

Public safety to spruce up digs

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

At its last meeting, the Farmington City Council agreed with architectural firm Allen and Laux, Inc. that the city's public safety department facilities needed to be completely renovated.

The next steps will include authorizing construction drawings and determining whether to give City Manager Frank Lauhoff the OK to begin working the extensive project into the 1998-99 fiscal budget. Cost estimates for the renovation of the 35-year-old facility, now located at the south end of city hall, are about \$732,000.

Lauhoff said it is tentatively scheduled for the council, as its Jan. 5, 1998 meeting, to authorize the construction drawings. "So we can be ready at the right time of year to bid this project."

If everything falls into place, bids could be let and received by early summer, with construction to begin next fall. During the project, the public safety department would relocate to the public works building at Nine Mile Farmington.

"It's going to take a lot of coordination because of the very busy construction calendar that's going on," Lauhoff said. "We're very aware that construction companies are going to be scheduling next year's activities very soon."

Lauhoff and police Commander Daniel Dellar agreed that it is essential to improve public safety facilities.

"They (council members) agreed with the architect's presentation and recommendation that the facility is 1967 vintage and needs many things to bring it up to current standards, that will enable today's efficiencies to be used," Lauhoff said.

According to Dellar, the proposed new design "is more efficient as far as our daily operations are concerned. We have a limited amount of space to work with and the present floor plan doesn't make the best use of that space."

Among proposed renovations are the development of prisoner holding and interview areas that would be completely separated from department employees and the public, Lauhoff said.

DPW provides barrels for intersections

In addition to traditional snow plowing services, the Farmington Hills Department of Public Works provides residents with barrels filled with a mixture of sand and salt.

Some 50 to 60 barrels are placed at the same local road intersections each year - refilled as needed - and remain there from Thanksgiving through Easter.

Residents can ask that a barrel be placed in their neighborhood by requesting it in writing to Paul Ignash, DPW supervisor. People are asked to include written permission statements from adjacent property owners.

Those requests may be mailed to: Farmington Hills Division of Public Works, 27245 Halsted, Farmington Hills 48331. People are asked to include a daytime phone number with their request.

For information, call the DPW at 553-8580.



Dog daze of school



Pet project: At top, Alex Orr, Eagle first grader, pets Sasha, an 8-year-old chow briard owned by Carol Kushner. Kushner rescued Sasha and takes the dog to schools to discuss pet care.

Visit offers insight on animal care

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

"What happens if the dog eats cat food?" asked Eagle Elementary School first grader Bobby Rossetto to Michigan Humane Society representative Carol Kushner during Tuesday's program on animal care in the school cafeteria.

Kushner, with chow briard Sasha sitting on the floor next to her, was quick to respond.

"Well, that's not too bad," she said. "Just make sure they don't eat chocolate or chicken bones."

The kind of diet a dog should have was just one of the topics that Kushner detailed for the first grade classes of teachers Yvonne Taylor, Marilyn Schipani and Margaret Forbes. All of the classes are studying about proper care and handling of animals as part of regular curriculum.

Taylor said it's beneficial for children to receive such pointers about dogs, even if they don't have pets at home.

"There are a lot of the children who walk or ride their bikes to school," Taylor said. "It's good for them to know what to do or what not to do if they come up against strays."

And, the kids "just like" having a chance to meet a dog like Sasha, who was once abandoned by her family only to be adopted by Kushner, who

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—Yvonne Taylor
Michigan Humane Society

takes her spool to 20,000 elementary school children every year in Oakland and Macomb counties.

"Some of the first graders don't realize dogs are living beings and they need to know how to treat them," said Schipani, adding that students were "real excited about this. There's a natural link between a child and an animal."

After each session Tuesday, classes lined up and had a chance to gently pet Sasha on the way out. Sasha, named Michigan Humane Society's Animal of the Year for 1996, responded with enthusiastic tail wags and playful licks for the kids.

Kushner's presentation featured an easel, with felt shapes that correspond with typical elements of a

dog's life. She asked one student how he would care for a dog if it had to stay outside.

"A dog house," responded the pupil.

"Very good," said Kushner, instructing the youngster to come up to the easel and put a felt dog house onto the board.

By the end of each 30-minute discussion, the dog on the easel ("Sam") was surrounded by a myriad of shapes - dog house, bone, brush, food bowl, water bowl ... even a veterinary office. Each piece represented an answer to a question posed to the students about proper animal care.

Students also learned: how to pet dogs (slowly and softly); that they must ask permission of dog owners before going up to pet the animal; and what to do to stay safe around a stray.

"Stand like a tree," Kushner said to Erica, who came up to the front of the room to demonstrate. "Put your feet together and put your hands into a fist under your chin. Dogs don't bite trees. If a dog walks one way, you walk the other way, but very slowly."

Schipani said the students would discuss Kushner and Sasha's visit and write about it in their classroom journals.

No limb-it to Christmas tree options

BY NORMAN FRADY
SPECIAL WRITER

Much like fruitcakes, their seasonal companions, Christmas trees are a world of pro and con, legend and opinion, and seemingly sound science.

