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SEVENTY-FIVE CENTS

Farmington Observer

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Move Meals: Forgotten Harvest needs your help to supply fresh food to the hungry./A5

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Packing tips: Travel expert says the secret for women is to take 'one' suitcase and select a versatile wardrobe./B4

What's up Doc?: Bugs Bunny visits mall to dedicate new stamp./B4

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College bound: Farmington Hills athletes C.J. Ghannam and Tricia Traczyk will continue their athletic careers at Division I universities next year./D1

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One stop: Shopping for man's best friend is easier thanks to Pet Supplies Plus founder Jack Berry of Farmington./E1

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Attorney: Pressure caused guilty plea in Hills murder

BY WILLIAM COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

George Tyrone Davis doesn't want to be pressured into a guilty plea.

His attorney, Norman Robiner, said that is why his client has hired him to get a plea to second-degree murder withdrawn.

Davis of Westland and Arthur Hollingsworth Cayce of Farmington Hills, both 24, were charged with first-degree murder in the death of two Farmington Hills women who were killed in an arson fire of their Quail Hollow house in December of 1995.

Cayce was convicted of first-degree murder, which carries a mandatory life sentence, in December of 1996. Davis was scheduled for an April trial but agreed to a second-degree plea for his part in the killings just prior to the trial's start.

"He did not have much time to make up his mind," Robiner said. "He was under a great deal of pressure."

Robiner will file a motion that will be orally argued before Judge Barry Howard in Oakland County Circuit Court on July 9. Judge Howard has the discretion to allow Davis to withdraw the plea or not.

"The court rules specify that the request be 'liberally granted,'" he said, "as long as it isn't a frivolous request."

If Davis' plea is not withdrawn he would face anywhere from 12 years to life in prison. A first-degree conviction would mean mandatory life in prison without parole.

If Davis takes the chance of going to trial on the first-degree charge, he could be found guilty of that charge or any number of lesser charges.

"A jury could find him guilty of arson and one of the other charges, or nothing," Robiner said.

Robiner and Davis' previous counsel, Jose Fanego, have said that their client was being punished for helping police with information that led to the conviction of Cayce.

"That's why I tell our clients not to talk to police until they've talked to their lawyer," he said.



Oh yeah: The thrill of victory shows for adult education graduate Jennifer Cates, at the conclusion of the ceremony Wednesday.



Big day: Joe Schaefer holds up his 2-year-old son so the toddler could see his mom, Amy LaCler, in the procession.

Tears of joy:
Bobbie Jean
Dickerson
hugs Alternative
Academy
teacher
Linda Gold.



Obstacles can't stop adult grads

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Some waited more than 40 years; others considerably less to take advantage of their second chance.

Together, they celebrated during the Farmington Adult Education graduation ceremony Wednesday at Farmington High Auditorium. This year's class included 72 students, representing a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences.

Adelle Thompson, 63, was particularly looking forward to her graduation party — with her granddaughter, who was also getting her diploma from Livonia Churchill High.

Thompson, who is hearing impaired, rode her bike from Livonia to get to Farmington Community School for adult ed classes.

"She's overcome a lot of obstacles," said Terry Leonard, Adult and Community Ed supervisor.

Patricia Lesondak, 33, of Farmington Hills had a few hurdles of her own. She is a working mom with three children, ages 10, 7 and 6.

She left Harrison High at 18 and, after a few unsuccessful attempts, finally earned her diploma.

"For the kids and for my career, I just wanted to get something going," said Lesondak, who will attend Oakland Community College in the fall.

Lesondak, who plans to study Early Childhood

Please see GRADUATION, A5

Traffic fines speed upward



BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

The price tag on speeding has accelerated well above inflation.

Motorists ticketed for going over the speed limit by 1-10 miles an hour in the Farmington area are paying \$110 instead of \$75 for fines — a 31 percent increase. The 47th District Court imposed higher fines across the board for motor vehicle violations starting June 1.

