

He has strong vision  
and strong sound, 8A



Wrestling  
stars, 1C

Pros teach kids how  
to engineer cars, 3A



# Farmington Observer

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**CALLING ALL** high school artists: The Farmington Area Arts Commission's competition is coming up, in fact, the deadline for entering is today, March 23.

Public and private high school students in the Farmington area are invited to submit works of art, original in concept and production — for consideration by the jurist between 5-7 p.m. Wednesday, March 25, at East Middle School, Middlebelt Road between 10 and 11 Mile roads.

Two-dimensional work should be mounted and matted, if appropriate. Both two- and three-dimensional work should have a completed label attached, on the back if possible.

Entry blanks, available in the high schools or at the Farmington Hills City Hall, should be completed and dropped off at the City Hall, 11 Mile and Orchard Lake Road, by today, March 23.

Presentation of the awards will be at the Farmington Community Center 3-5 p.m. Sunday, April 26. Winners, their parents, teachers and principals are invited to attend.

The Arts Commission will award \$300, \$200 and \$100 prizes, as well as \$50 honors awards. Call 471-2675 for more information.

**STRIKE UP** the band . . . the Farmington Community Band, that is.

The band will present its fifth performance of the season at 3 p.m. Sunday, March 29, in the auditorium of Farmington Harrison High School on 12 Mile Road between Middlebelt and Orchard Lake roads.

Featured performers will include Kristin Hall, oboe; Dan Lendall, trombone; Fern Barber, clarinet; Michael Scott, euphonium; Dale Bjorklund, bassoon; and Karen Routson, flute.

Soloists will be featured along with a variety of musical numbers by the full band. Tickets at \$3 for adults, \$2 for students, \$8 for family may be purchased at the door. Senior citizens enter free.

For more information, call 476-5014 or 489-3412.

**SPEAKING OF** music and Harrison High, members of the school's symphony band and orchestra will be washing cars in the school parking lot 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, April 4, to raise money for a festival performance and clinic in Toronto. The students will seek pledges of a penny a car. A spokesman said they hope to scrub and shine more than 1,000 cars.

**MEMORY LANE** — From the March 27, 1992 Farmington Enterprise:

• About 65 candidates turned out for the first practice of the Farmington High School baseball team, coach Bill Nuss said. The Falcons were getting ready for a 12-game season with the home opener set for April 18 against Clarensville.

• Approximately \$1,200 had been collected in the annual Red Cross blood drive in the Farmington area, according to Charles Stuart, chairman. A Red Cross bake sale was planned for Zehnder's market in the former post office building.



SHARON LEMIEUX/staff photographer

Cheryl Oliverio, who lives near Muirwood, shows her opposition to the expansion to the shopping center at Thursday night's Farmington Hills Planning Commission meeting at City Hall.

## Muirwood zone change OK'd by Hills planners

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

A larger, renovated Muirwood Square with an anchor store, possibly a supermarket, is closer to reality on the border of Farmington-Farmington Hills.

In a 6-2 vote Thursday night, the Farmington Hills Planning Commission recommended approval of a rezoning request that would allow the center to expand on vacant land west of the center that is currently zoned multiple family.

The Farmington Hills City Council will consider the recommendation in April.

Despite plans from downtown Farmington officials, planning commissioners expressed the need to maintain the center's economic life at Grand River and Drake roads with an expansion. This is the third time planning commissioners have considered a rezoning request for Muirwood Square from Bextak Building Co.

"Presently, the Muirwood center is not able to sustain itself," said commissioner Jack Rajkovich. "I feel rezoning this area at Drake and Grand River is a positive step in the right direction. I don't feel it's injurious to the city of Farmington."

**OFFICIALS WITH Bextak Building Co.**, which owns the center, say the expansion is necessary to keep Muirwood Square financially afloat. In 1991, the center lost \$227,000, said Harold Stobinsky, Bextak vice president of commercial real estate.

But Bextak officials still maintain that their request is based on land use. "Our basis for this request is land use and not an economic one," said architect Leonard Siegal, who represented the Bextak Co. "We're not asking for a bailout."

*"I feel rezoning this area at Drake and Grand River is a positive step in the right direction. I don't feel it's injurious to the city of Farmington."*

— Jack Rajkovich  
city commissioner

Some planning commissioners expressed the desire to offer some type of competition for the Kroger grocery chain, which remains dominant in the Farmington area despite closings of a Farmington store at Halsted and a Farmington Hills store at 15 Mile and Orchard Lake Road in late 1990.

"Farmington Hills, I think, does need some competition for Kroger's. I don't think competition is a bad thing even for downtown Farmington," said Paul Elzman, commission chairman. "I think an improved shopping center would be a benefit to the entire area."

Not everyone agreed, however. Two planning commissioners, Brenda Kandt and newcomer Glen Fietzschacker, opposed the rezoning, as did two homeowners who live off Drake Road, not far from Muirwood Square.

