

Exam in group home assault adjourned until Aug. 13

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
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When a Farmington Hills group home resident tried to destroy a TV and grabbed a caregiver, the employee "lost it, a worker said.

The resident and alleged victim, a 47-year-old woman who is mentally impaired, sustained a black eye from the incident at The Greening adult foster care home Oct. 15.

The caregiver, Donita Ewing,

is charged with third-degree vulnerable adult abuse. Ewing did not work as a group home employee but as a job trainer through a vocational agency.

At a preliminary exam in 47th District Court Monday, a former group home worker at times reluctantly testified that she saw Ewing push and sit on Joan Pirolli.

Judge Fred Harris adjourned the exam until Friday, Aug. 13.

Ewing remains free on personal bond.

A group home worker, Kayla

Fondren, testified she didn't "recall" Ewing striking Pirolli but later recanted.

"She was just trying to get Joan off her," Fondren said. Fondren testified that in a later conversation Ewing admitted to her that she struck the victim after the hysterical woman grabbed her glasses. "And she lost it," Fondren said.

Ewing and Fondren no longer work at the home.

A Michigan State Police lieutenant testified Ewing admitted she slapped and sat on Pirolli after she latched onto her collar.

Ewing's attorney questioned whether she was read her rights

before giving the statement. To the lawyer's surprise, Lt. Ernest Myatt provided an affidavit Ewing signed.

Pirolli has a history of self-inflicted injuries, said a group home administrator, Winifred Evans, who added that she's helped oversee Pirolli's care for nearly 10 years.

Pirolli has since been moved from the Greening Street home.

During testimony, Evans described Pirolli as one of the "most challenging" residents. The woman tried to destroy furniture, swore and spit at workers, Evans testified.

When Pirolli became aggres-

sive or self-abusive, workers were told to calm her down by getting her to sit on the couch, drink a pop or take a bath.

Workers weren't allowed to physically restrain her unless she was causing harm to herself, Evans said.

"She might be causing us out, but we have to be calm around her," Evans said.

Pirolli sustained a bruised ear and eye and had scratches on her face, police said.

Those injuries only surfaced after she was taken to the hospital with a broken leg, which

occurred during an outing on Belle Isle the following day. The broken leg is not related to alleged abuse incidents, authorities said.

Fondren pleaded guilty to vulnerable adult abuse against Pirolli in a separate incident.

Evans testified Pirolli would frequently bang her head and bite herself.

"That's been told to me," said Pirolli's sister, Rosanna Sayed, who also testified. "I've never witnessed that."

If found guilty, vulnerable adult abuse is a misdemeanor and carries up to two years in jail and/or a \$2,500 fine.

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The Farmington Observer

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Schools chief gets pay hike

BY TIM SMITH
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The admission Farmington school board members have for Superintendent Bob Maxfield literally is paying off for the likeable leader.

In addition to a 2-percent raise in salary, the board July 20 approved a one-time-only 3-percent raise to bring Maxfield's compensation on a par with superintendents of nearby, comparable districts such as West Bloomfield and Birmingham.

According to a recent survey by the Michigan Association of School Boards, Maxfield was scheduled to earn about \$137,000 during 1999-2000, which will be his sixth at the Farmington district helm.

But the raises increase that amount to about \$150,000, which is in the vicinity of what the MASA survey said Seymour

According to a recent survey by the Michigan Association of School Boards, Maxfield was scheduled to earn about \$137,000 during 1999-2000, which will be his sixth at the Farmington district helm.

Gretchko and John Hoefler will earn this year with West Bloomfield and Birmingham schools, respectively.

Maxfield's contract followed a glowing review from the superintendent's evaluation committee, comprised of board members Bobbie Feldman, Linda Enberg and newly elected board president Francisca Brouillette.

"He works so tirelessly," said Brouillette following Tuesday's meeting, explaining why the board wanted to reward Maxfield with the additional salary increase. "And ... he's just so universally respected by our board

and our community."

Feldman lauded Maxfield's "ability to do the kind of job that's needed, at a moment's notice" to lead a district of 11,000 students and 1,800 staff members.

In addition, the committee members praised Maxfield for his dedication to Oakland schools and state education issues.

"We think we have one of the best superintendents in the state," Enberg said.

The committee's review was based on how well Maxfield achieved goals for 1998-99.

SUMMER MUSIC

The cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills offers musical entertainment throughout the summer.

The Downtown Development Authority continues its evening concert series "Celebrate the Sounds" at 7:30 p.m. Friday, July 30, under the gazebo in downtown Farmington next to the Village Commons on Grand River. The Red Carter Band will perform Dixieland tunes.

Ya Tafari & Tropical Sensations will perform as part of the Stars in the Park concert series at 8 p.m. Thursday, July 29, at Heritage Park in Farmington Hills. This musical series is presented by the city's Department of Special Services and features local talent every Thursday night. The Birmingham Straw Hat Band will perform Aug. 5. There is no charge.

The David Bennett Trio will perform as part of a free concert series at 8 p.m. Wednesday, July 28, at Nardin Park. United Methodist Church in Farmington Hills. All concerts are free. Call 476-8860.

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