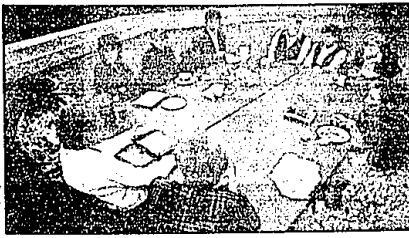
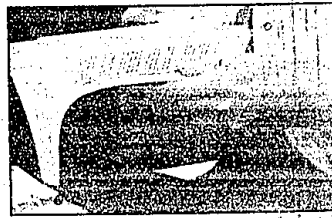


Lunch bunch: Once a month, 10 or so Hills city hall employees get together to talk books and relate them to their experiences



For the love of literature



Hills city hall group digests latest works

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
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When the last chapter is read in Farmington Hills City Hall, there's always plenty to talk about.

While dissecting the book "Midwives," one city employee can't get past that a man could write about emotions and physical pain associated with childbirth.

Chris Bohjalian is the author of the Oprah Book Club selection, which involves a midwife being put on trial for manslaughter after the mother dies during a home delivery gone wrong.

City employees pull no punches reviewing his work.

"Anytime I felt a connection, the bottom line is it was a man," said Jane Kroupa, who works in the Engineering Department. "Maybe you shouldn't have told me."

"He writes like a woman," said another sitting around a table in city council chambers. "That's a compliment by the way."

Since last summer, an informal group of 10 or so city hall employees — mostly women — gather every month for a brown bag lunch to chat and chew about books. They've digested such works as "Divine Secrets of Ya Ya Sisterhood," "Notebook" and "Education of Little Tree."

These book-inspired chats often veer into other topics, which helps bound and bond employees from different departments, an organizer said.

City Purchaser Kelly Monico started the group with Karen Birkholz, who works in the city manager's office. Monico, who was an English major at Wayne State University, belonged to similar book clubs in Iowa and Minnesota where she previously lived.

Between nibbles on bagel sandwiches and sips of microwave-heated chicken noodle soup, the women flavor their talk with views on "Midwives."

When asked if they finished the book, half of the members raise their hands. Others complain of long chapters and not being able to fully get into the novel.

Some also have a difficult time connecting with the book's characters, which includes a midwife who is a 1960s hippie.

The person who recommended "Midwives" is absent, which prompts members to jokingly speculate about a punishment.

Public Information Specialist Deanne Luteran, who attended her first book club meeting, asked if there is any structure. No, she's told.

"Often we end up talking about 10 other different things," said Tara Pieron, who works in the Department of Public



Page turners: Farmington Hills City Purchaser Kelly Monico tells others at the roundtable she had a hard time connecting with the characters in "Midwives" while book club member Betty Rannels listens.

Works.

"Like sick babies," added Monico, who earlier related how her 4-year-old son, Tony, is at home ill on this day.

Members, many of whom are themselves mothers, speculate about who would go through delivery in their home.

Birkholz asks who'd do it. "If I had enough guts, I'd have a

home delivery," she said.

Birkholz has few takers, though. Their enthusiasm is perhaps somewhat dampened after Pat Carlisle relates how her sister had a home delivery, which left family members outside clutching a brandy bottle and other devices to shield themselves from the soul piercing wails and screams coming from

inside the house.

"We were a mess," said Carlisle, who works in the Finance Department.

Evelyn Malloy thinks the larger message of "Midwives" is how the medical profession is increasingly limiting patient options, especially when it comes to childbirth. "It's a major control issue," said Malloy, who works in

the Zoning Department.

As members start to glance at watches, collapse their brown bags and swipe at tabletop crumbs, talk switches to future books. They decide next month's will be "Cold Mountain," a story of a Civil War deserter.

"I lent my copy to someone and I haven't gotten it back yet," Monico said.

Fire department recognizes those who made a difference

When it comes to helping save lives, good samaritans can come in a trio or be 10 years old.

Sometimes they have their mother cajoling them. Janet Tucker, who is a registered nurse, was one six people to receive Farmington Hills Fire Department Civilian Citations. She and others were honored during a Hills city council meeting Feb. 22.

Tucker provided CPR to a woman who was in cardiac arrest Nov. 10, 1997. She saw a man hovering over his wife while driving on 12 Mile Road.

"I thought it was a family fighting. I didn't want to pull over at first," Tucker said.

Her mother told her to stop the car. Turner then provided aid — which saved the woman's life — until Hills firefighters arrived.

Janet Petrusaba, Margaret Gillis and Charlene Mark were honored for their life-saving actions after a woman collapsed in the Botsford Inn lobby. They found she was in cardiac arrest and started CPR, which saved her life.

Lauren Marie Preininger, 8, is credited with preventing a garage fire on Country Ridge Drive from becoming a full-blown blaze. After seeing the fire, the St. Fabian student told her father who phoned 911 for help.

She also helped a neighbor put out the fire with extinguishers. Her actions helped contain the blaze, which involved gasoline.

Larry Sellers was also Johnny-on-the-spot when he noticed smoke coming from his neighbor's home Oct. 8. He went into the residence where he found the woman slumped over in a chair just as firefighters were removing a burning pot from the stove.



Fire spotter: Lauren Marie Preininger, 8, receives a Civilian Citation from Hills Fire Chief Rich Marinucci for her actions in notifying her father to call 911 and helping extinguish the blaze.

Trio of help: Janet Petrusaba, Margaret Gillis and Charlene Mark were honored for their life-saving actions after a woman collapsed in the Botsford Inn lobby.



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