

IN THE PAPER
TODAY

An Earthy Day: Gray skies and chilly winds didn't seem to diminish the enthusiasm at the local Earth Day festivities at Heritage Park in Farmington Hills. /3A

COUNTY NEWS

Making the rounds: Gov. John Engler got a warm reception in Troy as he began a series of appearances in Oakland County communities to pitch his education tax-shift plan. /5A

Safe streets: It might be worth keeping your kids up late. Sen. Mike Bouchard will host a safety and crime prevention program for all ages from 6:45-10 p.m. tonight. /7A

OPINION

Pipe dreams?: The Farmington Hills City Council is right to finish that flood control project. /18A

Thanks to them: The editor asked for support in the community in his plan to drop TV for a week. Surprise! The support was there. /19A

SPORTS

Track champions: The Harrison High girls made it two straight Saturday when they won another track and field relays meet. /1B

Soccer victory: Farmington Hills Mercy defeated rival Birmingham Marian a second time Monday in a Catholic League game. /1B

ENTERTAINMENT



Theater: Meadow Brook has a winner with "Smoke on the Mountain," a theatrical presentation that combines gospel music, gentle comedy, and wry insights into rural American family life. /7B

INDEX

- Building Scene . . . 1F
- Business . . . 1-4C
- Classifieds . . . D-G
- Auto . . . F,G
- Employment . . . F,G
- Real estate . . . D,E,F
- Creative Living . . . 1D
- Crossword . . . 10D
- Entertainment . . . 7-11B
- Obituaries . . . 16A
- Opinion . . . 18-19A
- Police, fire calls . . . 3A
- Personal scene . . . 5G

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School fistfight reaches court



The Farmington High student assault case that prompted a public awareness of violence in the schools has gone to the courts. The accused entered a no-contest plea to a charge of aggravated assault, in a juvenile hearing at Oakland County Probate Court.

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

A Farmington High student pleaded no contest to an aggravated assault charge stemming from the Dec. 7 beating of another student.

Gregory Lance Lugo, 16, of Farmington Hills, entered the plea in a juvenile hearing Monday at Oakland County Probate Court before referee Martin Alvin.

A dispositional hearing date has been set May 25, pending a report from the youth's psychologist and an

evaluation from the court clinic. Lugo's attorney, John Cibrario, cited a possible lawsuit against Lugo and his family as one reason for a no-contest plea.

Alvin told Lugo he's to have no contact with the victim, and must attend school everyday.

"That's all he'll be doing," said Alvin, adding Lugo will serve a "home detention" and cannot go into the community or participate in after-school activities.

Both the prosecuting attorney and

disatisfied with the no-contest plea. They suggested Lugo be detained for a short period.

"I'd like to see something else done," said Joanne LaFleur, the mother of victim Kenneth LaFleur during the hearing.

"... at least one weekend in a juvenile detention center just so he can see what it is like," she said.

See FIGHT, 8A

Planting a sentiment



SHARON LEMMER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Earth Day activity: Amy Schultz and David Kott plant a tree to remember fellow Special Olympian Robbie Meador, who died last month. For more on the Earth Day festivities, please see page 3A.

Hills backs study of routes, safety for school buses

BY BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

The city of Farmington Hills plans to do what it can to make school bus routes and stops safer, but massive changes aren't likely.

The city council voted 6-0, with councilwoman Joanne Smith absent, to increase speed limit enforcement, add safety education programs, improve and add sidewalks and signs, and name a group of citizens to study certain questionable bus stops and make recommendations.

But city attorney John Donohue said the city should take care not to bite off more than it can chew.

"The responsibility of the location of the school bus stops routinely rests with the schools," Donohue said. "If the city shares in that, it will take on a great responsibility."

Donohue urged the council not to take any formal position on the issue and said he would research the limits on the city's liability and responsibility.

Referred to the city

Susan McKendrick, a spokeswoman for Citizens for Transportation Safety, a citizens' group trying to change some school bus routes, said the school board had referred them to the city.

"The bottom line is that we had a basic disagreement with the school system over what is safe," she said.

Don Cowan, director of Building and Student Services for the Farmington Public Schools, said after exhaustive meetings and budget sessions after the state announced it would "recapture" \$6 million from the district, transportation was targeted for \$1 million in cuts.

