

### Staying power

### Hobbs takes business initiative

**F**armington Hills officials have their work cut out for them. One of the city's biggest corporate residents, the \$6-billion computer software giant Compuware, is facing continued growth and a need to expand. Sometime in the next six to 12 months, company officials say they'll make a decision on where those new facilities will be built.

Compuware Chairman Peter Karmanos announced in a published report last month that he was looking in earnest at Detroit as the place he wanted to be, with the idea of moving his company and its 3,000 employees.

Soon after, company officials we interviewed backpedaled a bit. A spokesman said moving to Detroit was just one of the many options being considered, but he noted that it was "vastly premature" to say the firm is definitely leaving Farmington Hills.

That seems to leave the window of opportunity slightly ajar for city officials. And they're planning to take advantage.

City Manager Dan Hobbs sounded emphatic at a meeting of the Interagency Council of Farmington/Farmington Hills two weeks ago: "We're not going to lose them." He said he had spoken to Compuware officials who said the published report was "overblown." Hobbs also pledged to team up with Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi to meet with Compuware officials to see what could be done to convince them to stay or build elsewhere in Farmington Hills.

It wouldn't be fair to say Farmington Hills officials are making some kind of knee-jerk reaction to the Compuware situation. Actually, back in February, Hobbs' state of the city report outlined the need for a new city administrator — hired within the current number of

employees — to focus on economic development. Topping his listed needs were "business retention" followed by "looking for opportunities to expand existing businesses," according to the report.

The reasons are simple. Farmington Hills' tax base is more than one-third commercial — meaning 36 cents of every tax dollar that pays the cost of police, fire, trash services, parks, local roads, etc. comes from the business community. Every new business investment — like the new Calsonic North America headquarters and testing facility that hosts a grand opening this week (you can read about it in Sunday's Observer) — boosts commercial tax base and means homeowners pay less.

Focusing on economic development shouldn't mean giving businesses everything they want and trampling homeowner rights. On the other hand, a community can't ignore the needs of its commercial residents.

This isn't the first time Farmington Hills has seen one of its bigger business residents looking toward Detroit for a new headquarters. Former Mayor Ben Marks, who listened to Hobbs' comments on retaining business during the Interagency meeting, recounted how he woke up one Monday morning a few years back to find out that Little Caesars was relocating its pizza operation to Detroit. "Don't get lulled into a false sense of security like we did with Little Caesars," Marks said.

Hobbs' focus on economic development and business retention shows he isn't taking for granted Farmington Hills' rich commercial tax base. Now, we'll see if he can meet his pledge of keeping Compuware here.

### Common quest helps them help others

**C**olor it compassion. That's the impetus behind an Oakland County human service agency whose volunteers are grounded in a common quest to help people prevent and cope with crisis, however imminent.

Called Common Ground, the 24-hour crisis intervention center has been dispensing a commonly sought elixir for survival since 1970. As services grew over the years, the headquarters moved from Birmingham to Royal Oak to Pontiac. But the agency's mission hasn't changed: to help people escape from an emotional briar patch.

Oakland County Community Mental Health, plus public and private grants, fund Common Ground's nearly \$2 million budget. The biggest fund-raiser: Birmingham Art in the Park, held each September in Shain Park. Common Ground came away with upwards of \$95,000 on Sept. 6-7, thanks in part to the spirituality of healing that fine art and a kind heart evoke.

Common Ground's signature service is round-the-clock telephone crisis intervention. Staffers and volunteers trained in tackling mental health concerns take 20,000 calls a year from people at the brink. Counselors practice timeliness and caring amid hysteria and tears. They tap an information and referral library to provide telephone numbers and facts from 4,500 community and professional resources. Walk-in counseling is available, too.

Related crisis intervention services include a victims' assistance program, a legal clinic and youth interaction programs. Community outreach and training deal with crisis intervention, workplace stress, suicide, parenting, self-esteem, child abuse and sexual abuse.

