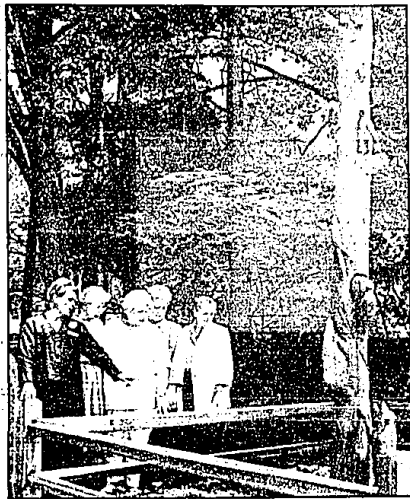


Carving more than a niche



Ingrained: Friends of Heritage Park Ellen Abdou, Ginger Babiarz, Barb McCann, Sharon Radatz and Kay Gates marvel at the new wood carving in the Farmington Hills park. Champion wood carver Herb Travis created the work from a white oak tree removed during the construction of Fire Station No. 6.

Hot-diggity-dog: Coney island opens in downtown Farmington

For almost a year or so, it seems, a window sign teased Downtown Farmington Center patrons about a forthcoming coney island. But when the Metro Coney Island's doors actually opened for business Thursday, it was almost too hard for some to believe.

"I was kind of surprised to see it open," said Livonia resident Kathleen Falkowski, leaving the new eatery after lunch Friday with two young daughters. "I was hungry, I drove by and saw it. Since I love coney, I decided to eat there."

And how was it? "Very good," Falkowski said. "And I know my coney."

Farmington city officials were also chomping at the bit to try the cuisine at the newest restaurant in town. Friday's lunch crowd included City Manager Frank Lauhoff, Department of Public Safety Director Gary Goss, Assistant City Manager Bill Richards and Bill Hartsock, of the city council.

George Busidis, one of the owners who bought the former Downtown Cafe in August, said the officials ate gyros, coney dogs and a bowl of chili, washed down with soda pops and ice water.

"We tried it all," joked Lauhoff later in the afternoon.

Lauhoff then turned serious and gave a thumbs up to the food, service and atmosphere at Metro.

"It was great," Lauhoff said. "All they did was turn on the sign and at least a dozen people came in. It's clean and fresh and they know the business."

Busidis also operates a Metro Coney Island in Romulus.

According to Lauhoff, there might be a good reason why Metro's opening was a surprise to some.

"It's been coming for so long," Lauhoff said. "And they've had so many problems getting to this point. The sign was up for so long that (opening) was almost anticlimactic."

Busidis, a former employee at Dimitri's of Farmington, was relieved to finally open the restaurant, which has eight employees.

"We were supposed to be open in January, then February and then March," Busidis said. "It was a mess in here. I had to re-do the whole thing." He estimated the cost to purchase and renovate it was \$160,000.

But he sees a long, successful future, filling a coney void in the downtown area. Metro has a 10-year lease with the center's landlord, Kimco Corporation, Busidis said.

"I'm glad I'm here in Farmington," he said. "...The food is good and we'll try to keep it as clean as possible."

Hours are Monday-Saturday, 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Sunday, 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Busidis said the restaurant will be open on Memorial Day.

Starbucks percolates for cancer support



Starbucks donated a portion of proceeds during the grand opening of the Farmington and Royal Oak stores on May 16 to Gilda's Club Metro Detroit, a cancer support community.



Beaned: Farmington Mayor Mary Bush supports the coffee beans showered upon her from Starbucks district manager June Beach, left, and shift supervisor Dan Baron

"Gilda's Club is for all people with all types of cancer and their families and friends. Our social and emotional support is free to all, so we are most appreciative of Starbucks' contribution," says Joyce Biehler, ACSW Executive Director of Gilda's Club.

Corvette Raffle Party
The Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce's Corvette Raffle Party will be held from 6-9 p.m. Sunday, July 12, at the Costick Activities Center in Farmington Hills.

There will be food, entertainment and the drawing for either a 2-year lease on a new Corvette plus \$5,000 - or \$30,000 in cash. Tickets for this event are \$100 each and only 1,000 tickets will be sold. Call 474-3440.

Chamber Golf Challenge
The Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce,

along with the Novi Chamber of Commerce, will host the "Chamber Challenge," a nine-hole golf mixer beginning at 3 p.m. Thursday, June 25, at Cattailli Golf Club in South Lyon.

The cost is \$75 per person. A trophy will be awarded to the winning chamber. Call 474-3440.

School plans reception to honor longtime teacher

The Forest Elementary School community is saying thanks and so long to one of its most-respected teachers, the soon-to-retire Judy Wepman. The school is hosting a reception in the gymnasium from 3-4:30 p.m. Friday, May 29.

Current and former Forest students, parents and colleagues are invited to the free program, sponsored by the Forest PTA. Light refreshments will be served at the reception, taking place in the school's gymnasium.

Wepman, who is ending a 27-year career, the last 12 at Forest, was one of the nominees in the Newsweek/WDIV Elementary School Teacher of the Year

program. In the nomination form, she was described as an enthusiastic, exemplary teacher who challenged students and infused them with positive energy.

Besides teaching, Wepman spent time at Forest as acting principal and coordinated the Farmington district school's safety patrol. She also coached girls and boys track and basketball.

Also retiring after 1997-98 is Judy's husband, Lloyd Wepman, a teacher at North Farmington High School.

Forest Elementary School is at 34545 Old Timber Road. For more information, call 489-3688.

Historical commission requires 2 more chairs

The Farmington City Council, as expected, Monday approved an ordinance to expand the Farmington Historical Commission from seven to nine members.

Adding the two members is viewed by city officials as a way to follow through on a comprehensive list of recommendations for the Warner Museum.

Among those recommendations - designed to promote the Warner home as an educational and community anchor for Farmington and Farmington Hills - is changing the Grand River building's name to "The Governor Warner Mansion ... home of Farmington history."

The city council is deciding whether to implement any of those recommendations during fiscal year 1998-99.

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