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IN THE PAPER TODAY

Bad bills: Counterfeit currency has shown up in Farmington Hills, and in smaller bills than usual. /A2

COUNTY

Road rumble: A battle is brewing over who will control county roads — the state or the county. /A5

TASTE

Anniversary: Excellent food and service, no gimmicks, these are some of the reasons the Golden Mushroom restaurant is still around after 25 years. /B1

MALLS & MAINSTREETS

Store Strategies: Several local retail chains present their formulas for success against the superstores. /B4

Holiday display: Hudson's annual animated, walk-through exhibit "A Christmas Carol," opens this week at Summit Place in Waterford. /B4

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Vote Tuesday on seats, parks tax



By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Fewer voters are expected to trek to the polls Tuesday, but that hasn't stopped Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi from walking and talking.

The affable Vagnozzi is running unopposed for mayor, which is one fac-

tor in a projected low turnout. Voters will have a choice in the Hills city council race where incumbents Jerry Ellis, Jon Grant and Cheryl Oliviero and challenger Massie Kurzaja are seeking three four-year council terms.

All four council hopefuls debated in a Council of Homeowners Associations' sponsored forum and received "Friends of Business" distinction from the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce.

The electorate will also be asked to renew a half mill for parks and recreation programs and whether to preserve Woodland Hills Nature Park for passive use.

Vagnozzi said he's been promoting both ballot issues during his door-to-door visits, which he's continued despite having no opponent.

During a break at a recent study session, Vagnozzi pointed to the far northeast portion of the city where he found three homes on a dirt road. It's three of

5,200 homes he visited so far.

"I'll probably do a couple hundred more this weekend," said Vagnozzi, who beat Paul Sowerby in 1996 to become the city's first directly-elected mayor. "The people expect it. I hear from time to time, 'When are you going to get to our neighborhood?'"

"I, too, was surprised there wasn't more competition, but I think the residents are generally happy with the city."

Contentment doesn't inspire voter interest, though.

Please see ELECTION, A6

Handmade dollhouse dresses up Cornucopia auction

More donations needed



Children, Youth and Families

By TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

No one would blame Charlie Bates if he didn't want to give up the Lafayette-style dollhouse he's spent more than 125 hours

assembling since September.

Or, at least keep it in the family. Such a unique dollhouse is something Charlie and Nancy Bates think would be cherished by great-granddaughter Amber, who lives in Indiana.

But Charlie doesn't think his miniature house — 20 inches tall by 20 inches wide by 14 inches deep — will be around their much-bigger house long enough to give to Amber. The two-story gray wooden dollhouse will be auctioned and services being auctioned and raffled off at the third annual Cornucopia Ball, set to begin at 8 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 15, at the William Costick Activities Center.

The gala event is the biggest fund-raiser for the year for the non-profit Farmington Hills Community Foundation for Children, Youth and Families. The foundation, which Nancy Bates was instrumental in beginning, raises money to help ensure operation of several youth centers and other programs that benefit children, youth and families in the area.

"I'm confident that it'll sell, yes," said Bates



STAFF PHOTO BY BRIAN MITCHELL

Handwork: Charlie Bates puts some of the finishing touches on a Lafayette-style dollhouse he built to be auctioned for the Farmington Hills Community Foundation for Children, Youth and Families at the Cornucopia Ball on Nov. 15. More donations are being sought.

Thursday, noting he was just some fine touches away from completing the project.

And why wouldn't it? One of the country home dollhouse's quadrant of rooms is carpeted, another has a varnished floor. In the miniature bathroom is a sink, bathtub and commode, with brass touches. The bedroom features a four-poster bed. And Charlie painstakingly glued tiny square shingles on top of the roof, which as of now goes on and off like a hat.

"It has a spiral staircase that I'll put into it later," said Charlie, who required tweezers to maneuver around tight corners inside the dollhouse. It has a

scale of one inch for one foot.

The Bates knew Charlie wanted to build something to auction off. They are also preparing a gourmet meal for one of the auction winners. But they didn't know exactly what he'd be building until September.

"We were in Kokomo, Indiana visiting Nancy's sister," Charlie explained. "We saw one just like this in a store and it hit us. Here's something I can do with my hands." It does take some thinking to get through some of the problems, though.

While wallpapering an interior wall, the glue

Please see DOLLHOUSE, A4

District's bond rating cuts taxes

By TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

An unsettled stock market last week concerned Farmington school district officials, wondering if it would have a negative impact on the bidding process for construction project bonds.

