

# Kids pick up bus for youth programs

**BY WILLIAM COULTANT  
STAFF WRITER**

Farmington Hills teens involved with the city's decentralized youth program are getting SMART -- a bus, that is.

As part of the effort to tailor the regional bus system to the needs of communities it serves, SMART is using part of the millage increase passed last year to tailor transportation needs.

To that end, Farmington Hills' Decentralized Youth Program has a new (although used) 18-passenger bus, equipped for handicapped passengers.

SMART General Manager Richard Kaufman joined Hills Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi, program Director Todd Lipa, Hills City

**'This is really the beginning of a community-based service plan.'**

*Richard Kaufman  
—SMART GM*

Manager Daniel Hobbs and other officials at a ceremony Wednesday. Several of those who will ride the bus, the kids, also came.

"This is really the beginning of a community based service plan," Kaufman said. "We'll continue to have our main bus lines, but have more specialized services as well."

Kaufman said Harrison Town-

ship in Macomb County and Farmington Hills are the first two communities to have the specialized transportation. Dearborn Heights and Warren will also take part.

Dan Potter, Hills director of special services, said the city will receive the use of two seven-passenger mini-vans later this year for the city's senior citizens program, and another 15-passenger bus next year.

"These are primarily aimed at our youth and seniors programs," Potter said.

The bus will be used to take youngsters on field trips and transport them from one center,

such as the Costick Center, to another, such as the ice arena.

Mayor Vagnozzi said the bus could also be used if the youth program can be run during the summer, which has been discussed. The Farmington Public Schools now transports students to the Costick Center and will take them to the other two centers -- the ice arena and the YMCA -- during the school year.

SMART picks up 80 percent of the cost of the buses, with the city matching with 20 percent that is already budgeted.

"This will certainly help with both our seniors and youth programs," Vagnozzi said.



**Ride on:** Kids get a chance to ride the SMART bus available for both youth and senior programs in Farmington Hills.

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board looked for fund-raising ideas and came up with the ball, which raise more than \$35,000 last year. This year, the Observ-

er and Eccentric Newspapers, Botsford Hospital and Michigan National Bank have already committed to donations of \$10,000 each as even co-sponsors.

"This is an ideal example of the private sector and public sector working in unison," Daguanno said.

Event Co-chairwoman Joanne Smith said in addition to the three sponsors, others have shown support.

"We have five or six groups that have are going to have their own table (\$800)," said the former Farmington Hills mayor. Last year 187 attended. Smith said this year more than 200 are

expected to attend.

"We're still sending out invitations," she said.

The program begins at 6:15 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 9 with a silent auction. Dinner is at 7:30 p.m. catered by Gourmet Express.

There will be music, dancing and another auction after dinner.

For information or tickets, call 473-1841.

Daguanno said last year's success was something of a surprise considering the event was organized on short notice.

"This year we've had a lot more time," he said. "And the 501C status (tax deductible) also has something to do with it."

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by Richard W. Milder, P.T., A.C.C., M.S.

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