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IN THE PAPER TODAY

Filled with song: *One of Farmington Community Chorus' two performances was highlighted by a tribute to Melissa Garr whose mother, Susan, is a member. /A5*

COMMUNITY LIFE

Ask Bristol: *Bev Cornell and her dog answer your pet questions. /B3*

SPORTS

On the line: *Those who battle in the trenches were honored on the Harrison High state championship football team. /C1*

ENTERTAINMENT

Band of the Year: *An amalgamation of rockabilly, swing, blues, R&B and rock 'n' roll, the Twistin' Tarantulas play constantly, and the clubs are standing room only. /E1*

REAL ESTATE

Warm memories: *The holidays are a nice time to look back at the wonderful stories from holidays past. /F1*

INDEX

■ Obituaries	A5
■ Classified Index	G3
■ Real Estate	G3
■ Crossword	G4
■ Jobs	H5
■ Home & Service	H12
■ Autos	J2
■ Opinion	A10-11
■ Sports	C1
■ Calendar	C5
■ Real Estate	F1

Schools take bold look at future



BY RICHARD PEARL
STAFF WRITER

Elementary education in the Farmington Public Schools system in the year 2007 could look a lot different. One vision is:

- All first-, second- and third-graders either share one large classroom within their school building or attend a school for just those grades;
- Every school has either a full-time

technology teacher or technician to help teachers and students use the latest computer and audio-video equipment; and

■ Special needs students spend less time in special education classrooms and more time in their regular classrooms.

These were among the far-reaching and forward-thinking – some might even say “radical” – ideas for restructuring elementary education within the

district that were presented to the Farmington school board Tuesday night.

A special study committee of more than 70 teachers, administrators and parents came up with these ways of implementing the board's Mission 2007 recommendations – a three-year-old project aimed at taking the district into the 21st century.

The committee's study encompassed curriculum, instructional strategies, new technology, student evaluations and various programs to meet all students' needs within a single classroom setting.

If implemented as proposed, the programs would cost \$1.3 to \$1.5 million

per year, though it was suggested a grant might be available to establish a prototype.

“We gave our best thoughts,” said Dr. Jan Colliton, committee chairwoman and principal of Hillside Elementary School.

“We looked for models both within and outside of Michigan and then tried to be very forward-thinking,” said Judith White, assistant superintendent for education, who presented the report with Colliton.

She said Superintendent Bob Maxfield had told the committee Farmington “ought to be a premier school dis-

Please see FUTURE, A2

Citizens' group puts its money on incumbents

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills City Council incumbents spent little and less in their quest for another term. They had help from a political committee, though.

Only Jerry Ellis ran a tab of more than \$1,000, which requires a campaign finance report to be filed with the Oakland County clerk's office. Cheryl Oliverio and Jon Grant spent less than \$1,000 and were waived from filing.

Citizens for Good Government raised \$4,386 to aid the three council incumbents. Challenger Massie Kurzeja didn't benefit from such support; she spent less than \$1,000 and wasn't required to file a report.

Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi, who ran unopposed, still coughed up \$965 to ensure a second two-year term.

Most of that was raised and spent prior to the filing deadline. Vagnozzi still campaigned door-to-door after he found out he was running unop-

Please see SPENDING, A2

Barking canine alerts neighbors to burning house

BY RICHARD PEARL
STAFF WRITER

A neighbor's barking dog provided the tip-off to a Farmington Hills house fire Sunday afternoon. It was the unusual racket created by Indy, a generally quiet three-year-old German shepherd-Labrador retriever mix, that alerted her master, Marc Kowalczyk, to the situation.

Kowalczyk called 911 and firefighters arrived in three minutes, but the house at 21117 Randall Street, two doors from his, sustained heavy damage.

Luckily, its occupants, the Anthony Pasavalone family, were away at the time, having Sunday dinner with relatives.

However, the family of six lost everything in the fire, including gifts around the Christmas tree. A home office also was destroyed and antiques sustained smoke damage, according to Mike Kish, Farmington Hills fire department inspector.

