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Locals ponder cable law

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

In the wake of proposed federal legislation to regulate cable television, city officials are hoping that local control of the system is maintained.

"Our cities have taken the stand that a piece of legislation is inevitable and that it is good," said Lark Samouelian, executive director of the Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission (SWOCC).

"But it's important for basic control to remain at the local level," Samouelian said, referring particularly to cable TV rates which is a primary negotiating tool in cable TV franchising.

THE NEED to "help streamline the cable industry" prompted the search for legislation, Samouelian said. Franchising processes for cable television vary from area to area throughout the country, she said.

Consequently, the legislation's purpose is to replace piecemeal local regulations with a standard national framework for both communities and cable firms.

But what's been happening, she said, is that when cities or cable commissions encounter a problem in cable service and at-

tempt to force the cable firm to live up to its original agreement, cable officials generally say they can't because of financial reasons.

"They are a developing business," Samouelian said, referring to the cable television industry.

Cable firms at first thought they could count on revenue from services such as banking and security, but they no longer can, she said, simply because the electronics for such services still are unavailable.

"They were looking at what services they could provide frankly without having a realistic financial outlook. It's just slower in developing than is coming to light. They are going through a natural growth process that every business goes through."

In other words, the cable firms overestimated potential profits and underestimated costs.

WHILE CITY officials can sympathize with the cable industry's plight, they nonetheless want to make sure that the contracts they signed with cable officials are honored through the life of the franchise.

That's why the SWOCC, for one, is keeping its eyes on the latest legislation now before the U.S. House.

House Bill 4103, now in committee, is a

cleaned-up version of Senate bill 66. But S66 substantially eroded local ability to regulate cable rates and access channels.

Those two provisions alone caused Farmington and Farmington Hills officials in August to adopt a resolution urging the house to include provisions protecting the cities' interests.

"HR4103 did clean up S66 but not enough," Samouelian said.

City officials are upset over a particular clause in the house bill stating that if a cable firm encounters a "significant change of circumstances, then the subscriber has substantial reason for not providing the original service," she said.

In November, the SWOCC adopted a resolution urging modification of HR 4103 because it conflicts with the fundamental principles of local control over cable television rates, and that the integrity of existing local contracts and franchise provisions and the competitive process in franchise renewal proceedings should be maintained.

In the resolution, the SWOCC also urges the Michigan representatives in Congress "to oppose any national cable legislation which does not confirm the validity of provisions in current local franchises and assure reasonable local authority over cable television rates, franchise renewals and access to channel set asides."



King of hearts

Robert Coffey (right) and Dale Cassidy have little time to play Hearts or hooky since opening the Donut Gallery on Michigan Avenue west of I-275 in Canton. However, they're commemorating St. Valentine's Day with this 25-pound, yeast-raised doughnut made by Coffey.

DILL GREGORY/staff photographer

Solving the reading mystery

By Diane Gale
staff writer

Move over Sherlock Holmes, watch out Magnum PI.

Third and fifth grade students are becoming small-sized private eyes as they bring out their magnifying glasses to uncover the meaning in their reading materials.

"Be a Reading Detective," is one theme in a new reading program designed to increase comprehension.

It was so successful in its pilot testing of third and fifth grade students that the techniques will be taught this semester to other students in those grades.

THE PROGRAM will be implemented in all grades. When that happens depends on the availability of funds, according to Lawrence Freedman, assistant superintendent of instruction.

"Children have benefited in participating

in the program," Freedman said. "Any program that would be a help to students in achievement is very worthy of our efforts."

However, actual percentage increases in reading ability between the experimental and control groups weren't provided in a summary report.

University of Michigan professor Dr. Scott Paris designed and administered the program, Informed Strategies for Learning. It stresses the importance of making students aware of what they are reading by using metaphors they can understand.

"A Bag Full of Tricks for Reading" is one of 20 themes used on bulletin boards and work sheets to teach students to read carefully and absorb the meaning of the material.

The "Tricks" in this lesson teach students to ask themselves questions about the work, to create a mental picture and to look back at the story if they didn't understand the meaning.

Each instructional model was taught during a one-week period extending through fall 1982 and spring 1983.

THE GOALS are discussed and suggestions are given for extending the lessons to other courses, like social studies and science, where reading is important for understanding the class material.

"The program provided direct knowledge to children and we (teachers) learned a great deal about teaching," according to Barb Novits, Forest third grade teacher.

Novits was one of 55 teachers of third and fifth graders in Farmington and Waterford who took part in the program. It was tested at nine Farmington district elementary schools; Eagle, Flanders, Forest, Larkshire, Long Acre, Woodcreek, Wooddale and Gill.

