



Farmington Observer

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Pressure mounts to halt drunken grad parties

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Despite pressure from a local parents group, Farmington Hills officials delayed action Monday on an ordinance which would prohibit parents from serving liquor to minors in their homes.

Mayor Jan Dolan, a member of the Farmington Family in Action (FFA) advisory board, brought the suggested ordinance to council's attention Monday. But attempts to introduce the ordinance for adoption failed in a split 3-3 vote.

The FFA hoped to see the ordinance passed before high school graduation season and have been lobbying council for passage of the ordinance.

Councilmembers Joan Dudley, Jodi Sorenson and Charles Williams opposed introduction.

Dolan and councilmembers Joe Alkatech and Ben Marks favored the proposed introduction.

Councilman Donn Wolf was absent. Despite the split vote, council agreed in a later 5-1 vote to discuss the suggested ordinance May 13.

Flatly opposed to the ordinance,

Dudley voted against further discussion.

"I don't like this ordinance. It's not that I don't agree with the principle," Dudley said. "But I don't think it is the place of the city to make it a crime. I just don't think it's a place for government to get involved."

"I don't think this is the solution and I resent it," she continued. "I resent it as a parent. I resent it as a citizen. And I will vote against it."

Sorenson had similar comments.

"I don't know if this is going to solve the problem," she said. "I'm certainly

not willing to take action on this tonight."

"It's an ordinance which I think goes far more into personal family life than we have in the past. I think it's a big step for us to take and I'm not ready to take it."

"I arrived here tonight and this is in front of my place," said Councilman Charles Williams, pointing to the lack of opportunity for public discussion on the suggested ordinance.

FFA's advisory board last week agreed to ask council members to consider adopting the ordinance that is based on similar ordinances used in Naples, Fla., and Phoenix, Ariz.

"It is illegal for these young people to be drinking and we think parents should be held responsible," Betty Nickolay, FFA president, told council.

In an interview prior to the council meeting, Nickolay indicated that in addition to requesting adoption of the ordinance in Farmington Hills, FFA would approach Oakland County officials with the same request.

"I see no reason why Farmington couldn't follow the same," she added.

STATE LAW MAKES it illegal to serve liquor to anyone under the age of 21, said Officer Paul Cavan of the Farmington Hills Police Department's juvenile division. Cavan is also an FFA advisory board member.

The laws, however, are not specific enough to always allow police to take action when liquor is being served to minors at a party on private property, Cavan said. Local ordinances also don't cover the parental aspect of serving liquor to minors, he added.

Helping workers to cope

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) sound like a product of the 1980s. But the help programs have been around under a different name since the 1940s.

Originally, EAPs began as programs fostered by internationally known companies such as Eastman Kodak trying to combat "alcoholism in the workplace," said Deborah Comstock, an EAP consultant.

Eventually more research was conducted showing alcoholism was only one of many problems that employees carried with them through the work day, she said.

With research and a growing understanding that employees while working are affected by their personal problems, companies are increasingly seeking some type of "support system" for helping the troubled employee, Comstock said.

As an employee's personal troubles are borne out in the declining job performance, absenteeism, tardiness, job-related accidents and increased medical benefits, companies are "beginning to see that EAPs do help," she said.

Instituting an EAP, however, is not an easy one-step process.

Before an EAP can be installed, company officials must determine what job performance standards are



Employers increasingly are concerned about stress in the workplace because stress reduces workers' production and efficiency. Some businesses are seeking out counseling groups to aid those with stressful problems.

MARVIN TEEPLES/illustrator

Business seeks pro counseling for employees

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Marital difficulties, money problems, anxiety and emotional strain, alcohol and drug use and legal problems are a part of life employees have a hard time leaving at home.

The age-old professional rule may be "don't bring your personal problems to work," but the truth is it's nearly impossible.

"All problems affect an employee in the same way," said Deborah Comstock, a consultant for Employee Assistance Programs (EAP). "In other words, personal problems affect a person's ability to do their work."

Each year, employee problems resulting in lost productivity, accidents, absenteeism and medical bills cost American companies more than \$40 billion, said Betty Arnold, Farmington Area Advisory Council (FAAC) administrative director.

It used to be that employers would fire the employee who couldn't keep up with the work load, suffered from absenteeism or was consistently tardy — regardless of the personal problem that might be causing the decline in work performance.

It's not that employers and fellow employees didn't notice something was wrong with the person. Most likely the employee didn't know what to do or how to pinpoint the problem.

Fellow employees are affected by their friends' problems but generally are sworn to secrecy and faced with covering up the problem.

"When an employee's job performance starts declining it sends up a red flag," said Comstock, who is working with the FAAC, a community family and youth services organization.

