



SHARON LEMIRE/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Helping hand: Farmington Hills resident Mark Farrell (right) enlists the help of Harmony House employee Alvaro Cortes. Farrell was unsuccessful in finding recordings by Nelson Eddy, Jeanette MacDonald and Rita MacNeil, although Cortes did a computer search and even called other stores.

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necessarily take an enclosed mall to draw shoppers, just the right location for the clientele. Harmony House, which moved across the street from Hunter's Square to a larger store, has continued to see improved sales at its north end location.

"In the past, this was one of our slower stores," said manager Paul Levesque. "We've moved into a larger space and now we're in the top five out of 30 (Harmony House) stores."

Bob Diromvaldo, CEO of Border's Books, said his company would like to locate an outlet in the Orchard Lake/14 Mile area because the consumers are there.

"We have a lot of interest in Farmington Hills and West Bloomfield," he said. "We'd love to have one of our stores there."

In fact, Border's has been negotiating for a site in the 14 Mile and Orchard Lake area, but there

has been no agreement as yet, Diromvaldo said.

Jody Soronen, executive director of the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce, said the stability of the community along with increased consumer confidence in recent months has helped business.

"In terms of stability, you don't see many businesses disappearing," she said. "People are not feeling as cautious. Plus, our population is getting to a steady level."

Part of the success of the area's businesses has to do with adapting to a changed market.

"Our business is still strong, but it has leveled off somewhat," said Kim McNamara, general manager of Mr. Sports, a popular bar at the north end of the Kmart shopping center on the east side of Orchard Lake. "We are doing a lot of bar and bat mitvah's now.

We pull from the entire area. In fact, we're looking for another (third) location."

Ann Arbor resident Bill Hemmings, 26, said he regularly travels to Farmington Hills just to shop on the north end.

"I've found that the stores here are better quality," he said. "It's safe and I have no access problems, which is important, I'm in a wheelchair."

With the addition of a Ruby Tuesday's restaurant and a Boston Chicken outlet at the 12 Mile and Orchard Lake intersection, and plans for a McDonald's at Hunter's Square, the area is bound to prosper, Gardiner said.

But Shaw cautioned that conditions and shopping patterns change.

"In real estate there is a constant change," he said. "You're constantly adapting to the marketplace."



North-end mall: A row of stores forms one end of the Orchard Plaza mall in Farmington Hills.

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