Common Ground also is the coordinating agency for the Oakland County Crisis Response Team, formed in the wake of the 1991 Royal Oak Post Office shootings. The team assists groups or communities struggling to withstand the claws of a crisis.

Common Ground volunteers bring a range of social experiences. They know how to care,

#### OAKLAND WATCH



BOB SKLAR

calm and communicate. They aren't experts, but have on-site access to social workers, nurses and psychiatrists. They can get immediate help on suicide prevention, rape counseling, domestic violence and drug rehabilitation. To become a volunteer, please call (248) 466-8180.

Common Ground sprouted from a Birmingham-Bloomfield hotline started in 1969 mainly to help teens battle substance abuse. Then as now, volunteers included young people dedicated to helping themselves and their peers — creating a common ground from which to turn their lives around. Then as now, drug and alcohol problems were grave concerns, although the age range of typical callers has shifted from 18 to 20 to 30 to 50, a byproduct of school teen counseling services.

A key new Common Ground service offers emergency psychiatric screening, treatment and referral. Another is the Common Ground Phone Card — a 60-minute, rechargeable card selling for \$20. More than 37 cents of every dollar raised by the card are ticketed for telephone crisis intervention.

For 26 years, Common Ground has helped stand sentry over Oakland County residents — spurring them to find hope, courage and energy amid darkness, fear and lethargy.

Bob Sklar is managing editor of our Oakland County editions.

#### QUESTION:

Compared to five years ago, what do you do differently to help you stay healthy?

We asked this question outside the Farmington Post Office.



I think I am at least as healthy as five years ago. I eat more fruit and do regular exercise. I go to aerobics twice a week, and I also do walking and bicycling.

Patricia Craig works in Farmington Hills



I eat healthy, trying to eat less fat and more fruits and vegetables. I also power walk with my dog about three or four times a week.

Stacy Buatti Farmington Hills



I eat better, not as much fried food. I don't exercise every day, but I enjoy running or jogging once or twice a week and other kinds of activities.

Chris Brugman Farmington Hills



I don't eat as much red meat as I did five years ago. I think I probably ate meat every day, but now, it's fish, cheese or chicken. I also swim every day (when) in Florida.

B. J. Thompson Farmington Hills

#### LETTERS

##### Get ready for technology

I must take exception to Patricia Alsop's remarks in the Sept. 11 article on the school bond issue. (To be honest, I am weary of her tirades in your paper altogether.) As a parent of three children in the school district, school media specialist in a neighboring district, and former public librarian, I find her comment "in the time it takes to log onto a computer, you can open a book and get what you need" to be uninformed and irresponsible. Yes, you can, on some subjects. But we are accumulating and updating information at a far faster rate than it can be published, and neither media centers nor public libraries could afford to buy books on every topic even if they were available. For example, a young man came to me last week looking for information for an opinion paper on NASA's upcoming Cassini launch, controversial because of the plutonium that will be on board. There are no books on this subject. Searching the Internet took 10 minutes.

To paraphrase a well-known saying, "we can educate our children to live in our past, or teach them to live in their future." Their future will be laden with technology. It's time to get them ready for it.

Denise Moll Farmington Hills

##### Stick to smoking, speeding

Regarding staff writer Larry O'Connor's story in the Sept. 4, 1997 Observer, "3rd suicide in 3 weeks riles police," I can see how it must be frustrating to Chief of Police Bill Dwyer. Three dead bodies in three weeks, two in local motels and one at the person's home, with notes found referring to attorney Geoffrey Fieger and Dr. Jack Kevorkian, has to be unnerving, especially to the cleaning persons in the motels who discovered them.

Chief Dwyer complained that because of lack of cooperation from Fieger and Kevorkian police had to conduct full homicide investigations and a lot of detective work. But do not these operations have to be conducted in any case? The police have to have full investigative records no matter what in the case of Kevorkian assisted suicides don't they, in case some brave prosecutor decides to take on Fieger in court?

