

Hills zeroing in on handicapped parking problem

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Better watch where you park. Beginning this summer, eagle-eyed volunteers will issue violations if you illegally park in handicap-designated spaces in Farmington Hills. The 10-12 volunteers, who the Farmington Hills Police Department is now recruiting, will be allowed to issue handicap parking violations under a 1989 tougher state law.

"They will have no powers of arrest. They will write no other types of tickets," said Lt. Richard Murphy. The new law and the Farmington Hills program are the result of increased complaints about the abuse of handicap parking spaces.

In 1989, 725 parking violations were issued in Farmington Hills, excluding Oakland Community College-Orchard Ridge Campus, and the majority was for violating handicap parking laws, said Sgt. Ray Cranston, Farmington Hills Police Department Traffic Section supervisor.

STATE LAW allows violators to be fined a maximum \$100 for passenger cars and \$250 for commercial vehicles. The law also allows immediate tow-away.

Until a new city ordinance is drafted in the next few months, which will incorporate the new restrictions and fines, Farmington Hills violators will fall under existing ordinance and pay a \$50 fine with no tow-away.

A second ordinance is expected to address signs used to designate handicap parking spaces. The new state sign is white with a green border and bears the handicap parking logo. One sign per handicap space is required. But the new city ordinance is expected to consider existing signs based on state standards at the time of building construction.

"The first month of the program will be an educational process. All we want them to do is issue warnings," Murphy said, adding that the goal is voluntary compliance to the new restrictions.

The new restrictions and volunteer program will be explained through the news media and with brochures for residents and merchants. "The goal is not to go out and look for another form of revenue. The goal is to reduce the number of tickets issued," Murphy said.

VOLUNTEERS WILL receive eight hours of classroom instruction on topics such as professionalism

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and ethics, the role of the program volunteer, courtroom testifying and how to prepare citations. They also will receive in-the-field training.

The department will furnish uniforms, equipment, ticket books and a car for each pair of volunteers. The cars will bear signs stating, "Handicap Parking Enforcement."

Volunteers must inspect cars parked in handicap spaces for a handicap permit on the dashboard, a handicap license plate, an out-of-state handicap permit or license plate, a disabled American veteran plate with handicap decal, or special equipment, such as hand controls or wheelchair lift.

If none of the items is displayed, volunteers will issue violations, which they do only while on duty. If any problems occur, they must call a police officer for help. Volunteers also will inspect signs designating handicap spaces.

NEW HANDICAP permits are being phased-in until 1992. They are color-coded to distinguish permanent and temporary disabilities.

The police department is now accepting applications for 10-12 volunteers, 18 years and older, who can give perhaps four hours a week to the program, Murphy said. Applicants will undergo a criminal history background check.

Applications are available at the department, 31655 11 Mile, just west of the Farmington Hills City Hall, on the southwest corner of 11 Mile and Orchard Lake Road.



A big tale

Consultant Ruth Nathan shows fourth graders and teachers at Beechview Elementary in Farmington Hills the fundamentals of writing fairy tales by using Jack and the Beanstalk as an example. Each tale has a hero, a focus, a villain and helpers, she said, as she prepared them to write their own stories. Nathan, an adjunct professor at Oakland University, has worked throughout the year with Farmington elementary teachers, giving new ideas for teaching writing skills. "The idea is to teach writing the way real writers write," language arts coordinator John Barrett said.

RANDY BORST/staff photographer

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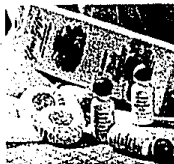
Top: Isotoner® satin boudoir slipper, has faux pearl bow trim and a suede sole, yet it's machine washable. White or pink in M, L and XL. \$24.

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RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Bagging it

Five percent of all sales at the Great Scott! at Orchard Lake Road and 13 Mile in Farmington Hills on May 2 went to North Farmington High to support academic, club, drama, music and sports programs. Students and staff provided free grocery carryout during the daylong fund-raiser. Above, Ken Dean, assistant principal, bags groceries. The North Booster Club sponsored the event.

Men: If you're about to turn 18, it's time to register with Selective Service at any U.S. Post Office.



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