"I am concerned about economic times. I'm concerned with how many (commercial) places are empty," Kandt said, adding that she's also concerned about increased traffic in the area.

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## Schools to offer more educational choices

By Casey Hans  
staff writer

Parents and students in the Farmington Public Schools will have more educational choices beginning this fall.

The school board last week adopted a policy that will leave in place current choice programs at the elementary level, and open enrollment at all other schools — at all levels — based on space available each year.

But the recommendation from a committee that studied the issue for the past three months was not reached without debate.

"This is truly a hot issue," said Don Cowan,

director of building and student services. "It's not an easy task. There're a lot of strong feelings on this issue."

Cowan co-chaired a community study committee on the choice issue over the past several months with Wooddale Elementary principal David Coffin, Farmington High principal Jim Myers and East Middle School principal Bill Martin. A number of parents from each level, teachers, business people and other school administrators also participated.

**SUPERINTENDENT MICHAEL Flanagan** called Tuesday's report and board action the first phase in the district's study of choice programs.

"It does not end tonight," he said. "What I hope to bring is other legitimate choice options. But it can't be done overnight."

In that vein, the district plans to form a second committee to study the future of other choice programs and schools within the district, which educators believe will be parent-driven in terms of what is offered. That committee will be headed by Judith White, assistant superintendent for curriculum and staff development, Flanagan said.

Letters will be sent to all parents this week, detailing which schools are expected to have open enrollment in the fall, and explaining the

new policy, Cowan said. Parents and students must apply to the district by April 10 if they wish to transfer this fall.

Cowan said between two and six buildings per grade level are expected to be on the list, which was not finalized as of Friday.

**SOME of the highlights of the plan include:**

- Transportation will be provided to all middle school and high school students, regardless of whether they transfer, and to elementary students attending their home school.

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## Healthy habitat is wetlands goal

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

The construction of wetlands on Peltz-MDOT is being designed so park visitors can see and experience the wildlife and vegetation that is expected to be drawn to the area.

"It's designed to provide habitat opportunities for species not now inhabiting the site and to expand habitat opportunities for species now found on the site," said Todd Holloway of Pleasant Ridge, an environmental planner who is designing wetlands on the city-owned land.

"If it's planned right and built right, it's going to work," Holloway said.

After a bumpy road of controversy, the Farmington Hills City Council recently agreed to allow a maximum two acres of wetlands to be replaced from 12 Mile Road, where the second, one-mile

stretch of boulevard is being constructed, to the western central portion of the MDOT property, south of 16 Mile and west of Farmington Road.

Holloway's design has received an approving nod from the Peltz-MDOT ad hoc committee, which has studied the wetlands replacement. But the plan has yet to receive approval from the state Department of Natural Resources, which issued a permit already for replacement based on an original plan that called for replacing approximately seven acres of wetlands.

**HOLLOWAY PLANS** to get the plan to the DNR by the first of April, with a hope that a revised permit will be issued by May 15. Construction bids have already been taken for the one-mile stretch of the 12 Mile boulevard, between Halsted and Haggerty. If all goes as planned, the wetlands may be lifted off the boulevard area and placed in Peltz-MDOT near the end of May, said David Call, Farmington Hills assistant city manager.

The new wetlands will include an actual wetland prairie with flooded reeds, grasses and aquatic plants. The wetlands also will include a kidney-shaped area of open water about 6 feet deep, Holloway said.

Items that will be introduced in the new wetlands to entice wildlife include dead trees placed vertically to provide roosting opportunities. Dead trees also will be placed horizontally to provide perch habitats and food sources. Brush piles and stumps also will be included for more perching and roosting.

"As these decay, they will provide sources of beetles and other bugs for food sources," Holloway said.

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Travel	5B
CLASSIFIEDS	.591-0900
CIRCULATION	.591-0300
NEWS LINE	.477-5450
SPORTS LINE	.953-2139



Frank Lauffoff  
public safety director

## Major crime up in Farmington, but safety chief sees positives

Ex-Hills public safety director dies, 3A

By Casey Hans  
staff writer

Major crime increased more than 11 percent in Farmington in 1991, following an unprecedented decrease of 22 percent in crime the previous year.

A total of 453 sexual assaults, robberies, arsons, aggravated assaults, burglaries, larcenies and auto thefts were logged in 1991 in the city of Farmington.

But that denotes the second lowest figure in 10 years showing that "things have really changed" in the western suburbs, said Public Safety Director Frank Lauffoff. Similar numbers showing decreases in 1990 and increases in 1991 were released by neighboring Farmington Hills earlier this year.

The 1991 figures are "more the norm," Lauffoff said, "though it's still below average."

Most of the major crimes in Farmington in 1991 — 365 in all — were larcenies, a category which includes things like purse snatchings, shoplifting and thefts from homes, garages and cars. The biggest increases included

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