"It also provided teachers with materials and strategies," Novits said.

Pharmacist speaks out on drug abuse by elderly

By Mattie Greene
staff writer

Borrowing another person's medication, taking more than the prescribed dosage and failing to consult their doctor frequently are errors most frequently committed by aging patients, Southfield druggist Jerry Efros said.

"You wouldn't believe it; people will argue with you. Here we want to school, and we are constantly upgrading our knowledge and the seniors (older persons) want to argue with us," Efros said.

Some people have taken the same

prescription for five years without consulting their doctors, he said.

"THEY'RE AFRAID to call him because they think he's too busy, but they'll ask me questions," Efros said.

Efros has been a druggist in Southfield for 25 years and also has stores in West Bloomfield and in Farmington. Older persons account for 35-40 percent of his business. He has appeared on television talk shows and spoken before groups lecturing on the elderly and medication.

Because older people generally take more medicines than younger people,

they run a greater risk of having drug problems, he said.

SOME WILL complain of dizziness or having a dry mouth. After questioning them at length, Efros said, he has learned they are taking medicine prescribed for someone else.

When he asked them why they would take someone else's medication, they say because it worked for the other person. They fail to realize what medications they are taking, said Efros.

A DRUGGIST can be an indispensable

aid to the older person if that person sticks to one druggist, Efros said.

"We'll be able to keep a history of medications taken and advise the senior on over-the-counter drugs."

Those with diabetes have to be especially careful in selecting cold remedies and avoid those with alcohol or sugar in them.

"We either give them something very light or we advise them to take nothing."

SOMETIMES, ESPECIALLY in the case of sleeping pills, some people take the pills too often or take too many without waiting for the medication to take effect, Efros said. Or people taking high blood pressure medication will feel better and stop taking their drugs.

Another characteristic is failure to read labels. Often, the medication will say "Advise the patient to eat and drink something before taking the medication." The customer will complain about ill effects, and Efros questions them to find out if they have been eating when they take the medication.

The list of unwise action in connection with prescription drugs is seemingly endless, Efros said.

THE OAKLAND County Health Division has a booklet, "Manage Your Medicine," designed especially for older people. It focuses on four points: what seniors should know about the medicines they take, how to talk to the doctor, how to use a pharmacist and how to prevent medicinal problems.

A smaller booklet called "Passport to Good Health Care" is available at all Oakland County pharmacies. Presentations on managing medicine can be arranged by calling the Oakland County Health Divisions Education office at 888-0014. Anyone who would like a copy of

"Manage Your Medicine" can receive the booklet by calling the education office and requesting that the booklet be mailed to them.

Democrats plan upcoming events

Those interested in participating in Democratic presidential politics, have two events scheduled to become involved.

At 8 p.m. Wednesday at the Betsford Inn, an organizational meeting will be held for the Farmington Mondale Committee. Anyone interested in working for the Walter Mondale campaign is invited.

For Farmington area voters who are interested in supporting Mondale or some other Democratic hopeful, a

caucus will be held Saturday, March 17, at either one of the Farmington Library system's facilities.

The libraries are at 23350 Liberty in Farmington and 32737 12 Mile in Farmington Hills.

The caucus voting will be from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. All persons declaring themselves as Democrats and registered to vote, will be eligible to participate. Also eligible are 17-year-olds who will be 18 years old by Nov. 6.

For further information, call Mike Breshgold at 477-8885.

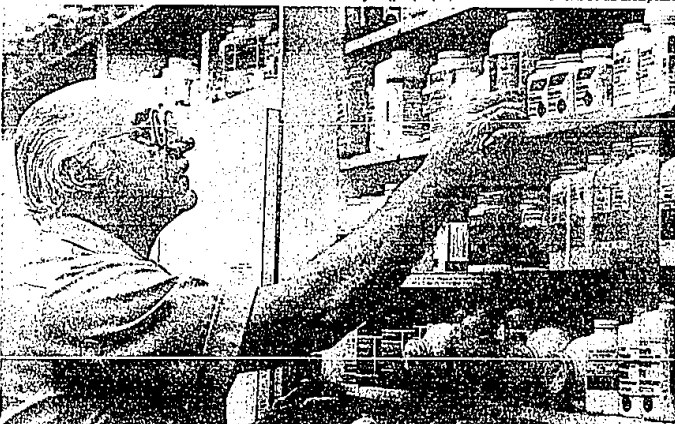
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MINDY BAUNDERS/staff photographer

Jerry Efros checks one of the items on the shelf of his Farmington drugstore. In addition to dispensing prescription drugs, Efros is a frequent TV guest and speaker at health-related forums.