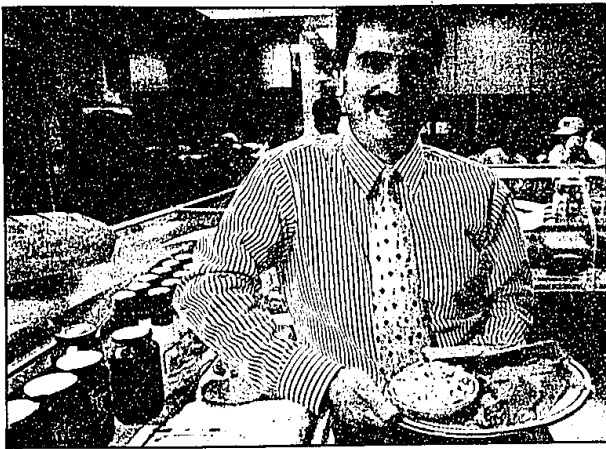




Bread for success: Jaz Delicatessen and Restaurant's Jamal Abu-Zahra makes the rye bread that provides that deli-style flavor to sandwiches sold at the eatery in Muirwood Square on Grand River and Drake.

Owner resurrects deli spot with 'Jaz' appeal

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER



A thriving delicatessen counts on savory bread, succulent corned beef and hearty matzo ball soup. Jamal Abu-Zahra had all three. He just needed the deli.

Now that he has one — Jaz Delicatessen and Restaurant in Muirwood Square on Grand River and Drake — is busy trying to resurrect what once was a bustling business spot that had been dormant. The previous location housed Lox Stock and Barrel, a deli whose fresh bread and sandwiches were hallmarks for lunchtime denizens.

The owner sold the business and then, inexplicably, Lox Stock and Barrel remained closed for a year and a half.

"I knew it's an uphill battle," said Abu-Zahra, who reopened the deli under a new name three months ago. "So far the response has been tremendous. They like the food; they like the menu."

Business has tripled since Zahra opened, but it's not up to the foot traffic levels Lox Stock and Barrel once enjoyed, he said.

The restaurant has potential for other reasons, Abu-Zahra said. He should know since he used to deliver the previous deli its aforementioned bread.

In fact, Abu-Zahra wanted to acquire the deli two years ago but was nudged out by another buyer.

"When I first came to Lox Stock and Barrel, I found they had a lot of offices in this area," he said. "I have several accounts around here. From that point of view, I knew I could use my experience and make this successful."

He's revamped the menu to include pasta dishes, provided a larger retail area that includes imported goods, herbal teas and other drinks for carry-out customers. He's also added a cappuccino machine. "People like to have cappuccino in the morning," he said.

Dinner (ranging \$5.45-\$9.35), lunch (\$2.75-\$6.25) and breakfast (\$1.99-\$3.95) are served daily. A grand opening is planned Friday, Aug. 15.

Aside from being a vibrant delicatessen, Abu-Zahra sees his establishment as evolving into a neighborhood restaurant. He already knows half his customers by name, including one who managed to buy some sausage for the deli in a pinch when the eatery unexpectedly ran out.

Restaurants are familiar terrain for the Jordan native, who emigrated to the U.S. to pursue an electrical engineering degree, he started work as a janitor at a Red Lobster.

"I guess I got stupid; I wanted to make money faster," he said.

Abu-Zahra worked his way up to general manager and went onto become "manager of the year" in the J.B. Restaurant group, which owned Big Boys, Old City Jax, Apple Butter Farms and Red Lobsters. He operated restaurants in California, Idaho, New Mexico and Arizona.

He also owned a Big Boy in Wayne and ran Paint Creek Golf Course's eatery with his brother Nick, who is a chef at the Townsend Hotel.

He praises his staff, which includes a chef whose chicken soup was cited as the best in a "Detroit Monthly" survey.

Zahra Distributing still delivers bread to 43 customers, including those who are competitors in the delicatessen business. Competition is fierce.

Jaz is surrounded by three eateries in Muirwood alone: O'Shuck's Raw Bar & Grill, Cookie's Carryout & Catering and Papa Romanos.

"I'm not competing with anyone," Abu-Zahra said. "I believe if you give good food, good service at the right price, you'll be number one."

William Grace principal catches up with president

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

William Grace Elementary School principal Kayleen Hill has a tenuous link, at best, to President Bill Clinton. The mother of one of her former students baby-sat a much younger Clinton.

But the Farmington district educator is using it to the fullest. Hill, and other members of the National Association of Elementary School Principals, recently heard from the chief executive about his goal to improve national education standards.

The president addressed the elementary school leaders during a conference held Friday, July 25, in Washington, D.C.

During one point after the proceedings, Hill shook hands and spoke to Clinton about that ex-student's mom who once baby-sat him in Hope, Ark., where the president grew up.

"I mentioned that I know her (the baby-sitting mom)," said Hill, noting that she taught the student in Maryland.

But she added that Clinton had an "it's-a-small-world" tidbit to share with her, too. "It turned out that this woman's son is one of Clinton's aides, Thomas Beecher."

Small talk aside, Hill said the president's comments about education were well received. "It was a revved-up crowd. It's just exciting to be in that presence."

