

Dis'ing on the (satellite) dish; Cable TV can offer much more

CABLE CONNECTION



MARY LINDA CALDERONE

Before you run out the door to buy a mini-satellite dish this holiday season, read this and think twice. I'm going to "dish" it out to you on the dish.

Being the value-conscious consumer that you are, you'll probably want to know first the cost of the mini-dish which is approximately \$700 to \$900. That doesn't include installation which will run you another \$160 to \$200. If you're truly handy, however, you can pay \$50 for a do-it-yourself kit. Cable TV installation, on the other hand, is running under \$20 at this time.

Sorry to tell you but your expenses don't end with the purchase of mini-dish equipment and installation. As with cable TV, all programming must be purchased on a monthly subscription basis. Comparatively speaking, basic cable monthly subscription rates are \$5 to \$10 lower.

I sure hope everyone in your household likes watching the same show. The mini-dish can only be connected directly to one receiver, meaning you get reception on only one television. Or for a \$500 to \$800 equipment fee you can connect an additional TV. On the other hand, extra outlets for cable TV cost under \$20 to install and there is no monthly fee.

You'll hear all this hype about mini-dishes offering superior video and audio quality of up to 175 channels. Yes, the all digital system of the dish will make the picture look better and the sound will be improved but the catch is in the "up to" 175 channels.

They don't have 175 channels on the system yet. The truth of the matter is mini-dishes carry about 70 channels compared to 64 on your cable service. Guess what the other channels on the mini-dish are composed of? Some are strictly audio channels which do air compact-disc quality audio programming and play without interruption.

But you can get that on cable too — it's called DMX. The majority of the other channels are pay-per-view channels. Herein lies the real advantage of the mini-dish, more pay-per-view channels. Anyway, many cable systems, including Time Warner in our communities, will be upgrading to fiber optics. According to Dan Dinsmore, Time Warner Marketing Manager, "This will mean added channel capacity, clearer pictures with greater reliability and even interactive services such as video games and libraries of information right at your fingertips."

By the fall of 1996, subscribers will see the completion of a fiber optic system in Farmington, Novi and Farmington Hills.

If you're still set on running out and buying the mini-dish, I sure hope you won't miss watching the local news on your broadcast affiliates (CBS, NBC, FOX and ABC) because federal regulations prohibit satellite program services from carrying broadcast-network affiliates' programming into areas already serviced by local TV channels.

That means you also won't get local sports coverage on the local affiliates. And, sports fans beware, some mini-dishes don't carry PASS. With the mini-dish you'd also be missing all of your local access channels, like our Community Bulletin Board, Channel 3, City of Farmington/Farmington Hills Channel 8, Educational Access-Channel 10, and INFO TV-12-Community Access.

You can always hold on to your TV antenna or subscribe to basic cable TV service. But, aren't you right back where we started from? While the mini-dish does truly give excellent video and audio quality, it's not perfect. Heavy winds and storms can blow the dish out of tune, causing the picture to freeze-frame or go out completely for a few minutes at a time. After your one-year warranty, service isn't free either. With cable TV (if the picture gets fuzzy or the box goes bad) there is no charge for normal service and repair.

Last, but not least, check with our municipality. Some cities require permits to put up a dish and other cities are in the process of revising ordinances.

I guess I've put the "dish" on the dish. Anyway what good is a dish if you can't eat out of it?

The next SWOCC meeting is Jan. 9 at 4:30 p.m. in Farmington City Hall. The next CAC meeting is Jan. 9 at 7 p.m. in SWOCC office.

Mary Linda Calderone is the Community Outreach Coordinator for the Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission.

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Public Notice

The Bon Ton Shoppe will be closed on Christmas Eve, Sunday, December 24th and Christmas Day, Monday, December 25th, to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, our Savior. The staff of Bon Ton Shoppe invites you to join them and their families to make this a most Joyous Holiday.



To help you wrap up your Christmas Shopping, our whole staff will be anxious to assist you through 9 p.m. on Saturday, December 23rd. A gift from Bon Ton Shoppe is surely to be appreciated.

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