few weeks ago after being laid off from General Motors.

"I don't like it, but it's a job," Ms. Thompson said.

"The boss is nice and the guys are willing to pick up the heavier things," she says, trotting between stops or hopping a short ride on the back of the truck.

"I hope to go back (to GM)," she said.

"But this is bucks in the pocket and it's better than being on welfare."

## Easy does it

Pam Oppeneer (left) peers into the rear view mirror while operating the controls that compact the trash into the storage compartment of the truck. The pick-up crew (right) hops aboard the truck for a ride to the next stop. From left to right are Dave Chargo, Timothy Vansickle and Sherry Thompson.



Staff photos by Randy Borst

## INSIDE ANGLES

**REAL ESTATE** and You is the subject of a free seminar to be held at 10:30 a.m. Saturday, June 13, at 29630 Orchard Lake Road.

Real Estate One, with more than 35 offices throughout metro Detroit, designed the seminar to answer the questions that most usually are asked about the real estate business and what rewards a career might bring.

To make a reservation, call sales manager Jack Bourdon at 851-1900.

**STRAWBERRIES GALORE** is the name of the William Tyndale College Ladies Auxiliary spring garden party to be held at 1 p.m. June 8 at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Wendell G. Johnston in Bloomfield Hills.

Speaker will be Betty King. For more information, call the college at 553-7200.

**WEDNESDAY NIGHT** is concert night at the high schools with musicians from elementary schools through high school blending their talents on stage.

Paul Barber, coordinator of music students for the district, has put a new twist on end of year concerts.

The traditional high school events will feature elementary students on stage together with high school musicians.

Wednesday, May 27 at 7:30 p.m., North Farmington High students will team up with musicians from Eagle, Forest, Kenbrook and Woodlake schools. Then on June 3, Farmington High students will perform together with youngsters from Alameda, Longacre, Flanders and Gill.

Harrison high began the series last week, performing with musicians from Grace, Larkshire, Middlebelt and Woodacre schools.

The high schools are the sites of the concerts. Admission is free, and refreshments will be served.

**CHANGING CAREERS** or re-entering the job market? A seminar designed for you will be presented by the Westland Women's Employment Center and the YWCA of Western Wayne County.

The seminar will include five sessions including one individual consultation for resume critique, strategy assistance and problem clarification.

Four other sessions will begin on Monday, June 8, from 6:30-8:30 p.m. and continue the following three Monday evenings.

The seminar costs \$15 and will be at the YWCA, 26279 Michigan, Inkster (between John Daly and Beech Daly).

To register or for more information, call Leslie Frederick at 561-4110.

**FREE IMMUNIZATION** against measles, German measles, mumps, polio, diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough will be offered for Farmington and surrounding communities on June 11 from 9 a.m. to noon at the Shiawassee School, 30415 Shiawassee.

A parent or guardian must accompany children under 18 and bring any previous records of immunizations, including any letters or notices received from school.

The next immunization clinic is Aug. 13, same location and time. For more information, call 424-7000.

**RELATIONSHIPS IN SUBSTANCE ABUSE**, a statewide conference sponsored by the Michigan Alcohol & Addiction Association and the Michigan Association of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors, is planned June 5-7 at the Park Place Motor Inn in Traverse City.

Lee Silverstein, a recovering-alcoholic-turned-lecturer and author, will headline the conference. Also presented will be LeClair Bissell, M.D., Edith Gomborg, Ph.D., Owen McKenzie and more.

Workshops will vary from "Increasing Job Enrichment — How to Have Fun on the Job" to a presentation by the Mental Health Players of Kent County.

Workshops will include both lecture and experiential formats to facilitate learning. Ten workshops will be offered.

For more information, call the MAAA in Farmington Hills at 474-1291.

**MARK S. BOSLER**, son of Francis and Joan Bosler of Farmington Hills, graduated recently from the University of Detroit Law School. His sister, Barbara Bosler, recently graduated from New York State University in Buffalo. Both are North Farmington High School graduates.

**KUDOS TO CHRISTINE** Moylan, a senior at Our Lady of Mercy High School, who was chosen to represent Detroit in the National Forensic Competition in New York City May 22-25. She competed in the category of oral interpretation by doing two readings. One was prose, the other poetry.

Miss Moylan won this honor by placing well in previous forensic competitions. She was third out of 24 on the regional level and will be competing with 150 other regional winners in New York.

Welcome the crew from Izod

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