

# Farmington Observer

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RANDY BORST/staff photographer

## Junkyard blaze

Farmington Hills fire officials are investigating the cause of a fire which struck the Grand Haggerty Used Auto Parts facility on Haggerty Road, just north of Grand River on Friday at about 6 p.m. The fire started in a pile of junk cars piled eight deep. Firefighters fought the blaze for several hours both from the department's aerial ladder bucket and from the ground. A combination of the summer heat along with the fire spurred firefighters to douse themselves with water from their own hoses to fight off the effects of the 100-plus temperature around the fire scene.



## Auto thieves greeted with new obstacle

By Tom Baer  
staff writer

Stolen car claims have become a \$54 million problem for the Automobile Club of Michigan's Insurance Group, and the club would like some ACTION taken.

ACTION is just what the AAA has provided in the form of a new project which club officials hope will help solve the growing problem of automobile theft in Michigan.

The main feature of ACTION (Arrest Car Thieves In Our Neighborhoods) is a plan to etch the vehicle identification numbers (VINs) into the glass parts of members' cars.

So identified, the autos may be less desirable to car thieves and the "chop shop" operators who specialize in breaking down expensive autos into salable parts.

Personnel at AAA offices across Michigan, including the one at 53153 15 Mile, Farmington Hills, will begin etching VINs into members' auto glass on Monday. The program will last for an indefinite period.

"Stolen car claims for the Auto Club skyrocketed 50 percent last year over 1981, with our members losing 14,289 vehicles to thieves," said Van A. Webber, manager of the Farmington Hills branch of the AAA, at a recent meeting to explain the project to reporters and police officials.

"In certain areas, we paid out more dollars for comprehensive — fire, theft and vandalism — than we did for collision," Webber said. "That's not the way it's supposed to be."

FARMINGTON HILLS Police Chief John Nichols and Farmington Commander Norman Maddison were among the law enforcement officials at the meeting.

Asked to comment on the ACTION plan, Nichols said, "It might stop the joy riders and the fly-by-nighters, but here in Farmington Hills we see mostly professional car thieves and they'll junk those windows right away."

"Something like 60 or 70 percent of our car thefts are commercial," Nichols continued. "They're looking for



In attempts to combat automobile thieves, the Automobile Club of Michigan is promoting a program to have car owners engrave their vehicle numbers on car windshields.

The 'Vettes and other high-performance cars. They'll have those cars in the chop shops in 20 minutes."

Bull, Nichols and the other police officials, which included Farmington Hills Lt. Norman Kilmer and Milford Chief Ron Averill, agreed that the plan should be tried.

According to Webber, the VINs, usually found on a metal strip on top of the dashboard on the drivers' side, will be etched with an acid cream into the windshield on the lower left side, on the lower left of the rear window and on both side windows.

T-tops, removable glass tops on expensive cars like Corvettes and Pontiac Fierbirds, would also be marked.

Small decals explaining the markings would then be placed on the inside of the front side windows.

WEBBER COULDN'T say how much money the AAA intended to spend on the project, or how many cars he hoped to service.

"I expect to be inundated with cars," he said. "If just one vehicle does not become a theft statistic, then the program will be cost justified."

Tony Welch, branch sales manager of the Farmington Hills AAA, said that additional people would be hired to help in the task if needed.

"We'll hire anybody — high school kids or anyone who can work the hours."

The AAA's ACTION program includes several other features and proposals. They are:

- A requirement that salvage yards provide vehicle identification numbers for any major parts provided.

- A pre-insurance inspection of higher-value vehicles.

- A toll-free number (1-800-222-587) for persons who report car thieves and chop shop operations to police to qualify for up to a \$10,000 reward.

Hours for etching at the Farmington office are noon to 7 p.m. on Monday, noon to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday. The office will be closed on Saturday, but members may have their windows etched there from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

On Aug. 20, a Saturday, non-members may have the etching done.

## Health care costs target of proposals

In an attempt to give health care consumers more control over their bills and to cut hospital spending, state Rep. Sandy Brotherton, R-Farmington, has introduced two legislative bills.

House Bill 3811 would require physicians and hospitals to obtain a patient's signature on a form describing each test and its cost before it is performed.

One reason for increased medical costs, says Brotherton, is that a large segment of the population doesn't have to pay the cost of medical tests performed on them by hospitals and doc-

tors. Because they have no knowledge of what the tests cost, many persons make no attempt to question the need for the tests, he says.

In the other bill, HB 4735, hospital expenditures would be limited to 115 percent of the annual average for the past five years.

"Limiting these expenditures would be a giant step toward effective health care cost containment," says Brotherton.

"As a rule of thumb, each dollar in new capital investment results in about

50 cents in additional operating expenses. This means that the more than \$400 million spent in Michigan in 1980 for capital expenditures potentially meant \$200 million more of increased expenditures for government, third parties and private payers," he says.

Brotherton explained that in 1972, Michigan enacted certificate of need legislation requiring hospitals to prove that a project met certain criteria of need before it was undertaken. But the process has been less effective than it should be, he says, because any project

which can demonstrate any need, even a slight one, can be approved.

"With resources getting more and more scarce, not every project which offers benefits should be approved," he says. "We need to force hospitals to choose projects that have high benefits compared to costs."

Persons in the medical world, he says, need to set new priorities.

"The total value of projects approved needs to stay within a socially determined budget that judges what the state can afford," he says.

Last year, 48 percent of the \$10 billion spent on health care went to hospitals, he claims.

Much of that money was spent on duplication of facilities and services and unnecessarily expensive care. Many experts believe that the level of capital investment in this state is higher than we can afford," he says.

Persons who review hospital project proposals must have, he says, strong incentives to consider all potential projects together and allocate money in methods that will yield the largest benefits.

## C'ville trustee calls it a day

Clarenceville School Board trustee Lee McDowell announced his resignation last week because he was moving out of the district and no longer be eligible to serve.

McDowell, who was elected to a four-year term in 1981, had served two years. He said "personal problems" prompted his resignation but he declined to elaborate.

McDowell's replacement will be filled by appointment until the next school board election takes place on June 11, 1984. The board will interview applicants at its July 28 meeting, said district superintendent David McDowell (not related to Lee McDowell). The board expects to fill

the vacancy before Aug. 3.

The superintendent encouraged interested applicants to apply by contacting administrative assistant Patricia Vickers at 474-5569. The school board offices are located at 20210 Middlebelt in Livonia.

Only registered voters who live in the district which takes in parts of Livonia, Redford Township and Farmington Hills are eligible.

McDowell's resignation came at a time when new officers were elected for 1983-84. Named board president was former vice president Michael T. Manore. Manore replaces Daniel G. Morrison in that slot.

Named vice president was trustee Barry M. Sherman. Secretary Lorene F. Erickson was re-elected and Richard J. Wood replaces McDowell as treasurer. All of the board members are Livonia residents.

The trustees also set meeting dates for the new school year at last week's organizational meeting.

They are: July 14 and 20, Aug. 11 and 25, Sept. 8 and 22, Oct. 13 and 27, Nov. 10, Dec. 8. The 1984 meeting dates are Jan. 13 and 26, Feb. 9 and 23, March 8 and 22, April 13 and 26, May 10 and 24, June 14 and 28.

The meetings begin 7:30 p.m. at the board of education office.



Lee McDowell

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Big family homes, beginning homes, retirement homes, country homes, city homes, townhouses, apartments, condominiums...there's a place that was designed and built just for you.

**CREATIVE LIVING REAL ESTATE SECTION**

And we have it. Every Thursday in our Creative Living Real Estate Section. You're sure to find what you're looking for advertised by qualified Realtors.