

## Not wading around



Rite of spring: In photo above, Bill Liba of Farmington, right, helps to move a branch with DPW worker Art Curtis lending support. Liba has pitched in for the local Rouge River cleanup effort since it began in 1985.



Rouge rescue: Logs and debris were cleared from the Farmington Hills branch of the Rouge River during the Rouge Rescue Saturday. Above, volunteers work near Middlebelt Road, between Grand River and 8 Mile. In the photo at near left, David Finkbinder of Flanders Elementary Cub Scout Pack 162 pitches in to do his part at the annual event that draws hundreds of volunteers.

## Hills board set to battle fraud

Varied committee aims to help residents

Their ranks includes a school teacher, attorney, business woman, police officer and mayor. From those varied perspectives, they will tackle fraud and other issues as part of the newly formed Farmington Hills Consumer Protection Committee.

The committee has its first meeting 7 p.m. Tuesday, June 23, at Farmington Hills City Hall.

"Hopefully, we can do some good," said Farmington Hills Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi, who started the group.

The nine-member committee formed from city council members recommendations and representatives from the Farmington Hills police and Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce.

"Since it was a grassroots thing starting out, I thought it would be interesting," said Tina Jensen, who was recommended to serve on the committee by Hills Councilman Jon Grant. "We're not going after businesses but to help people like older senior citizens who don't have a spokesperson to care about their interests."

Though yet to have its first meeting, the committee has already generated interest in the consumer rights community.

WJR-AM's Joe "The Appliance Doctor" Gagnon, former Detroit Consumer Affairs Director Esther Shapiro and Evelyn Stern of Call to Action have indicated they'd like to get involved. A person from the state Attorney General's Office may attend a consumer's committee meeting, Vagnozzi said.

The group will try to build a resource where people can learn about consumer issues. Some believe the resource can evolve

into a place where consumer complaints can be resolved.

Already, the committee has received a letter from a resident about an alleged car repair scam.

While consumer protection might come off as being anti-business, the committee is anything but, members said.

Diana Christensen of C&F Benefits is the Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce representative, who will help bring a business perspective to things.

"I hope we would bring some problem solving and create some mediation between the consumer and the business, as opposed to being adversarial," Christensen said.

A Farmington Hills-based attorney on the committee agrees.

"Given my background, I've dealt with a number of people who have had concerns on both sides of the issue," said Bruce Lazar, who also lives in Farmington Hills.

"When someone comes in and rips people off, it hurts legitimate businesses.... Ultimately, consumer protection strengthens both businesses and consumers."



■ 'Hopefully, we can do some good.'

Aldo Vagnozzi  
-mayor,  
Farmington  
Hills

## S'fld man charged in drug case

A Southfield man faces an 8:30 a.m. pre-trial conference today (Thursday, June 11) in 40th District Court before Judge Stephen Cooper in connection with a drug raid last week at a Southfield pizzeria.

Michael Alan Thomas II was arraigned June 6 before Magistrate A. Kay Stanfield-Brown on six counts of delivery and manufacture of controlled substances, less than 50 grams of cocaine, and one count of delivery and manufacture of marijuana.

A call to Thomas' attorney went unreturned Wednesday. He stood mute and a plea of not guilty was entered for him by Stanfield-Brown.

Bond was set at \$35,000 cash surety. He remains in Oakland County Jail.

Each cocaine count upon conviction is a 10- to 20-year felony with a \$25,000 fine or lifetime probation, said Brian Smith, deputy court administrator. The marijuana count, if convicted,

holds up to four years in jail and a lifetime probation on each count.

Farmington Hills Police Chief William Dwyer called Thomas a mid-level dealer.

Police arrested seven people and seized 70 grams of cocaine and marijuana after swooping in on the pizzeria.

Undercover officers from Farmington Hills, West Bloomfield and Novi alerted Southfield police about 11 p.m. Thursday and raided Papa Romano's Pizza at 23926 Nine Mile in Southfield after seeing an employee make three drug deals from the rear entrance.

Police also searched the employee's apartment at 28477 Franklin Road, said Dwyer.

The bust was part of an investigation that started several weeks ago with an undercover drug buy in Farmington Hills.

Thomas, a manager and five-year employee, wasn't working at Papa Romano's to deliver or

make pizzas, Dwyer said. "He was there only for his business of delivering cocaine and marijuana," Farmington Hills police Chief Bill Dwyer said.

"He had no other interest but to deliver narcotics to young people, which is upsetting," Dwyer added.

Six others were arrested on charges ranging from outstanding traffic warrants to drug possession.

"Others were given tickets, but he was the dealer," Dwyer said. The raid also netted four vehicles and \$9,000 cash. Other property might be considered for forfeiture, including the pizza business.

Dwyer said Tuesday that his criticism shouldn't be considered a slam against all Papa Romano's pizzerias.

Police say the case is unusual, if not unsettling, because the drug deals took place out of a legitimate business frequented by young people.

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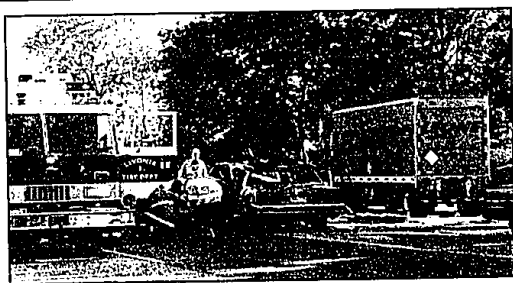
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fighters aid  
victims of a  
crash on  
Merriman  
Monday. A  
Farmington  
teen was  
driving one  
of the cars  
in the crash  
that sent  
two people  
to the hospital.



## Farmington teen involved in serious crash

Two people remained hospitalized Wednesday with injuries suffered in a three-vehicle crash that closed part of Merriman for nearly four hours Monday.

Both males (the 16-year-old driver of one of the vehicles involved and the 12-year-old passenger of another) were in stable condition at St. Mary Hospital, a hospital spokeswoman said.

Two other people, the 12-year-old's brother, 14, and their

mother, 45, were treated at St. Mary and released Monday.

The crash occurred on Merriman just south of Lyndon about 7:20 a.m., said Sgt. Wes McKee of the Livonia Police Department's traffic bureau.

A northbound 1996 Pontiac Transport minivan, with the Livonia woman and her sons in it, collided with a southbound 1989 Chevrolet Caprice driven by the 16-year-old, of Farmington, McKee said.

The crash took place in the

left-turn lane, and its cause is still under investigation, he said. There were no indications that drugs or alcohol were a factor in the crash, McKee said.

The impact spun the Transport around, and it hit a northbound semi tractor-trailer, McKee said. The truck driver was not hurt.

The accident tied up traffic, which was detoured onto side streets, during the morning rush hour. Police were on the scene until 11 a.m.