

Capitol honor



Fine example: Highmeadow Common Campus Learning Center teacher Jill Fleming (left), Congressman Joe Knollenberg, Principal Jan Colliton, and Farmington Public Schools Assistant Principal Judy White attended ceremonies in Washington, D.C., honoring Highmeadow as one of 276 National Exemplary Blue Ribbon Schools.

Frozen sprinklers can bring unwanted shower

By BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

While fire prevention specialists don't want to discourage the use of sprinkling systems and their role in preventing serious fires, improperly maintained systems can be a hazard on their own.

"At this time of year, people tend to dial down and then leave on vacations or close their businesses," said Lt. Mike Garr, Farmington Hills Fire Department fire prevention specialist. "If you are going to be leaving, you ought to have someone check your house or business."

Sprinkler pipes freeze when the temperature inside businesses and residences is turned down too low, Garr said. The problem is worsened in buildings with dropped ceilings.

Even if the temperature is above freezing in a room, the temperature in the space above the ceiling, or in an isolated store room, can dip below freezing,

causing pipe joints to burst and the water to flow.

"We had one incident last year at the Montessori School on 13 Mile where people getting out of church on Sunday saw the ice in the parking lot," Garr said. "If they hadn't seen it, the damage could have been much worse."

In fact, between Dec. 26 and Jan. 26 of 1993, Hills firefighters responded to 11 incidents involving sprinkler system problems, more than the other 11 months together.

Although part of that was due to the record-breaking low temperatures, the problem is worsened because people go on vacation and businesses sometimes close over the holidays, Garr said.

Garr recommends a water flow alarm, which can be monitored like a burglar alarm or can be an external alarm, as a way to protect against sprinkler problems.

Last year in the week between Christmas and New Year's, sprinkler damage exceeded \$100,000 in

Farmington Hills.

Incidents involving sprinklers last year included:

- Water flowing from a second-floor restroom at an office building on Northwestern on Dec. 28, 1993.
- A burst pipe at the Honey Tree on Orchard Lake on Dec. 27, 1993, resulted because the temperature was turned down to conserve energy.
- A frozen pipe in an attic space burst in an office complex at an office building on Eight Mile on Dec. 28, 1993.
- A pipe burst at a house on Shady Ridge near a water meter on Dec. 28, 1990.
- A faucet broke in a basement of a house on Birchcrest Way on Jan. 1, 1994, after the owners turned their heat completely off before going on vacation.

For information about sprinklers or fire prevention, call 553-0744.

State legislators to rub out officeholder expense funds

By TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

Michigan legislators will end their practice of maintaining "officeholder expense funds" in a year.

The Legislature also passed a "Doug Cruce law," prohibiting lawmakers who resign in mid-term to become lobbyists during their term of office. It was so dubbed because Cruce, R-Troy, left the Senate in spring of 1991 to take a higher-paid job as president of the Michigan Insurance Federation.

"None of the freshmen had OEFs," said Rep. Dan Gustafson, R-Williamston, the freshman who sponsored House Bill 4837 to stop them. "Other lawmakers spent

down or closed their OEFs."

Under the bill, which passed the Senate overwhelmingly and is on its way to Gov. John Engler's desk, lawmakers may spend whatever is left, give it to a non-profit group, transfer it to a campaign committee (if the OEF contained no corporate money) or use it to retire a debt.

The House concurred 98-0 in Senate amendments. All area lawmakers voted yes except the absent Justine Barns, D-Westland, Penny Crisaman, R-Rochester, and Richard Young, D-Deerborn Heights.

Senate majority leader Dick Posthumus, R-Alt, praised the "bi-partisan, bicameral, four-bill legislative ethics package that

makes the most comprehensive changes to current lobby and campaign finance law in several years."

Besides the Gustafson OEF bill, the package contains:

- SB 1319 which lowers to \$501 the threshold at which lobbyists must report spending on trips and gifts to legislators (effective Jan. 1, 1995).
- HB 4371 which bans all cash honoraria for legislators. It is punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 or 90 days in jail (effective Jan. 1, 1995).
- HB 4326, which bans resigning lawmakers from becoming lobbyists or lobbying agents during the term of which to which they were elected (effective Jan. 1, 1995).

WW group names PR coordinator

MaryLou McKerrill has been promoted to regional public relations coordinator at The Weight Watchers Group Inc., based in Farmington Hills.

McKerrill previously served as the company's public relations coordinator.

In her new position, McKerrill is responsible for media relations and ongoing public relations projects for The W W Group Inc., which operates Weight Watchers franchises in eight states in the United States and in Canada.

Prior to working at The W W Group Inc., McKerrill served as director of special events for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation's

Metropolitan Detroit chapter in Troy. She previously worked as public relations/promotion coordinator at WJBK-TV Channel 2, and as program coordinator for WKYT-AM.

McKerrill received a bachelor's degree in communication from Oakland University. She is pursuing a master's degree from Wayne State University and is a member of the Public Relations Society of America.

McKerrill lives in Commerce Township with her husband, Daniel, and son, Nicholas. In her leisure time, she enjoys English horseback riding, biking, walking and aerobics.



MaryLou McKerrill

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