

Buckled better

Harrison 'belts' North in student challenge

BY WILLIAM COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

A friendly competition between North Farmington and Harrison high schools produced a surprising result.

As part of the Oakland County Safe, Sober and Secure campaign sponsored by the Traffic Improvement Association of Oakland County, students from the two Farmington Hills high schools were surveyed by AAA Michigan in April to see how many were using seat belts.

The "Safety Belt Challenge" began with a parking lot survey on April 9 by the AAA Farmington branch staff. They found that drivers and passengers in 64 percent of the 201 cars counted at North and 76 percent of the 112 cars counted at Harrison

were wearing seat belts.

Over the next month and a half, the Students Against Drunk Driving chapters of the two schools put up posters and emphasized seat belt use within class rooms and driver's education classes in an effort to increase seat-belt usage.

Even though Harrison had a higher usage rate, the school that showed the most improvement would be rewarded with prizes provided by several companies including McDonald's, Papa Romano's, the Laurel Park AMC Theater, Fantastic Sam's and the TIA.

AAA presented a trophy to Harrison High School Wednesday after they improved to a phenomenal 87.1 percent from the already high 72.1 percent.

More surprisingly, North seat belt use actually declined by a percent to 65.6.

"That's a little surprising considering North had a lot more room to improve," said Hills Traffic Division Supervisor Sgt. Dennis Green. "But it was meant as a friendly competition."

Harrison students can feel good about their high seat belt use and response to the public information campaign, said Joan Poor, AAA Michigan District Manager.

"Harrison High students led during both rounds," Poor said. "But in reality, we consider both schools winners."

Farmington Hills police Chief Bill Dwyer praised the students and is hoping for an even higher rate.

"Next year's challenge will be to reach a 100 percent usage rate for all high school students."

The "Safe, Sober and Secure Campaign" is managed by the TIA in partnership with seven Oakland County law enforce-

ment agencies and AAA Michigan. The campaign stressed the importance of safety belt use, obeying Michigan speed laws and not drinking and driving.

The campaign is paid for through grants from the Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning.

Another aspect of the campaign will be increased speed enforcement in Farmington Hills and other communities over the Memorial Day weekend, Sgt. Green said.

Green said the third wave of a four-wave program of selected enforcement in troublesome areas will be in place during the holiday weekend.

Thanks to a \$90,000 state grant, Farmington Hills officers and those of six other police agencies will be given overtime for the specific task of targeting speeders during Thanksgiving of 1996, Christmas and New Year's of 1996, the upcoming Memorial Day weekend and the July 4 weekend.

Mexican Garden II builds a new legacy



BY TODD WICKS
STAFF WRITER

To ensure that his new Farmington Hills restaurant would be a success, Hector Sr. Puente Sr. took a clue from Hollywood: he

experience."

The Legacy's opening required a thorough renovation of the former Comeria building at its Grand River location, between Drako and Halsted. Over a year of work went into turning the former bank, complete with vault and drive-through window area, into a restaurant.

But location is about the only connection between the fancy Legacy and Mexican Garden II. Instead of jazz and opera music, strolling mariachis may make an appearance. Prices are lower as well. Berlanga estimated that drinks and dinner for two would run about \$18-25, and called the steak and chicken fajitas their number one sellers.

"You know Mexicantown downtown? A lot of customers come in and say that their (fajitas) can't even compare to ours," said Berlanga.

The Southgate location is also known for its margaritas and daiquiris, and carries many Mexican beers in addition to American favorites. Unlike The Legacy, Mexican Garden II will also feature a carryout menu.

"With all of the apartments and businesses around here, one people taste our carryout food, they'll be back," assured Berlanga.

Mexican Garden II will be open from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven days a week.

Berlanga is also hiring a completely new staff, and has many positions open; call 474-8417 for more information.

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Raczkowski's amendments trim rights of prisoners

State prisoners wouldn't get sex change operations or access to the Internet. And they would pay \$5 instead of \$3 as a co-pay for medical treatment.

State Rep. Andrew Raczkowski (R-Farmington Hills) offered those three successful amendments recently when the state House of Representatives approved the \$1.3 million Corrections Department budget. The plan goes to the state Senate next.

On prohibiting sex change operations and related drug therapy for prisoners, Raczkowski said, "It is shameful that taxpayer dollars are paying for this sort of thing, especially when the public's priority is fixing our crumbling roads."

The other two amendments were also important, he said.

"We don't need prisoners out surfing the 'net,' linking to pornographic material or making contact with others to arrange illegal activity," he said. "By increasing the co-pay on non-emergency medical procedures, we are raising funds to help pay for those services."

Two of Raczkowski's prison budget amendments were rejected. One aimed to eliminate athletic director positions in state prisons and a second instituted a pilot program in which prisoners sleep in shifts.

Raczkowski called for the athletic director posts to be eliminated in favor of putting low-risk prisoners onto chain gangs to clean and repair roads; more dangerous felons would be "busting rocks in the prison yard," he said.

The plan for shifting sleep would put one shift of prisoners out working or in the exercise yard while the other group is sleeping — cutting the need for more prison cells, he said.

Ice Cream Fest set

The Farmington Musicals will end the season with an old-fashioned Ice Cream Festival and Bake Sale on Saturday, June 7, from 1 to 5 p.m. at the Finnish Cultural Center on Eight Mile west of Farmington Road.

There will be entertainment, including Barbarehoppers and music of all types, games for children and activities for all ages, plus Guernsey ice cream, strawberries, and Sanders fudge in cones, floats, sodas and sundaes.