

McCabe Funeral Home hits century mark

By SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER

Inquiring children are usually surprised when funeral director Kevin McCabe tells them during lectures that he has never seen a ghost.

Nor has he heard things go bump in the night. But neither McCabe nor his father L. David can dispute that the spirits have been kind to them and blessed them with good fortune, especially as they celebrate the 100th anniversary of the McCabe funeral business.

It's not easy to live to be 100 in the funeral business with all its competition and challenges. Although the McCabe Funeral Home has only been in Farmington Hills for 21 years, the business is receiving its share of official congratulations.

"We decided to have a gathering to celebrate," Kevin McCabe said.

The business soon received plaques from the Farmington Hills Historical Commission, the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce, the Historical Society of Michigan and a state proclamation.

The Historical Society of Michigan lauds the McCabes for "100 years of continuous operation in service to the people of Michigan and contributing to the economic growth and vitality of our state."

A special ceremony Oct. 1, dedicated a historical marker presented by the Farmington Hills Historical Commission.

Among those attending the ceremony at the funeral home with the McCabes were: Farmington Hills Mayor Nancy Bates, Farmington Hills city manager William Costick, Farmington Hills Historical Commission chairperson Kathryn Biggs and former Farmington Hills mayor and noted historian Jean Fox.

Fox narrated the historical events which transpired during the past 100 years.

"That's 10 decades, four generations, five or six wars, several depressions or recessions," Fox said. "This business was able to weather it all."

The Botsford Inn is the only other 100-year Farmington area business, Fox said.

In 1893, Francis J. McCabe purchased the Detroit funeral home of Frank Gibb at Cass and Grand River. In 1902 he moved to Canfield and Grand River, again moving in 1904 to Hudson and Grand River, and in 1913 built his own funeral home at 5461 Grand River, which he operated until his death in 1950.

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After World War II, Clifford L. McCabe, his son and successor, moved to a new ranch-style funeral home on Grand River in Rosedale Park.

L. David McCabe, a third generation son, joined the firm in 1956 and moved the firm to its Farmington Hills location in 1971.

Kevin L. McCabe, the fourth generation, joined the firm in 1981. A \$700,000 expansion of this home was completed in 1989. The expansion provides for seven state rooms, two complete chapels, a library, several conference rooms and a parking lot for 100 cars.

"The services are a far cry from the way things were done back before the turn of the century when my grandfather began the business," said L. David McCabe in a 1988 interview.

"In those days, the service was either in a store front, funeral parlour or in the family's home. And going to the cemetery called for my grandfather to make the long trip to the outskirts of town in a horse-drawn carriage with the coffin riding in the back."

Both L. David and Kevin McCabe strive to be active in the community.

Kevin McCabe especially is a frequent lecturer on death and grieving. He presents his topics truthfully, served up with small doses of wit and humor on the side.

Kevin McCabe also serves as president of the Farmington/Farmington Hills Community Center.



SHARON LEMIEUX/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

On the mark: Kevin McCabe, the fourth generation of McCabes, stands in front of a historical marking commemorating 100 years of business, including the last 21 in Farmington Hills.

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M-102 project gets mired in a political gridlock

By BILL COLTANT
STAFF WRITER

Sometimes cutting the fat takes some of the lean in Washington.

At least that's the opinion of U.S. Rep. Joe Knollenberg, R-Bloomfield Township, about the removal of the M-102/Grand River interchange reconstruction project from the Transportation Appropriations Bill on Sept. 22.

The project, which Farmington Hills has been trying to get money for since the late 1970s, would have relieved "arguably one of the worst traffic congestion nightmares in Oakland County," Knollenberg had said in June, when \$4 million was included in the Transportation Appropriations Bill for it.

Knollenberg called the removal of the project a "parliamentary maneuver."

"It is so unfortunate that an effort to help the people of Southwestern Oakland County, while at the same time saving the taxpayer \$12 million, has fallen victim to politics as usual," he said.

The project would have included a new two-lane bridge north of the existing four-lane bridge across M-102 that serves traffic turning on to Haggerty. The plan would cost about \$10 million, a savings of \$12 million over a full-scale interchange. The appropriations subcommittee had earmarked \$4 million in this year's budget and another \$4 million next year.

"There is a lot of concern about pork barrel projects," said Farmington Hills city manager Bill Costick. "This was a legitimate project that got lost in that effort to cut waste."

Since M-102 and Grand River are state roads, the city has had to wait for ever decreasing state road money for a project that would have to be built to state standards of a full-scale interchange.

Costick said the project is not dead, but will have to "get back in line" with others for federal money.

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Standing room: Visitors receive an inside glimpse of a helicopter during the Farmington Hills Fire Department's Open House Sunday, which featured fire safety tips and other attractions.

Firefighters open doors for good times and safety tips

By AILEEN WINGBLAD
STAFF WRITER

Fire facts and safety tips — as well as plenty of fun things to see and do — were the day's fare Sunday afternoon at the Farmington Hills Fire Department's annual Open House held at fire headquarters on Drake Road.

And judging from the reactions of the hundreds of local folks who turned out for the event, it was quite the success. For one, they learned such things as:

■ If a fire starts in your microwave oven, it's best to keep the door shut and turn off the unit until the flames die down.

■ Youngsters should practice fire drills and home escape plans in a darkened area to better simulate conditions during a fire.

■ A small kitchen fire can cause upwards of \$60,000 in damage.

"We all really enjoy the open houses. We have been coming each year for the past four years or so," said Farmington Hills resident Lori Goldberg, who had brought along her two youngsters, Aly, 9, and Andy, 6, and their friend Annie Lieberman, to the fire station.

"The kids get a real benefit out of all of this, especially since they are learning what to do in case they are ever in a fire, like how to get out, the 'stop, drop and roll' and all that," said Goldberg.

The "Smoke House" continues to be popular with the kids as well as their parents during Open House. Designed to closely simulate for people the experience of being in an actual home fire, the smoke house is a specially constructed unit which is filled with a non-toxic smoke; participants then climb out of the unit's windows and escape with the help of firefighters.

Farmington Hills firefighter Corey Bartsch, stationed at the smoke house to assist folks as they climbed out, noted that many of the people who take their turns inside find out that escaping, even from a simulated fire station, can be a bit more difficult than they expect.

"A lot of the people are very surprised how tough it is to get out," Bartsch said. "Parents, especially, really appreciate doing this with their kids and letting them have the experience of how to react in case a home fire ever does happen to them."

Fire chief Richard Marinucci agreed that the Open House is something folks look forward to each year and something that offers the community some real benefits.

"We are entertaining the kids and delivering the message of fire safety... actually safety in general is what it is all about. And since we've been having an increase in the number of people living in the area and a decrease in fires, that leads me to believe that we are getting the message across. Something must be working."

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