Please see DOG, A4

Senior advocate 'difficult to replace'

BY RICHARD PEARL
STAFF WRITER

Loretta Conway, who's retiring as the senior program director for Farmington and Farmington Hills after 24 years, was feted Monday at her second luncheon in less than a week.

This time, it was city officials who honored Conway with a luncheon at Farmington Hills City Hall. Last Tuesday, Conway, was lauded by her colleagues during the senior citizens' Christmas luncheon held Tuesday at the William Costick Activities Center in Farmington Hills.

Conway, who was the guiding light as the two communities' senior citizens program grew from a \$50 budget to \$500,000 per year, is “going to

be difficult to replace,” said Dan Potter, director of special services for Farmington Hills.

“Loretta's career in serving the senior population in both communities has been one of dedication and love. She's spent untold hours beyond her work week in reacting to the needs and concerns that impact on seniors.

“She's a loving advocate of seniors' needs and we're going to miss her,” he said.

Potter said his office hopes to name a successor to Conway shortly.

“We're required by city procedures and contracts to post the position internally and we're doing that now,” he said. “We expect the position to be filled internally.”

Vocal neighbors



In tune: Above, Old Farm Colony subdivision resident Katie Wemyss (left), is joined by daughter-in-law Jean Wemyss and son Max, visiting from Orlando, Fla., during the Farmington Hills neighborhood's annual sing-along Sunday. Residents, as well as Santa Claus, light luminaries on the subdivision streets and go caroling.

STAFF PHOTOS BY JEFF KUEHL



She's there: Loretta Conway puts a hand of assurance on the shoulder of Ken Hill at the Farmington Hills Senior Center.

STAFF PHOTO BY DATAN MITCHELL

Tragedy turns into gift of life

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

The holidays come and go. But there is always a need for blood.

That is one reason why the American Red Cross is holding a second blood drive in honor of recovering Farmington High School student Melissa Garr, from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday, Jan. 2, at Farmington Hills Fire Station No. 5.

There is another reason: Organizers of the first Melissa tribute effort, held in early September, were pleased with the results. 187 pints were collected, helping 661 ill and injured patients throughout southeastern Michigan, according to Diane Risko of the Red Cross.

According to Risko, “We supply 64 hospitals and this drive will be crucial as the shelves will be empty at the Red Cross after the holidays.”

“With Melissa, we've turned what was a sad situation into a positive one with these blood drives.”

For the second blood drive, Melissa herself probably will be on hand for a couple hours, said her father, Farmington Hills Fire Lt. Mike Garr.

“I'm hoping people will want to step by and support the community effort,” he said. “But also have the chance to meet Melissa.”

Garr said the Red Cross recently approached him and Melissa's mother, Susan Garr, about having a second blood drive. The family agreed, largely because “There's always going to be a critical need” for emergency blood supplies.

Bean & Bagel will donate food for nurses and volunteer workers at the drive while Great Harvest Bread Co. will provide cook-

Please see BLOOD DRIVE, A2

FARMINGTON FOCUS

Lions Club members and individuals, foundations and corporations, with no government funding. For details, call 851-9011.

Dance cuts nice figure

Princess Madiba's 7th annual dance workshop and concert held last month at Botsford Inn to benefit the children of St. Jude's Research Hospital was the most successful yet. More than \$6,000 was raised.

When St. Jude's first opened in 1962, a child with leukemia had almost no chance for survival. Today,

thanks to the research conducted at St. Jude, over 73 percent of children with the most common type of leukemia can expect to be fully cured.

For the record book

Farmington Community Library workers were a busy bunch during the last term, according to Farmington Friends of the Library Info Exchange. The library posted its highest circulation ever for the 1996-97 fiscal term:

■ A total of 834,893 items, including books, videos, compact discs and magazines, were checked out. That marks a 13-percent increase from the previous fiscal year.

■ Some 9,388 new patrons received at both branches, pushing the total to 66,317.