Clinton told the elementary school principals that districts in a number of the country's top



Prez says: President Bill Clinton and Principal Kayleen Hill share tidbits about a former baby-sitter both know at a meeting July 25.

urban areas, including Detroit, have signed on to a concept outlined in his State of the Union address: his initiative to promote standardized testing in reading and math, by 1999, for all fourth and eighth graders, respectively.

"He wants to be known as the 'education president,'" Hill said. "He's very concerned about educational issues and children's issues, and about raising the standard of testing."

"Funding is a big one. . . He's given us more money than any previous president. And the fact that he wanted to address us as school principals meant we must have been somewhat important."

Principals also lobbied on Capitol Hill for the need to promote professional development for educators, primarily through the Higher Education Act, being reconsidered by Congress; health-care legislation for children; and federal education funding for elementary and secondary schools.

The principals group capped off the July 25 meeting by presenting Clinton an engraved bell, said Hill, president-elect of the Michigan Elementary and Middle School Principals' Association and former principal at Farmington's Forest Elementary School.

AGENDAS

Farmington City Council
City hall, 474-5500
8 p.m. Monday, Aug. 4

Agenda items include:
■ Presentation by Jennifer Hoemke, Miss Farmington 1997-98.

■ Consider professional service agreements for site assessments related to the underground storage tank removal project.

■ Consider purchase of replica

columns for the Historical Museum.

■ City manager report on Farmington Road maintenance agreement.

■ Consider disposal of canceled principal and interest bond coupons.

■ Consider appointment to Downtown Development Authority.

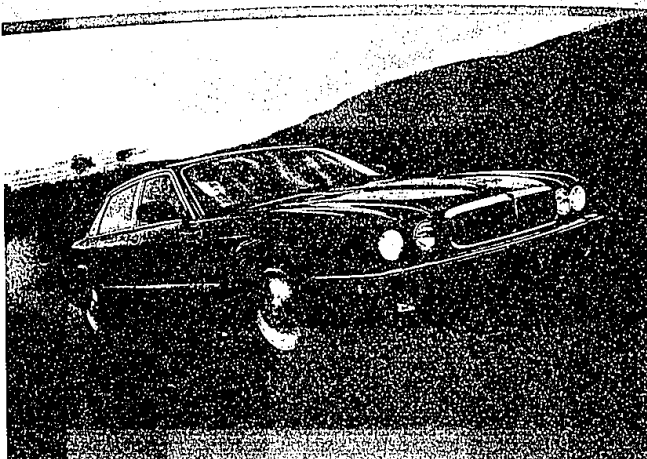
■ Adopt ordinance amending city's retirement ordinance.

Farmington Downtown Development Authority
Farmington City Hall, 473-7276; 474-5500
8 a.m. Tuesday, Aug. 5

Agenda items include:
■ Update on Central Business District planning by Grissim & Associates.

■ Update on storefront planters-city property.

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Ordinance puts kibosh on apartment, condo barbecues

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

It bears repeating every summer. Barbecues are a no-no for many residents who live in Farmington's 26-30 apartment and condominium complexes, said public safety Commander Maria Putt.

According to a Farmington city ordinance, gas grills and barbecues cannot be used: 1. at higher than ground level or 2. in any apartment complex.

While most residents are well aware of the rules, the city likes to remind them during each barbecue season. The ordinance — the same as one on the books in the city of Farmington Hills — also prohibits gas grills and barbecues on second floor balconies.

"We remind them every year for the safety aspect," said Putt, perusing the 10 top barbecue safety tips provided to Farmington Fire Marshal Joe Schumack by the Safety Council for Southeast Michigan. "Even though instances (of such fires) are low."

The ordinance doesn't just pertain to balcony dwellers. Putt noted that on-the-ground grills must be kept at least eight feet away from the building.

Some of the safety tips are common sense, such as having a fire extinguisher and oven mitts near the grill and turning off the propane when finished.

Top 10 tips

Following are the top barbecue tips for a safe cookout season, as provided by the Safety Council for Southeast Michigan:

- Make sure the grill is clean. Use steel wool or a hard brush to remove any baked-on grime.
- Keep the grill on a level surface away from

■ 'We remind them every year for the safety aspect. Even though instances (of such fires) are low.'

Cmdr. Maria Putt
—Farmington Public Safety

children, foliage, chemicals, and house, garage or apartment.

■ Wear an apron and avoid wearing baggy clothing.

■ Use long-handled utensils and sharp knives for cooking. Keep them handy to avoid having to leave the fire unattended.

■ Have a water bottle and a fire extinguisher close by in case of a sudden flare up.

■ Line the bottom of the barbecue with aluminum foil and cover it with an inch of ash to absorb grease drippings. Stack the charcoal in a pyramid shape at the center of the grill.

■ Read the directions on the lighter fluid container carefully. Use only the suggested amount, and allow it to soak into the coals for a minute before lighting.

■ To start the fire, throw a lighted match onto the coals or use a fireplace match. Wait until the coals are ash covered (which usually takes about a half hour) and then use a poker to spread them out evenly in the grill. Replace the food rack and begin cooking.

■ If the coals are too hot, spread them out. And, if they're too cool, gather them closer together. Never squirt a starter fluid on a fire or hot coals.

■ Douse the grill thoroughly with water when finished. Close the grill's vent and allow the coals to cool overnight. Dispose of them in a non-flammable container.