



Sister Ann Fleming (left), of the Farmington Hills-based Sisters of Mercy order, project leader Woody Boydell and architect Shirley Smith, a 1971 Mercy High School graduate, look out windows of the 7-apartment building in Detroit they are helping to renovate.

## The rehab spirit

City dwellers, suburbanites roll up their sleeves

By Casey Hens  
staff writer

**T**HE REHABILITATION of an old Detroit apartment building has rejuvenated the spirit of city dwellers and suburbanites alike who have worked on the project since late last year.

Many people, including a 38-year-old Rochester woman searching for a new career, a Mercy nun with an urban calling who lives in the city, and an architect who graduated from Mercy High School and designed the rehab project have played important roles in reviving the 74-year-old



This is the 1917 brick building on West Grand Boulevard in Detroit that is being renovated for homeless families.

structure on West Grand Boulevard.

The 3-story brick building is being renovated by a group called Core City Neighborhoods and will be used as a shelter and training ground for families as part of the Coalition on Temporary Shelter, or COTS, program.

"This project has done wonders for me," said Theresa Cusumano, the Rochester resident who said the project has been her therapy since losing her paralegal job. "Because I'm unemployed, it's great therapy for me."

"It reminded me of who I am. It's given me a lot of joy."

Cusumano became aware of the project through the St. John Fisher Chapel, a Catholic parish on the Oakland University campus founded to serve the university community.

ARCHITECT SHIRLEY Smith, a 1971 graduate of Mercy High School in Farmington Hills, took a professional interest in the project, but soon developed a personal interest as well. She has spent many hours working in the building with her sleeves rolled up.

"We have a very, very strong interest in housing, especially housing for the poor. There's a real problem out there," said Smith, an architect with the Royal Oak-based Garnet H. Cousins & Associates Architects.

"We did our job and have stayed involved. There is not a lot of this going on in Detroit. This is really breaking ground for

more, we hope. This is starting within the community."

The 1917 building on West Grand Boulevard had been abandoned for 12 years when Core City tackled the project. Volunteers took hammers and sledgehammers to the building in November 1990, and began the renovations in March.

Core City was started as a sort of block club 5-6 ago by members of the near west side Detroit community, including two sisters from the Farmington Hills-based Sisters of Mercy Order. The group continues to encourage the upkeep of neighborhoods. They have renovated vacant lots, single family houses and a few small apartment complexes, but the West Grand Boulevard building is the first major apartment renovation for the group.

WOODY BOYDELL is the Core City project manager and social worker who Smith calls "the glue that holds this all together." Boydell said he became involved because his skills as a social worker could not fully help people. "I wasn't able to provide some basic needs," he explained. "If someone doesn't have a place to live, it's hard to work on self-esteem issues."

The project has also helped the self-esteem of the neighborhood.

Individuals or groups interested in volunteering for a project can call the Core City Neighborhoods office at 894-8431.



Photo by SHARON LAM/EOU/staff photographer

Project director Woody Boydell works with Rochester resident and project volunteer Theresa Cusumano in the West Grand Boulevard apartment building. Volunteers from throughout the Metro area are spending Saturdays getting the building ready for occupancy by seven families.

## police/fire calls

Listed below are some of the Farmington-area police incidents, fire calls and court cases reported during the past week:

### • AUTO THEFTS

Four thefts from vehicles parked in the city of Farmington over the weekend netted thieves more than \$2000. Two incidents occurred in the Bel Air area and two others on Smithfield in the Chatham Hills subdivision.

• golf clubs and a radio valued at \$600 were reported stolen from a car parked on Leelanau June 27.

• a purse and its contents and jewelry valued at \$925 were reported stolen from a car parked in the Orchard-10 Center.

• CDs, a wallet, cash and a radar detector valued at \$498 and a tape player valued at \$200 were reported stolen from two different vehicles parked on Smithfield.

### • SUSPICIOUS FIRE

The cause of a fire at an abandoned building on 12 Mile, west of Drake, just after 2 a.m. Friday is considered suspicious, according to a Farmington Hills fire report.

