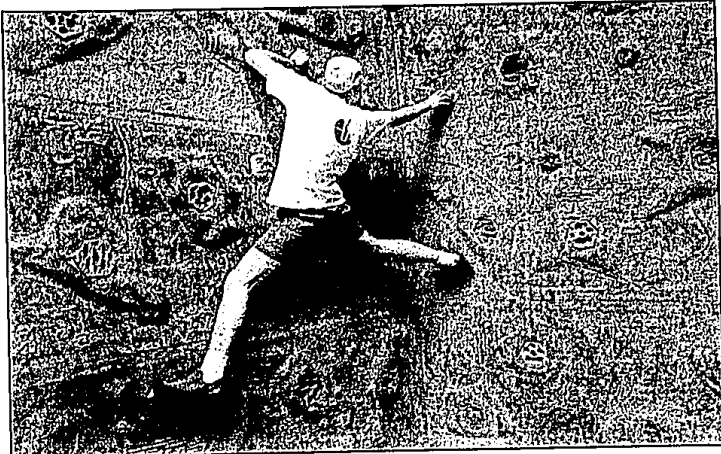


Going it alone: Jason Barwickouski, scaling the wall, says he does this sport alone because his friends can't afford it.



Climb from page 1A

Paul Goodman, the store's general manager, said the current owner, Chuck Spriggs, started the store with a partner, Emil Hutton, 20 years ago in Prescott, Ariz. The two men wanted to return to their Michigan homes, but didn't want to give up their sporting goods business. Hutton has since moved back west, to Boise, Idaho, to open another Benchmark.

"The interest in back packing and outdoor recreation has been cyclical," Goodman said. "There was a tremendous interest in backpacking in the 70s, then there was a dip in the 80s when people began to worry about jobs and families. Now they are either free from family obligations or including their children."

Outdoor recreation seems to suit an economic climate, Karzynski said. "You can buy a tent for \$200, pay \$8 a night to

camp and not have to pay \$150 to stay in a hotel," he said. "So when families can't afford other vacations, they can still go outdoors."

Jennifer Schneider, 23, of Milford and a student at Eastern Michigan University and her friend Deanna Bell, 24, of Brighton, have both become hooked. They work as a team, one "belaying," or holding a supporting rope for the other while she climbs the wall.

The store requires the class or some show of expertise, and those under 18 must have a parent with them when attempting a climb.

"We just started two weeks ago," said Schneider. "I really like it, but I have a lot to learn."

That attitude is a healthy one, said Karzynski. He emphasizes techniques to avoid falling or losing your balance. "Those are the people you read about in the paper who eventually fall," he said.



Ready to try: Sam Kalous (left) and Rachel Blaylock, sophomores at Mercy High in Farmington Hills, plan their ascent on the Benchmark wall.



STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LEMMON

Hitting the heights: Jennifer Schneider, 23, scales the wall at Benchmark in downtown Farmington.

Plan puts city's streets on road to improvements

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

The six-year capital improvement plan for Farmington intends to hit the streets in a big way.

As in the past, extensive street improvements are called for in the report prepared by the Farmington Planning Commission. High priorities on the major street improvement list include:

- Shawassee Road from Grand River and Farmington Road
- Farmington Road from Eight Mile north to Grand River
- Shawassee from Farmington Road to Orchard Lake, and
- Power Road from Grand River to 10 Mile.

Some local streets cited for upgrades include Valley View Circle, Mooney, Raphael, and those in Floral Park.

"We have many streets that need attention," Farmington City Manager Frank Lauhoff said. "It's important we maintain those streets."

The six-year capital improvement plan is a projection, not a promise. City officials use it to line up money for projects.

Whether those are completed often depends on what county and federal money is available.

For that reason, there's no guarantee certain road improvements will take place by 1999.

Councilman William Hartsock thinks widening Farmington Road from a four to five lanes south of Alta Loma is an important project. The project would cost \$600,000, \$700,000 of which would come from county and federal grants.

"It adds a fifth lane," Hartsock said at March 21 council meeting, "and lessens the chance of accidents from left-hand turns."

Lauhoff said the number of accidents along the road determines if a project is a high priority for county and federal funds. If Farmington Road is widened, it will likely take place near the end of 1999, Lauhoff said.

"The six-year plan addresses economic development, capital improvements to the Farmington Community Library branch in

Farmington Hills and expansion of the 47th District.

Renovations are necessary to the 12 Mile facility after voters turned down a special millage and bond proposal to build a new library. Included in the estimated \$275,000 project is carpeting, furniture and reorganization of employee work areas.

Expansion to the 47th District is based on a recommendation by both Farmington and Farmington Hills to the state Legislature that a third judge is needed to handle a growing caseload. Subsequently, additional office space would be required.

New to the list, though, is replacement of fuel tanks at the Department of Public Services facility. The tanks, which have a life expectancy of 20 years, are more than 15 years old.

Removing and the replacing the tanks will be needed to prevent major leaks and contamination, Lauhoff said. DPS is monitoring the tanks for any leaks.

"With the high water table down there, we're going to be monitoring the situation," Lauhoff said.

Tea room brewing up interest

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

People want to know: When's tea time?

Soon, says Doris Lovill, who is opening a tea room on Grand River in Farmington. The house at 32905 Grand River has been completely converted, ready to serve up to 42 customers.

All that is needed are OKs from the Oakland County Board of Health and the Farmington Building Department. The tea room could open by the first week of April.

"It's been a long struggle," Lovill said.

The operator of the former Doris Lovill Tea Cozy in Franklin Village bought the home owned by Walter Sundquist in August. Since

then, she's been pouring her time into making the place into a quaint and elegant tea room.

A kitchen has been converted into a dining area; a main bedroom has been turned into a kitchen.

Another major change included installing a bathroom with access for the handicapped. People visiting the tea room, though, are more likely to notice the little things. A leather-bound book of Alfred, Lord Tennyson poems sits on a table. There are porcelain dolls and hand-knit napkins and table mats.

A towering, wooden grandfather clock sits in the dining room. It goes along with a chandelier Lovill brought from her Lathrup Village residence.

"Half of my house is here," she said.

Lovill said she's put up 68 rolls of wallpaper, handmade curtains, napkins and table mats, and upholstered chairs. Lovill will serve soup, salads and homecooked lunches. There will also be a high tea at 4 p.m., which includes scones, Devonshire cream and jam and other pastries. Between 20-25 brands of tea will be available, including the homebrew of Mrs. Lovill's Friendship Tea.

The only thing brewing so far is interest.

"I'll bet we get half a dozen calls a week," said Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber director Jody Soronen. "People are asking, 'Is it open yet?' Where are they located?" Apparently there's a lot of pent up interest out there.

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