It didn't and district taxpayers will see the benefit. Following a highly competitive bidding process, the Farmington Board of Education Tuesday approved the sale of bonds to finance phase one of construction projects — \$86.4 million — included in the \$93.1 million bond issue approved Sept. 16.

"We were worried about the stock market the last couple days," Cheryl Cannon, assistant superintendent of business and operational services, said Wednesday. "We just didn't know how bidders were going to react. When there is uncertainty in the financial market, you don't know."

The size of the issue and the district's exceptional credit ranking apparently convinced eight investment firms last week to make a bid for the bonds, despite the fluctuating stock market, which later rebounded.

School board members unanimously awarded the sale to the low bidder, a syndicate led by ABN AMRO of Chicago, at a net interest rate of 5.12 percent. The high bidder came in at an interest rate of 5.17 percent.

"It was a fantastic showing," Cannon said Wednesday. "You can see how competitive

Please see BOND SALE, A4

'Rumours' told

On stage: Farmington High School students Joanna Murphy and Paul Myers rehearse the Neil Simon play "Rumours," which students will perform at 7:30 p.m. Nov. 6-8 in the Farmington High auditorium. Tickets may be purchased in advance, 2:15-3 p.m. Monday-Friday at the school, or at the door. Admission is \$6 for adults and \$5 for students. The school is on Shiuwaassee, west of Orchard Lake Road.



STAFF PHOTO BY BRIAN MITCHELL

Going national

The Rev. Mark Jensen of North Congregational church will soon be leading the National Association of Congregational Churches. Jensen was elected to the highest office of the national organization during the group's annual meeting in Atlanta, Ga. He will serve as moderator-elect during the current year, before taking over the leadership as moderator in June, 1998.

Jensen has been minister of North Congregational for almost 18 years and will continue to serve during his national term. He also serves on the board of the Farmington Hills Foundation for Children, Youth and Families and as president of the Interagency Council of Farmington/Farmington Hills. Jensen served churches in Boston and Pittsburgh before moving to Farmington Hills. He and his wife, Liane, have two college-age children.



The Rev. Jensen

FARMINGTON FOCUS

The national association is composed of churches tracing their history in America to the Pilgrims and Puritans of New England. Historically, they are known for founding colleges like Harvard and Yale.

A's for achievement

Move over athletes, Farmington High School classroom achievers are also getting prestigious block letter "F's" for their sweaters or jackets.

Nearly 400 students who maintained grade-point averages of 3.3 or higher were awarded the letters during Wednesday night's Academic Awards Program.

Space for Goodfellows

Anyone have 10,000-square feet of building space

Developer tries to swap land for density

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

A developer who wants to build on 12 acres gave nearby residents an offer they couldn't refuse. Or so he thought.

Steve Schafer of Phoenix Land Development proposed a project that would allow for a green buffer — possibly a park — and protect existing wetlands during a Farmington Hills City Council study session Tuesday at Farmington Hills Fire Station Multipurpose Room. The catch: He wants to build 70-80 multiple family units instead of 40 previously proposed.

The property is on the northeast area

of the property south of 13 Mile and east of Orchard Lake.

Highmeadow Homeowners Association members mulled the idea for 30 minutes, and said they liked the park and wetlands portion. They're not too keen on the number of units, though.

"We have a problem on the density," said Fran Valley, Highmeadow Homeowners Association president. "We feel 75 units is way too high. That's what we're stumbling over."

Schafer campaigned further.

"I don't think you can ask for a better transition than giving up seven acres,"

Please see SWAP, A6

to spare? Farmington Area Goodfellows need a facility to store food and clothing items the organization collects for needy families. Goodfellows would use the building space Nov. 15-Dec. 29.

"We leave it in better shape than when we find it," said Bob Rebtov, Farmington Hills Goodfellows vice chairman.

Call Rebtov at the Farmington Hills Fire Department 248-426-4410 or his pager 248-400-7714.

Learn about the birthday party

Jeff Stewart, chairman of the Farmington Hills 25th Anniversary Committee, will speak to the Interagency Council of Farmington/Farmington Hills at its next meeting, 7:30-9 a.m. Thursday, Nov. 6, at the Longacre House on Farmington Road.

The group meets to bring area leaders together to discuss issues of common concern and to share details on upcoming events and activities.

Upcoming meetings are Jan. 8, 1998, March 5 and May 7.