

the farmington enterprise & observer

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First In A Series

Mask Of Poverty Is Well Hidden Here

(Following is first in a series of articles concerning one-square mile in Farmington Township which is beriddled with substandard housing, deplorable drainage conditions breeding health hazards, and low-income families in need of help.

We are indebted to Wylie Gerdes, former reporter and now Garden City Observer editor, who initiated the research used as the background for this series.

The Oakland County Office of Economic Opportunity and the U.S. Census Bureau "provided great assistance."

The series will continue in the weekend edition of the Farmington Enterprise & Observer with an interview conducted by Lynne Luther with mothers living and raising children within the one-square mile boundaries.

By LYNNE LUTHER
& WYLIE GERDES

The face of poverty in Farmington is masked, hidden behind the facade of the 36th richest county in the richest nation in the world.

It is hidden behind \$30,000 homes and two-car garages.

But most of all, it's hidden behind ignorance and apathy.

IN A SMALL survey of residents here, only a minority knew or had even heard of Farmington Township's poverty pocket.

Residents traversing Grand River pass close to Farmington's depressed area every day but for lack of time, necessity or interest, never seem to see it.

The pocket is conveniently hidden from the more prosperous Farmingtonites because there are no through streets going through the area. It is isolated in a corner, and any motorist driving through has done so on purpose.

The poverty pocket is located in Section 36 of Farmington Township, a square-mile of run-down houses peppered sparingly with new ones.

This is "home" to two well-defined echelons, according to residents and U.S. Census figures: white, low-income families of southern background with several children per family; and senior citizens 65 years and older with little income.

South of Shiawassee to Eight Mile and east of Orchard Lake Rd. lies an area known to township officials as Sec. 36 and to the Census Bureau as tract OAE.

CENSUS FIGURES show that 296 out of 2,336 families there have annual incomes of less than \$3,000.

Average incomes for families in the northeast section of Farmington Township is \$9,800 with nearly one-third of the residents there earning yearly incomes of \$10,000.

About 40% of Oakland County's 55,000 residents 65 and older live in the \$3,000 income bracket. More than 200 of these senior citizens live in Farmington's depressed area of one-square mile.

A QUICK LOOK at census figures and information from the Oakland County Commission on Economic Opportunity (OEO) shows the following picture in Section 36:

- Housing — 31 out of 2,830 units lack hot water. 383 are classified as "deteriorating" and 113 as "dilapidated," and several have no inside toilets.

- ADC — 44 out of 2,309 families in Oakland County receiving Aid to Dependent Children payments reside in Farmington.

- Old Age — About 1,500 senior citizens receive old age assistance in Farmington; about 30% have incomes below the poverty level; 75% have only social security

income; and only half have enough money left over after housing costs are paid.

- Income — 68 families in Farmington's depressed area earn under \$1,000 a year; 100

earn under \$2,000 annually; 105 under \$3,000; 140 under \$4,000; and 280 under \$5,000.

- Education — median education level attained of persons over 25 years old is 10.4 years.



UNOCCUPIED SHAMBLES — This barren wreckage is all that's left of a small wooden house that decayed from lack of care. (Evert photo)



A NORTHERN VERSION of Appalachia is what some folks might label houses like this one in Farmington Township. (Evert photo)

9 Girls Are Brownies

Nine members of Brownie Troop 127 of Forest Elementary School were invested into the family of Girl Scouts in a ceremony at the school Nov. 4.

The girls, all second and third graders, received their Brownie pins which officially made them Brownie Girl Scouts and entitled them to wear uniforms for the first time.

Nine girls, also from Troop 127, received their one-year stars at the same ceremony. They earned a star for each year of membership in the Girl Scouts.

New members are Marie Alati, Mary Archdale, Pat Fantazian, Laura Kulinski, Maria Nicita, Anne Sheehy, Anne Marie Worthington, Sarah Wyman and Cheryl Duckworth.

One-year members are Debbie Bissop, Erika Fox, Pam Leonetti, Carol Newman, Shelly Ross, Martha Stamy, Linda Stinson, Karen Washington and Sharon Ziegeleman.

Pioneers

Pioneering will be the order of the day when Cub Scout Pack 231 holds its next meeting Nov. 20 at 7:30 p.m. at Larkshire school. It will be in keeping with the Thanksgiving theme.



"POVERTY IS HERE, not only in downtown Detroit," say OEO caseworkers who see run down homes like this one cluttered with old car hoods, tires and spare parts in everyday dealings with Farmington's poor. (Evert photo)



ANTIQUES OR JUNK? Mattresses, couch frames, pails, bellows, old pieces of fence — you name it — all litter the front yards of some of the houses in poorer sections of Farmington Township. (Evert photo)

Fran Evert Photos

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