The new fine schedule is not seen as punitive as it is prudent financially, a court administrator said.

At the behest of both Farmington and Farmington Hills, the court did a cost analysis and found the previous fine schedule didn't recoup nearly the money spent administering civil infractions.

An estimated \$167 is spent with court, police and prosecution costs on each ticket issued, court officials said. The increase doesn't fully recover the costs, but at least lessens the gap.

"The feeling of the judges and myself is that it is more appropriate to recover the money from those individuals getting the tickets instead of those costs being borne out of the general fund and through

Please see FINES, A7

Few voters expected Monday

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

A 5-percent interest rate may make a nice return at a bank, but it's not an encouraging statement on the community's curiosity in a school election.

Last year, 2,956 — 5 percent — of registered voters cast ballots in the Farmington school election, which was won by incumbent Joe Svoke and challenger Priscilla Brouillette. Turnout isn't expected to be any better this year.

Mark Clevey, Frank Reid and Bobbie Feldman are running for two open seats in Monday's Farmington school election. Polls are open 7 a.m.

Please see ELECTION, A2

Farmington Road over I-696 closes Tuesday

BY WILLIAM COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

Beginning Tuesday and for the next 10 weeks, Farmington Road will be completely closed to through traffic while the bridge over I-696 is repaired.

The City of Farmington Hills had considered other ways to repair the bridge, including shutting down one lane at a time. But the city council, instead opted to repair the bridge by completely closing the road, thereby finishing the project in a shorter time during the summer months while traffic is lighter.

"The schools will be out and OCC (Oakland Community College)

Orchard Ridge campus) sees less students during that time," said City Engineer Skip Ottwell.

That will mean motorists will need to use Orchard Lake Road from 11 to 12 Mile.

Signs have been up for two weeks and the road will not be closed until Tuesday, giving motorists Monday before pulling the rug.

Ottwell said the city expects the project to be completed on time.

"It's very doable," he said, adding that the city has extended the hours when the contractor can work beyond the 7 p.m. curfew.

"It's not too near any residential

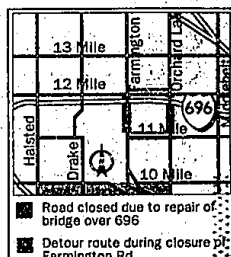
area," he said.

Motorists won't be able to cut through OCC because that road is closed.

A left-turn phase on the traffic signal at 11 Mile and Orchard Lake will be operating, giving eastbound traffic better flow through the detour, especially at rush hour.

Ottwell said letters have been sent out to businesses and subdivision associations in the area to prepare them for the change, but there is always something of a glut on the first day of the detour.

"There's one thing we forgot," Ottwell said. "We don't know what it is, but we'll find out Tuesday."



Big job

Now that graduation and the all-night party is just recent history, plans for next year's bash are already under way.

But, what happens to the props — huge, fake palm trees, roulette wheels, etc. — between now and then?

Jean English, whose daughter will be a class officer next year at Harrison, is inheriting the large bags of items and huge pieces of bench scenery until next year's party. However, she needs some storage space. The school building can't be used, though.

Anyone who can donate storage space should call her at 477-4995.

FARMINGTON FOCUS

Message in a bottle

Josh Rollins wasn't just littering the Gulf of Mexico.

The 9-year-old Farmington boy decided to seek a pen pal through a tried and true method while on a family cruise off the Yucatan Peninsula in February.

He wrote out a request — and got help with a Spanish translation — before stuffing it in a two-liter plastic bottle and tossing it overboard.

More than two months later, Josh got a letter from a woman in Texas whose condominium is right on the Gulf. "She wrote him back and said write me back or visit," said Julie Rollins, Josh's mom.

She also sent a packet of postcards and other information about her part of the country, including an arrow on a postcard showing where she'd found the bottle. "She really took some time with it," Rollins said.

Josh shared his pen pal's mailing with his classmates at Longacre Elementary before the school year ended.