OVER THE YEARS, however, the corporate world has learned that it gets pretty expensive to fire the employee whose job performance has declined for one reason or another. The expense comes in increased insurance costs, discipline problems, accidents and retraining new employees to replace the old.

But many of those same companies, particularly those in the Fortune 500 category have latched on to an answer — EAPs.

An EAP is a "support system" generally located within the larger companies, which offers confidential help to troubled employees.

The help offered, generally on a referral basis, covers alcohol and drug treatment, legal help, counseling for troubled marriages and families, psychological help for emotional problems and medical care for health problems, Comstock said.

"If people are producing at the level they are supposed to be, they are going to come out with a better product," Arnold said, offering a reason why companies are moving toward EAPs.

After working together for some time, most employers and employees begin to care about each other. Humanism, however, is not an overriding concern for installing EAPs in the corporate world, Comstock said.

Parents, students fight to keep choral director

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Parents of many North Farmington High School vocal music students want Joan MacKenzie to stay.

But the vocal music teacher who's the moving force behind Northern Lights, the well-known select choral group, is being transferred out of North Farmington High.

And parents are unhappy.

"I personally think it's going to devastate the vocal music program at North Farmington," parent David Dauterman told Farmington school trustees Tuesday.

Six parents, as well as both a former and current student of MacKenzie's, asked school trustees Tuesday to keep the teacher — one of five in the district scheduled to be transferred to different schools in the fall — at North Farmington because of her work with the school's vocal music program.

"I feel, as do all students, our success

is attributed to Joan MacKenzie," said student Chris Rau, choir president. MacKenzie was not present at the board meeting.

While acknowledging MacKenzie's success with the vocal music program at North, district administrators told parents their hands are tied as far as the five scheduled teacher transfers are concerned.

Declining enrollment, particularly at

the high schools, and the subsequent expected class changes are the culprits for the teacher transfers, said Superintendent Lewis Schulman. Changes in teaching assignments must be made so programs at the three high schools can be maintained, he added.

"Not everything is within our choice," Schulman said. "It has nothing to do with the quality of the person. The choice of her being in one spot is no longer our complete choice."

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATORS expect a drop of 254 students in the three high schools, said Lynn Nutter, assistant superintendent. In maintaining a student teacher ratio of 24-1, he said, administrators try to determine how best to use teachers and their qualifications.

Farmington Education Association (FEA) officials acknowledged that the involuntary transfers are within contract provisions.

"It is not only administrators," said Marion Spencer, speaking for the FEA, adding the transfers had been discussed with the teachers' association.

"No one likes this moving around," Spencer said, adding that transfers

oral quarrel

How do you feel about serving booze to kids?

With high school prom and graduation season drawing near, Farmington Families in Action (FFA) members are hoping to get an ordinance passed in the area prohibiting parents from serving minors liquor.

Under the suggested ordinance, parents could be fined \$500 for serving liquor to anyone under 21. Serving liquor during religious ceremonies and activities would be exempted under the ordinance.

Today's Oral Quarrel question is: How do you feel about a city prohibiting you from serving your youngsters liquor? How would you prevent parents from serving their children liquor at parties?

To answer this question, call 477-5498. You have until 1 p.m. on Friday to answer. Look in Monday's Observer to see how your neighbors feel about this issue.

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Reminder...

Your Observer carrier will be stopping by this week to collect for the month. Please have the money ready and be sure to get your receipt.

It's worth a \$2.00 discount on the next classified advertisement you place in your hometown newspaper.

Police seeking bank robber

By Julie Brown
staff writer

An unarmed robber Monday made off with about \$2,500 from the Comerica Bank at 31500 12 Mile in Farmington Hills.

According to police, at about 3:45 p.m. a robber approached a teller's window and gave the teller a small brown paper bag, telling her to fill it with money. The teller did so, and also activated the bank's alarm system.

The robber left through the bank's southeast doors and fled on foot, Farmington Hills Police Chief William Dwyer said.

The Comerica Bank was also the site for an earlier unarmed robbery, which occurred on April 25.

"Basically, it's the same MO (modus operandi)," the police chief said.

"We canvassed the area and are actively involving the community," Flyers on the robbery, with a picture of the robber, have been distributed to banks and other local businesses.

The robber is described as a white male with brown shoulder-length hair, a brown mustache and a full beard. He wore sunglasses, a white T-shirt under a brown flannel shirt, blue jeans, and a brown hat with a brim.

He is described as being between the ages of 25 and 32, approximately 6 feet tall and weighing approximately 180 pounds.

Those with information on the unarmed robbery are being asked to contact the police department's Detective Jerry McKenzie (474-6181).