

RECREATION NEWS

Each week, the recreation division of the Farmington Hills Department of Special Services presents a synopsis of upcoming activities in this column. For further information regarding programs, call the recreation office at 473-9570. For city council agenda items, call the Newsline at 476-3838.

■ PRESCHOOL ACTIVITIES A variety of activities for preschoolers ages 1 1/2 to 6 are being offered at the new Day Camp Building in Heritage Park. The activities range from dance, art, and music to tumbling, cooking and day camps. Refer to the recently distributed program.

■ DADDY-DAUGHTER DANCE A memorable evening is awaiting dad and his daughter 7-8:30 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 12, or Saturday, Feb. 13, at the Mercy Center. This fun-filled evening includes dancing, refreshments, corsage for daughter(s), boutonniere for dad and a picture of the couple. Pre-registration is required as space is limited. Fee is \$16 per couple and \$7.50 per additional daughter.

■ WINTER BREAK DAY CAMPS Children ages 6-8 and 9-12 register for the Winter Break Day Camp that will be offered 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday, Feb. 15, through Friday, Feb. 19, at the Heritage Park Day Camp Building. Children will enjoy the outdoor activities of sledding, skating, cross-country skiing, as well as numerous indoor activities. A

registration fee of \$65 per child is required. Maximum of 24 per camp.

■ NORTH SWIM LESSONS Swimming instructions for beginners to advance skill levels are offered at Harrison High School. The program meets on Saturdays for eight weeks beginning March 6. Lessons are held from 9:50 a.m. for levels 1-2; 10:10-10:50 a.m. for levels 3-5; and 11-11:50 a.m. for levels 6-10. Fee is \$32 per person and registration is required. Participants must be 38 inches at their chin height.

■ WINTER BREAK SKI WEEKEND Students in grades 4-12 can register for a day of skiing at Mt. Brighton from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 18. Fee is \$16 per person and does not include a \$9 rental fee, if required. You may register for either the North Farmington High or East Middle School sites.

■ NATURE ART T-SHIRT OR SWEAT SHIRT Decorate a T-shirt or sweat shirt with paint or ink using things such as half an apple, feathers, leaves, cones and other items. Class will be held 7-8:30 p.m., Monday, March 8, at Heritage Park Day Camp Building. Pre-registration fee of \$10 per person is required.

■ EUCRE TOURNAMENT Get your partner and register for the Eucres Tournament at the Heritage Park Day Camp Building from 7-10 p.m., Friday, Feb. 26.

Arenas often face slippery course

BY BILL COULTANT
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills should take a long, hard look at ice rinks in other communities before building its own.

"That's the advice of some who have experience with city-owned ice arenas.

"It's a break-even thing, at best," said Tom Willette, acting director of Plymouth's department of recreation. "There's a demand. We can't give them enough time for their programs. But the cost for ice time would keep people away if they had to pay it all."

Southfield, which has its own ice facility, has the same problem, said Jeff Farland, director of parks and recreation.

"I don't think there's a single slab making money," he said. "We had two (ice slabs) and closed one."

Southfield's facility, built in 1970, and Plymouth's, built in 1973, were part of a boom era of ice arena construction in the area

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Tom Willette

Acting director - Plymouth recreation department

that, for the most part, has gone bust. Federal money helped with construction, but the expense of maintaining the facilities coupled with the often-inefficient design that means big energy bills has kept city-owned facilities in the red and pushed private rinks out of business.

"There's no doubt in my mind," Farland said. "The technology was not energy efficient. But even with computerized compressors and other things, it's costly."

Southfield's ice arena complex also has an outdoor pool for the summer, a pro shop and snack bar. The ice arena is open from

August to May and is used by hockey leagues, recreational skaters and for classes. Even though it is used heavily, the city subsidizes it to the tune of \$150,000-\$200,000 a year, Farland said.

Jack Vivian, an expert on building ice arenas and a University of Michigan professor, told the Farmington Hills committee looking into building a new arena that publicly owned arenas are likely to fail. Vivian told the committee that building another facility will help, not hurt, existing facilities, if it's done right.

"A lot of people think of it as competing," he said. "But if you have one arena, that will allow more (hockey) teams to play and

other arenas will benefit. It can have a significant impact on services, because people will need hotels, meals and gas. We have to have a Big 10 for Michigan to play somewhere."

Farland agrees that there is enough demand for more ice facilities, but he's not sure that a privately owned facility could pay its own way.

"Somewhere we need at least one more slab of ice," he said. "And we could use one or two more slabs of studio (smaller rink) ice."

Farmington Hills has made no commitment to a new ice facility. Leo Bourquart of Montreal, the owner of a year-round, private ice arena, plans to visit Farmington Hills next month to explain how to make a go of a private facility.

His Les 4 Glaces includes four rinks, locker rooms, a sporting goods store, a restaurant and bar, and a banquet room. The city will pay him \$1,500 a day and expenses for his consulting services.

Hills hopes to win landscape grant

Farmington Hills will apply for a grant to landscape and plant trees in several areas of the city.

The city will use \$25,000 of its own money, already budgeted for citywide beautification, and hopes to receive \$25,000 in grant money and \$5,000 of in-kind services from the Federal Small Business Administration and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

There are six areas targeted for the landscaping: Orchard Lake Road from the I-696 interchange north to 14 Mile, including several sites at the intersections of 12 Mile and Orchard Lake and 13 Mile and Orchard Lake; the southeast corner of 14 Mile and Middlebelt; 12 Mile Road in front of Harrison High School as part of the tree replacement for the road improvement project completed

in 1992; further enhancement of the Nine Mile and Middlebelt project; various areas along Grand River from Inkster Road all the way to Orchard Lake, including the southwest corner of Grand River and Orchard Lake; and Farmington Road from I-696 south to Heritage Park, in conjunction with the bike path project.

Steve Brock, assistant to the

city manager, said the grant would likely be approved by May. The grant money would be available next year and planting would be in the spring and fall.

The city council approved applying for the grant, 7-0.

Farmington Hills received \$35,000 mini-grant money for landscaping through the state and federal government last year.

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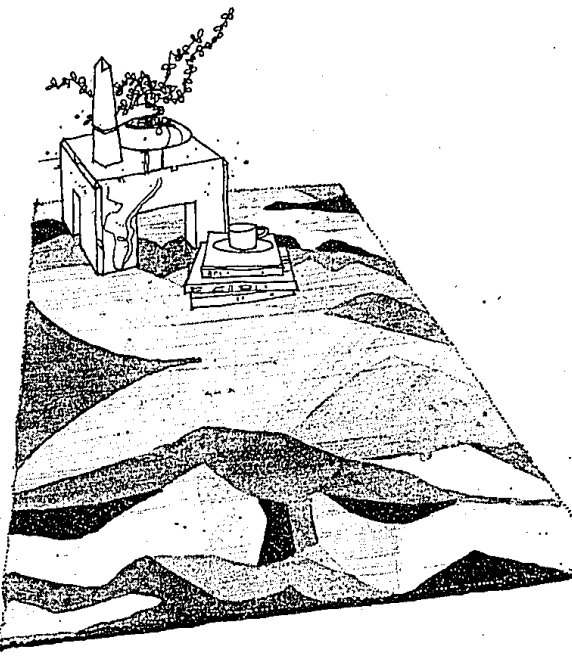
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