

# Big, bad wheel

## Riders get rescued

By Sue Buck  
Staff Writer

Two area 11-year-olds took a Ferris wheel ride they'll always remember — one that had them looking down on a church carnival for about a half-hour Friday evening.

When a support cable snapped, Michael Moser of Livonia and Bert Decker of Farmington Hills found they suddenly had a panoramic view of the St. Paul's Lutheran Church carnival, next to the church at Eight Mile and Sardinia.

"It could have been a catastrophe," said Bob Robtoy, district chief for the Farmington Hills Fire Department. He ordered this ride and two adjacent rides shut down. "I don't know if it was lack of maintenance or what."

Robtoy said that the fire department doesn't inspect rides, since it's the responsibility of the state. He said he doesn't know if that responsibility was met in this case.

The boys, who attend the church's day school, were brought down via the fire department's ladder truck.

At first, Michael Moser said he thought the ride had just stopped, but then his Aunt Marvlyn motioned that the cable had broken.

"It was a little scary, at first," Michael Moser said. "While we were up there, we prayed that we would get down safe. Then I was shaking. I felt relieved when the firemen arrived. It was fine going down, but I told them to go slow." Sue Moser, Michael's mother, didn't take the incident quite as well, viewing the situation as a concerned parent.

Her sister-in-law and husband had brought her family to the fair while the Mosers were golfing.

"It could have been a lot worse," Sue Moser said. Pastor Ralph Unger had the highest compliments for the boys,

saying they acted well under pressure.

"I talked to both of them," Unger said. "They were real calm and didn't panic."

Unger had just "left to run an errand" when the problem occurred.

This was the fifth year of the church carnival, he said. Pugh Shows has provided the rides the last three.

Unger attributed this year's problem to "some malfunction."

"Any mechanical thing can break down," Unger said. "We've had no problems with these people (Pugh) in the past."

He'd hire the Indiana company again, Unger said.

Lee Farmer, a Pugh Co. supervisor, could not be reached for comment. Nor could the Michigan Department of Labor, which handles carnival safety.

Lola Touchette, who organized the church carnival, cited the Pugh Co.'s safety record. The company received a prestigious 1991 American Recreational Equipment Association award, Touchette said. "Pugh is one of the best of the best."

The carnival has been held for the last five years. The first two years, Wade Shows supplied the rides, Touchette said, but church members weren't satisfied with that company. That's why they switched to Pugh.

"The (boys') parents were not upset," she said. "The incident was a freak thing."

According to a police report, the ride's "main axle slipped out of the hub on the right side of the machinery when in turn, it stressed the support cable on the left side which pulled the hook out of the buckle making it straight."

As for Michael, well, he planned to go to Bob's Island Wednesday. "I'm going with him," Sue Moser said. "I think I'll make him go on the kiddie rides."



To the rescue: The Farmington Hills Fire Department is called to pick off two youngsters stuck on a carnival ride.



Up in the air: Burt Decker and friend Mike Moser wave from a fire department "cherry picker."



Safely down: Burt Decker (center) and Mike Moser tell their story to TV news reporters after being brought down from a stalled Ferris wheel at a carnival.

# Counseling session helps school deal with death

By Sue Buck  
Staff Writer

The Farmington School District assisted Farmington High School students and faculty with their grief following the accidental death of sophomore James John Sawulski.

Sawulski, 16, died at 8:20 a.m. May 25, and by 1 p.m. the same day Farmington High School administrators had organized a group counseling session with a grief counselor.

Rik Cryderman, a chaplain for William Beaumont Hospital in Troy, spoke to 160 students and 25 staff members who chose to attend the sessions.

The school had issued an open invitation.

"Kids are taking care of each other," Cryderman said.

Sawulski and friend Kenneth Andrew Johnson, also 16, sustained closed-head injuries when they fell off the trunk of the car on which they were riding. Sawulski was taken to Providence Hospital, Southfield, where he was pronounced dead some 12 hours later.

Johnson was taken to Botsford

Hospital, where he was treated and released.

It was a return visit to the school district by Cryderman, who several years ago helped North Farmington high school faculty and students grieve when a basketball player collapsed and died from cardiac myopathy.

Staff members agreed to announce Sawulski's death at the same time, 9:55 a.m., Cryderman said. "Only the sophomores leaving on a field trip weren't told at that time," he said. They weren't told until after they returned.

"Some students wanted to know what a funeral was like and what the protocol for bereavement was," he said.

Cryderman suggested that students keep journals of their feelings. Those who knew Sawulski personally might want to collect some memories to share with his family.

"I asked them (students) to tell me something about Jamie," Cryderman said. "One friend told me that when they were eight years old, they planned to star in a rock band together. I learned of late, Jamie wanted to go to the

University of Michigan to become a lawyer."

Cryderman also co-leads a bereavement group of about 25-26 people, called Movin' On, for teens and their families. Families meet for 12 weeks.

Referring back to the high school group, Cryderman said: "This was a huge group, so there was no intimate sharing."

Cryderman also told the students that their parents might be critical of the way Sawulski died, calling it horseplay.

"You might hear lecturing," Cryderman said. "Parents need to protect you and may worry about the same thing happening to you."

Cryderman advised faculty to live with the loss a little while. For one of Jamie's teachers, that means leaving his seat empty for a while, and talking about his death, before rearranging the classroom seats, Cryderman said.

"Some staff were shaken and tearful," he said. "Any new losses awaken old issues with people. Someone just like them has died. It reminds us how fragile we are."

# Police alcohol-sale sting on tap once again in Hills

By Sue Buck  
Staff Writer

Beware, Farmington Hills liquor dealers.

You know the drill. Farmington Hills police cadet decoy will soon be paying you a surprise visit via the department's "Decoy Liquor Enforcement Operation."

The program began in 1988.

"As always, at this time of the year, the off-premise licensees will be checked; those licensees more commonly known as SDD-SDM," Farmington Hills Police Chief William Dwyer said.

Dwyer mailed a certified letter to all licensees who will be checked between now and graduation.

The crackdown involves the use

of an undercover police cadet under 21 years of age who will attempt to buy alcohol. The legal drinking age in Michigan is 21.

Before the cadet leaves the police department on the undercover operation, a photograph will be taken to show the cadet's clothing and appearance during the sting.

The cadet wears casual clothing.

"The police department will continue to charge all employees who sell or serve alcohol to minors," Dwyer said. "A licensee should not have to solely assume the penalty because of the improper actions of employee," Dwyer said.

"The certainty of dismissal/disciplinary action against em-

ployees can be used by licensees as a management incentive to remind employees to protect themselves and their (employers). In addition to Liquor Control Commission (LCC) penalties, against the licensee, the seller of alcohol to a minor faces the possibility of a fine up to \$500 and up to 90 days in jail."

Research indicates that alcohol-related accidents and tragedies increase during the two or three weeks surrounding high school graduation, Dwyer said.

"The commitment of licensees and their employees not to sell or serve alcohol to minors is an important component that adds to the general safety and welfare of the entire community."

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FALL 1993

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