Firefighters were called to the scene on a report of smoke in the area. They found a fire in the building next to a dentist office at 37325 12 Mile. Firefighters found multiple points of origin for the fire in the building. No significant damage was caused.

### • CAR FIRE

Damage was estimated at \$1,000 after fire broke out under the hood of a car driven by a Royal Oak man on northbound I-275, south of 9 Mile, according to a Farmington Hills fire report.

The man told firefighters he was returning from Battle Creek when the car just stopped. He pulled off the road, opened the hood and found fire in the engine compartment. Firefighters extinguished the fire.

### • TICKETS ISSUED

Three of four Novi teens found in the Oakwood Cemetery on Grand River after hours were ticketed for

trespassing, June 28. The two 19-year-olds, one 17-year-old and one 15-year-old who entered the cemetery at about 1:45 a.m., told police they were "looking for the area where the car would roll uphill."

The four were caught when someone reported hearing screaming coming from the cemetery area.

### • HUB CAP THEFTS

At least nine cars lost their hub caps and wheel covers to thieves June 27-29 at the Green Hills Apartments complex, south of Nine Mile, between Gill and Halsted, according to Farmington Hills police reports.

Value of the hub caps ranged from \$100 to \$1,000.

### • GREASE FIRE

Heat from gas-fueled kitchen equipment ignited grease on a kitchen range unit at McDonald's restaurant, 38425 10 Mile, early Saturday morning, according to a Farmington Hills fire report.

When firefighters arrived they found the restaurant's sprinkling system has extinguished the small grease fire but a fire was still burning behind the unit.

Damage was estimated at \$1,000.

### • BARBEQUE FIRE

Firefighters found that the fitting entering a barbecue had failed, causing the barbecue to catch fire. When firefighters arrived at the house on Bella Vista Friday, they turned off the gas and extinguished the fire with a garden hose. Damage was estimated at \$300, according to a Farmington Hills fire report.

### • THEFTS REPORTED

A gold necklace valued at \$750 was reported stolen from a glove compartment of a car parked at Arbor Drugs, 23391 Farmington Road June 15.

A AM/FM cassette radio valued \$200 was reported stolen from a 1985 Oldsmobile at the Robert Bosch Corp., 38000 Hills Tech Drive, June 28.

An AM/FM cassette radio valued at \$600 was reported stolen from a

1991 GMC Jimmy on Research Drive, June 28.

A portable telephone valued at \$500 was reported stolen from a 1990 Mitsubishi on Sky Drive, June 21-28.

An AM/FM cassette player valued at \$300 was reported stolen from a 1991 Pontiac at Medar Inc., 38700 Grand River, June 28.

A ring valued at \$6,000 was reported stolen from a unit at the Diamond Forest Apartments, 23160 Halsted, June 28.

Three fuses valued at \$300 were reported stolen from the deck of a house on Marvin, June 28-29.

An outboard motor valued at \$1,150 was reported stolen from a house on Brittany, June 28-29.

Cassette tapes and a water tester kit valued at \$500 were reported stolen from a 1986 Pontiac from a unit in the Village Green Apartments on Haggerty, June 29.

A lawn mower valued at \$400 was reported stolen from a house on Hensseler, June 27-28.

Tools valued at \$200 were reported stolen from a garage on Pond Ridge, June 18-28.

A 10-speed bicycle valued at \$300 was reported stolen from a house on Freedom Road, June 27-28.

A purse and wallet and contents valued at \$300 were reported stolen from a 1987 Acura parked at the Village Green Apartments on Haggerty, June 29-30.

A VCR, camera, radar detector, flashlight and briefcase valued at \$1,214 were reported stolen from a house on Chapelweigh, June 30.

### • DAMAGE REPORTED

A car parked at Shes Tower, 23332 Farmington Road, was damaged June 25, when the driver's window was broken out. Damage was estimated at \$90.

The rear window of a house on Hensseler in Farmington was broken out June 26-27, causing some \$75 in damage.

Damage was estimated at \$200 when the paint on a car parked at Pauline's Unisex, 24119 Orchard Lake, Farmington, was scratched.

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