According to folks who reasonably ought to know about selecting a tree, you should shake a limb, choose a tree as early as you like, get one cut as late as possible, buy one cut, cut it yourself, or get one you can pack away until next year.

"They got a fresh tree if they cut their own," said Ken Boughan of Boughan Christmas Tree Farm & Nursery, 44020 Hull, Belleville. "Go to a lot, probably been out in September or October. Pretty much dried out."

Boughan, who claims that his operation was the first tree farm in southeast Michigan and is the state's "largest cut-your-own," estimates he has about 200,000 trees growing on two locations totaling 256 acres.

Hanging from this year's seedlings to trees born in Nixon's second term, the Boughan forests include Scotch pine, Austrian pine, red pine, blue pine, blue spruce, Norway spruce, white spruce, Serbian spruce, balsam fir and Douglas fir.

The most popular tree, according to Boughan, is Scotch pine, with one or another spruce second choice. He sells any size pine for \$22, any size spruce for \$35, with the 6 1/2-foot tree the usual choice for homes without the cathedral ceilings or retractable sunroofs needed to accommodate 14-footers.

"Used to be 90 percent pine, 10 percent spruce. Now it's 65 percent pine, 42 percent spruce, and the balance in the fir line," he said.

At Steinkopf Nursery on Farmington Road in Farmington, second-generation operator Fred Steinkopf has all of his trees cut and ready to decorate.

"It's an old wives' tale to cut the tree late," Steinkopf said.

"The later you cut the tree, the drier it will become because a lot of the sap has already left the tree and gone down into the root area."

"When you cut it real, real late you've got less sap in it than a tree that was cut, say, first week in November," Steinkopf also said the type of tree and the amount and intensity of cold weather are factors in timing and cutting.

Steinkopf trees include Scotch pine, Douglas fir, white fir, blue spruce, white pine, and Fraser fir, with the Fraser now exceeding the Douglas in popularity, he said. Both Fraser and Douglas, he said, hold needles a long time and retain good color. He added that the white, Fraser and Douglas firs are "very aromatic." His trees range from 4 to 12 feet and from \$19 to \$125.

Like other Christmas tree sellers, he stressed the importance of making a fresh cut across the base to open the trunk to water. Keep it in water, he said, and don't keep it lit all night, to avoid drying.

Brad Zoner, manager at Farmer John's Greenhouse on Haggerty Road in Farmington Hills, recommends a vigorous approach to tree selection.

"If you grab the tree branches and give a little pull, the needles should stay intact. If they don't, you've got a tree that was cut too early and is dying."

Douglas fir and Fraser fir have the best needle-holding qualities, he said. His tabletop-size trees start at \$15, while 6-footers and up are \$20 to \$250.

Meanwhile, Herb Fincham, a manager at Kmart on Grand River in Farmington, says the store offers three varieties of artificial trees: pine, spruce, and fir. They range from 3 feet or so up to 7 1/2 feet. A \$139 synthetic specimen currently is on sale for \$79.

According to Fincham, artificial trees are a growing business. Some people choose them because they're not allowed to have real trees in their residences, some like because they're less work, some because repetitive use makes them "more cost-effective." This year, the trees are selling earlier, probably due to early cold weather, he said.

Fruitcake, anyone?



Branching out: Steinkopf in Farmington Hills sells Scotch pine, Douglas fir, white fir, blue spruce, white pine, and Fraser fir Christmas trees.

Vocalist gets students in tune with melodic solutions

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

While sitting in the audience of one of Scott Kalechstein's concerts, where he performs personalized, made-up-on-the-spot songs, Livonia resident Joan Stansberry asked him to sing a song about the pain of being separated from a family member.

Stansberry had just moved her sister to Denver.

"I asked for a song about sisterly love and letting go," Stansberry said. "And he sang a very heart-rendering song and I found a lot of healing through the song he sang."

Stansberry was so impressed that she thought it might be a good idea to bring Kalechstein's spontaneous act to schools. On Monday, Dec. 8, he performed two sessions

each at Eagle Elementary School and Highmeadow Common Campus.

During the assemblies, students brought up topics that Kalechstein - acoustic guitar in hand - quickly turned into song.

"Making up songs is a talent they can identify with," said Kalechstein, a California resident who has recorded several albums. "Children are naturally creative."

His program, "Putting the Pieces Together: Learning to Get Along Through Song," was deemed by district officials to be a perfect way to continue helping children get a handle on how to get work out any problems and conflicts without resorting to pushing, shoving or name-calling.

According to Highmeadow principal Barbara Reams, all principals in the Farmington

district were told about Kalechstein's program and that the first two to call would get the singer-songwriter.

"Every elementary school in Farmington has a conflict resolution program," Reams said. "Here, as part of Masterpeace we try to do assemblies that coordinate and enhance the program for children to keep it in their minds during the year. He (Kalechstein) helps children realize our actions are important in our daily lives."

And, of course, there is no better teaching: too! than songs.

"These are fun, easy listening songs, something kids can catch on to, pattern songs ... And children respond to music. It's a big part of their lives. They love music," Reams said.



Music theory: Performer Scott Kalechstein believes song can pacify students in order to get along better.