"Out of numerous meetings with citizens, the consensus was that we should cut transportation rather than curriculum or programs," Cowan

■ **'The responsibility of the location of the school bus stops routinely rests with the schools. . . . If the city shares in that, it will take on a great responsibility.'**

John Donohue
Farmington Hills
city attorney

said. "That meant we had to reduce personnel and cut routes."

According to Julie Teddy, the school's bus supervisor, 12 drivers were laid off, some buses were sold and other cuts were made in her department. The district makes a total of 433 bus runs and 4,039 stops, she said.

Elementary school students are picked up at their homes, but middle school and high school students are picked up at designated stops, of which 527 are on main roads.

McKendrick, who is running for the school board, said she became especially concerned about the change in routes when the stops in her subdivision were cut last fall.

The change was one of many that involved moving more bus stops on to main roads. Coincidentally, a fatal accident involving a car and motorcycle near Strathmore and 13 Mile was witnessed by a group of school children who were waiting for the bus on the first day of the 1992-93 school year in September.

The resulting psychological trauma for the children brought a further outcry for a change in bus routes and stops from citizens.

See BUSES, 4A

Conductor wins award and influences listeners

BY BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

Karen Nixon, conductor and musical director for "Group du jour," just completed an intense weekend.

Nixon, who conducted the 75-member professional orchestra in its final concert of the year Friday night, was recognized as the Farmington Area Artist in Residence by the Farmington Arts Commission on Sunday.

"I was really surprised when they told me I would be receiving the

award," said Nixon. "It usually goes to someone in graphic media."

The energetic University of Michigan graduate had just finished leading her group in concert before a full house (more than 300 people) at the Mercy Center on Friday evening.

The final concert was a triumph of sorts for Nixon and her group, after a concert last fall that few attended. This "Bach to the Future" concert and the "Winter Fantasies" concert in February were both before a large, appreciative audience.

"The audience response was phenomenal," said Nixon. "I was worried because the lights didn't come up for the first part of the symphony (Dvorak's 'New World Symphony') and I could feel that they (orchestra members) were behind my beat."

But when she listened to the audio tape from the concert on Saturday, Nixon said she was amazed.

"When I listened to the tape, I was really pleased with how well we sounded," she said.

The concert started with Bach's

haunting Tocata and Fugue in D minor followed by the Dvorak Ninth Symphony, Holst's "The Planets" and the Flying Theme from the movie "E.T."

"Part of our purpose is to educate," said Nixon. "So we play some pieces, like 'E.T.," that are more familiar to a wider audience and explain with program notes those pieces like the symphony."

See CONDUCTOR, 8A

Splash for charity

The Village Green Apartments in Farmington Hills raked it in for the Rainbow Connection April 18 at the inaugural "Charity Splash." More than \$3,000 was raised for the charity that grants wishes to terminally ill children.

The official opening of the apartment complex outdoor swimming pool was turned into a rollicking party with people pledging money for anyone who dared take a dip on that chilly Sunday afternoon.

Jumpers included Ray Lane of WKBD-TV (Channel 60); Suzanne Jones, president of the Rainbow Connection; Mary Ann Joseph, Village Green manager and volunteers from local eateries DocFrocks, Marmadukes and Jimmie's Coney Island.

FARMINGTON FOCUS

A prom for seniors

Students from Harrison High School will host an afternoon spring dance for Farmington-area senior citizens 3:30-6:30 p.m. Thursday, May 13, in the school gymnasium.

Admission will be free for all senior citizens. Light refreshments will be served, and music will be provided by the Harrison Jazz Band and disc jockey Dennis McWhitt.

Registration forms are available at the Farmington Hills Senior Adult Center, the city halls, libraries, and at the Farmington Community

School.

For more information or to register by phone, call the Farmington Community School at 469-3333 or 469-3382 during normal business hours.

Congressman's coming

U.S. Rep. Joe Knollenberg, the new congressman from the 11th District, which includes the Farmington area, will host a town hall-type meeting noon to 1:30 p.m. Saturday, May 8, at the Farmington Hills City Hall, 11 Mile and Orchard Lake roads.

Items for Farmington Focus may be mailed to the Farmington Observer, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48336, dropped off at the newspaper office, or faxed to 477-9722.