If Chief Dwyer thinks Kevorkian has broken any laws, such as leaving dead bodies lying around, why not bring charges against him? If the Farmington Hills Police Department and Chief Dwyer are half as good at doing their jobs as they would like us to believe, why not go after these guys? Sure, taking on Fieger and Kevorkian would be harder than the usual police work of ticketing motorists or kids smoking on school property, but what the hey? Why not go for the big ones? Or is it always police practice to just take on the easy targets and let the tough cases go because they are just too tough? Are

our police real heroes or just paper tigers when the going gets tough?

From what I've seen in past Kevorkian cases, even though he has admitted to assisting in suicides, Fieger has successfully run interference for him. So I guess we really can't fault Dwyer or our police department. They know when they are whipped before they even begin on a Kevorkian/Fieger case. There are always plenty of speeding motorists and kids smoking to keep them busy.

Kenneth Kemp Farmington Hills

##### Simple pleasures vs. drugs

I found two Aug. 28 articles in the Farmington Observer very informative regarding the ongoing drug war. The funding certainly helps enforcement agencies, but is small compared to the amounts made by drug dealers. What really bothers me is the fact that a man could deal drugs for 15 years and finally get indicted — worse, he was turned loose on his own recognizance. What is going on in the U.S. District Court? And why haven't the Pontiac police been able to catch him for 15 years?

It is just too darn bad that humans have to get their kicks from substances instead of loving families and simple pleasures.

Al Cooper Farmington Hills

##### End the carnage

We condemn the recent Hamas terrorist acts that tragically claimed innocent Israeli lives and caused serious injury to many others. On Aug. 20, in Gaza, Chairman Arafat was photographed embracing a major Hamas leader. This image bespeaks volumes about Mr. Arafat's two-faced approach to the peace process. We fear that Arafat cannot deliver or even commit to work in cooperation with Israel to stop the wanton bloodshed.

We urge Secretary of State Albright, as she travels in the Middle East, to carry forth the message to the Palestinian authority and Chairman Arafat that they must clamp down on terrorism and aggressively strengthen security cooperation. The carnage must end; the violence must stop. The terrorists must be caught and punished, and support cells destroyed. Only then can negotiators move ahead toward the peace for which we hope.

George Mann, International Affairs Chairman American Jewish Committee, Detroit Chapter

Opinions are to be shared: We welcome your ideas, as do your neighbors. To assure authenticity, we ask that you sign your letter and provide a contact telephone number.

Letters should be mailed to: Editor, The Farmington Observer, 33411 Grand River, Farmington Michigan 48335. Or they can be faxed to 248-477-9722.

## Farmington Observer

DAVE VARGA, COMMUNITY EDITOR, 248-477-5450  
STEVEN K. POPE, PUBLISHER & GENERAL MANAGER, 248-901-2595  
BOB SKLAR, MANAGING EDITOR, 248-901-2563  
PHILIP SHERMAN, ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR, 248-901-2259  
MARK WARREN, CIRCULATION DIRECTOR, 248-901-2548

HOMETOWN COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK, INC.

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— Philip Power

#### TURNING BACK THE PAGES

This week in history as reported in past editions of the Farmington Observer and the Farmington Enterprise.

40 YEARS AGO — SEPT. 19, 1957 (ENTERPRISE) Farmington Township Supervisor Frank Stephenson suggested the township incorporate as a city during a quarterly meeting of the Farmington Township league of Subdivision Associations.

A new S.S. Kresgo Co. store opened on Grand River, just west of Orchard Lake Road in the Farmington Plaza Shopping Center.

25 YEARS AGO — SEPT. 16-17, 1972

A public hearing was slated to discuss changes to the Farmington Historic District Ordinance, which would cover most of the historic houses in town. Homeowners would be allowed to alter their homes only if approved by the Historic District Commission, with appeals going to the city council.

2 YEARS AGO — AUG. 14, 1995

Former North Farmington High student Elizabeth Berkley was causing quite a stir as the star of the NC-17 film "Showgirls," in which she played an exotic dancer.