

Suburban Life

Lorraine McClish editor/477-5450



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Melanie Churella, 1987's Miss Michigan, visits Misty Marie Parks in Detroit Children's Hospital, one of about 500 bedridden youngsters she chatted with this spring before she turns over her crown. The Farmington Hills resident will be in Muskegon in June for the Miss Michigan Pageant and back home in July for the Miss Farmington Pageant which traditionally opens Founders Festival.

Miss Farmington

Contenders called for pageant

Applications for young area women to be part of the Miss Farmington Scholarship Pageant can be picked up in Farmington-Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce, 33201 Grand River.

Deadline for applications to be filed is Sunday, May 15. From that time until pageant night, July 13, the contenders will have a host of experts to help them put their best foot forward in the quest for the title of "Miss Farmington 1988."

"This is not a local beauty pageant," said Sarah D'Ascenzo, executive director of the pageant. "We are an official franchise of the prestigious Miss America Pageant, the largest scholarship foundation in the world."

And, in the 15 years Farmington-Farmington Hills has maintained a franchise, we've had an unusual number of winners who have won a lot of scholarship money and have had a lot of doors open for them."

Within those 15 years three Miss Farmington title holders took the title of Miss Michigan.

Holly Ann Schmidt was Miss Michigan in 1977.

Kelly Ann Garver was Miss Michigan in 1986, and was third runner-up to Miss America.

Melanie Churella took the first runner-up spot to Miss Michigan in 1987. Then, when Miss Michigan, Kaye Lani Rae Rakko from Monroe, won the title of Miss America, Churella took the state title to fulfill Miss Michigan's duties for the balance of the year.

Throughout the 15 years, numerous Miss Farmingtons won runner-up spots or best talent awards, which means winning scholarship money, in competition in the state pageant.

CHURELLA and Dulane Whinnery, Miss Farmington 1987, will both be in Muskegon June 15-18 for the Miss Michigan Scholarship Pageant. Churella will be turning her crown over to the new title holder, Whinnery will be vying for that title.

Churella is now news director for Channel 20-WXON, and between news breaks, continues her duties as Miss Michigan with a heavy calendar of appearances.

This past month, she initiated a couple of appearances on her own.

"I've always enjoyed visiting hospitals as Miss Michigan and the children, especially, seemed to enjoy meeting Miss Michigan," Churella said. "Because I have so little time left before the June pageant I wanted to do it one more time."

Her "one more time" turned into two more times with a little help from Channel 20's general manager Doug Johnson.

Churella visited youngsters in both Detroit Children's Hospital and Children's Hospital in Ann Arbor, armed with 500 T-shirts to give as gifts.

"They were gifts from the station, Mickey Mouse on the front, our call letters on the back. The kids loved them," Churella said.

WHINNERY graduated from University of Michigan late last month and will enter Detroit College of Law in the fall.

Right now she's getting ready for her appearance in the Miss Michigan Pageant, and will be in Vladimir's Restaurant on the night of the Miss Farmington Scholarship Pageant to crown Miss Farmington 1988.

The contenders are judged by Miss America-certified judges on talent, personal interviews, bathing suit and evening gown appearances.

The Miss Farmington Scholarship Pageant is an exact replica of the Miss Michigan and Miss America scholarship pageants.

The local pageant is solely dependent on donations of goods and services from local merchants, and is operated by a volunteer committee.

Cash prizes and merchandise are awarded to the winner and runners-up. Minimal awards are given to the remaining contestants for their participation.

And the pageant committee has never failed to produce a sparkling evening for the contestants as well as their audience.

Home Town U.S.A.

AARP convenes in Detroit

By Lorraine McClish
staff writer

PRE-REGISTRATION has already passed the 20,000 mark for the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) convention May 10-12 in Cobo Hall. All of the special events have been sold out.

"Not surprising when you can hear Tony Bennett or Sarah Vaughan or the Hill Brothers for \$5," said Robert Potter, who is the state's coordinator for AARP's Tax Aide program. "What other convention have you ever heard of that will bring so many nationally known experts and celebrities to talk on so many subjects for free? The exhibit hall alone is going to be a show in itself with displays coming from about 200 commercial and non-profit organizations."

Theme for the convention is "Home Town U.S.A." Potter has been cited as one of the experts among AARP's 40-some programs, and will set up shop in the "court house" in the Home Town Square, telling visitors about the Tax Aide program, recruiting more Tax Aide counselors, and hopefully initiating more Tax Aide sites throughout the country.

The Bloomfield Hills resident will be working alongside his counterpart-experts in the many buildings that make up the Home Town Square, "in everything from home visiting through all of our health advocacy programs, all of our legal and lobbying programs, the programs for workers' equity, for the widowed, citizen representation,

"Taxes affect everyone and there is a universal need to help everybody get through the red tape."

— Robert Potter
Michigan coordinator
for AARP Tax Aide



every project we have going," he said.

POTTER JOINED AARP because he said he liked the motto, "To Serve — Not To Be Served."

He decided to serve in the Tax Aide program "because everybody pays taxes. Taxes affect everyone," he said. "There is a universal need to help everybody get through the red tape. It is not a part-time job. I've done a lot of traveling through the district (of Michigan), and I train at least 50 new counselors every year."

Potter got his training from Ivar Nylen, who started the Tax Aide program in Farmington and Farmington Hills. He established all of the programs that are now on-going in Birmingham, Troy and Southfield and continues to recruit and develop

more groups in his travels throughout the state.

He called it "interesting" that he has never paid rent for any site he has ever used for either the training of the new counselors or giving of the service.

"The people I've approached have not only given me the hall as a donation, but will generally throw in something extra. The entire program has been very well received," he said.

Bob Wightman, who wound up his January-to-mid April Tax Aide books in the Farmington-Farmington Hills area, verifies that statement with his report that lists 600 seniors and handicapped aided this spring with their tax returns.

Please turn to Page 2



RANDY BOST/Staff photographer

Dulane Whinnery, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Dwain Whinnery of Farmington Hills, captured the title of Miss Farmington 1987 almost a year ago. The University of Michigan graduate will be in Muskegon vying for the title of Miss Michigan in June, then in Vladimir's Restaurant for pageant night in July when she'll turn over her crown and title to Miss Farmington 1988.

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