

Climbing the ladder.

On the rise: Anyone wanting to know the status of fund-raising efforts for Farmington's "Kids World" PlayScape need only venture to Masonic Temple at Grand River-Farmington. That's where this thermometer-styled sign was erected last week by PlayScape committee members Nancy Tushman and Bruce Lilley. Two others just like it were to have been put up elsewhere in the city. The signs, complete with a changeable list of major donors, are intended to update the public about who's the latest to contribute and give an at-a-glance tally. According to the new sign, about \$45,000 in donations have poured in thus far. Kids World will be built later this year at Shiawassee Park at Shiawassee and Power roads.



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRENNER

Dueling from page A1

"We're not going to play the theme to 'Cats'," said Dana Croll, one Goodfellas roster of four piano players. "You have to be able to feel it."

On weekends, the stage is congested with patrons compelled to dance. On this night, a Thursday, more than a few people get the groove.

One woman sitting at the bar decides to take advantage of the club's open mike night. She sings the Beatles' "Oh, Darling" and then rejoins friends.

"There's a lot of dueling piano bars in Chicago and I like this one," said the chanteuse Connie Awdish, who works at Anixter Wire and Cable.

Shariene Les didn't know what to expect when she turned up at Goodfellas on a Saturday night.

"I came here by myself and I actually had a lot of fun," said Les, 26, who lives in Farmington Hills and is back four nights later. "It's something different instead of just going to a bar and seeing a band. Here you can request songs."

"And it's a lot better (to listen to music) than the coffeehouse."

Like coffeehouses, dueling piano bars are trendy. Goodfellas owner, 27-year-old Ron Stern, got the idea attending similar haunts in Columbus, Ohio.

He and his wife, Maria, co-own Goodfellas, which is named after the gritty Mafia film with Robert DeNiro. Stern, who was a film major at Wayne State University, is enamored with Mafia movies. "Goodfellas" is one but not his all-time favorite.

"It wouldn't have sounded right, naming this place 'Donnie Brasco,'" he said.

He and his wife, a photographer, operated the place under

the name Champions, which was a sports/dance bar.

"I got bored with (the sports bar theme)," he said.

The couple reopened with the new theme in September. In its reincarnation, the club is attracting different patrons.

Dueling piano bars draw clientele that is 30ish and definitely more sophisticated, Stern said.

"You're not dealing with 21-year-olds who are getting drunk for the first time," he said. "The whole idea here is to have fun."

Stern put an ad in the Metro Times for piano players. He landed three with extensive musical experience.

Noel Leaman attended the renowned Berkley School of Music while Stefan Kukurugaya has performed with the likes of David Byrne. The third piano member, Croll, is legally blind.

"My ears are pretty good. That's how I taught myself," Croll said.

The trio worked at a Pentac nightspot before moving south. A fourth member, Jeremie Malotke, has been added recently. Malotke performed regularly at The Grand Cafe in downtown Farmington.

On a given night, three pianists work as a tag-team. "Sometimes your microphone gets overexposed," said Croll while taking a break.

Bartenders and wait staff get into the act, too. They pop onstage at the top of the hour to dance.

"It's choreographed of course," said bartender April Jones, a Farmington Hills resident.

Goodfellas is on the east side of Haggerty, just south of 14 Mile, Farmington Hills. Call 788-4444 for information.

Flooding from page A1

mates damages between \$10,000-15,000. He put a check valve on his sump pump, which cost \$1,500 alone. He's also had to remodel the basement.

The city has not filed a response yet, said the attorney representing Franklin Knolls residents.

In the suit filed by Lincolnshire resident Jeannette Jones, city attorneys cited governmental immunity and labeled flooding as "the act of God."

"It really is a situation where the government is responsible for maintaining its sewer system," said Philip Bozzo, plaintiff's attorney. "When they fail to adequately maintain these systems, that's when

you have the backups.

"They claim that these are acts of God, but in reality there are many ways to control water."

Retention ponds are inexpensive and "environmentally sane," said Bozzo, who attended the International Storm Water Management Model conference in Toronto Tuesday.

Farmington Hills has a large retention pond on 13 Mile and Farmington roads. Restrictive sewer grates are another measure, Bozzo said.

Restrictive covers with two or four holes are placed over typical 36-hole street grates, which

limits water getting into sewers by up to 90 percent. Such covers run \$50-100.

The downside is water remains in streets waiting to drain.

"You'd prefer to have water in the streets opposed to sewerage in the basements," Bozzo said.

City officials asked residents affected by August's flooding to contact them for inspection. A cause hasn't been determined yet, City Manager Steve Brock said.

"We sent out a letter in January explaining the circumstances that we've been hamstrung by the

class action suit. We're still evaluating all the circumstances," Brock said. "We want to make sure how we're evaluating and what we're evaluating is accurate and correct."

"We still remain committed to helping residents. We'll be in a position to do that. We just need to get this class action situation behind us."

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