

# Fund-raising

## Players perform new role

BY HEATHER NEEDHAM  
STAFF WRITER

### NEW THEATER

The Farmington Players have begun playing the most important role of all in their quest to build a \$1.5 million theater — that of fund-raisers.

The Players met with Farmington Hills City Council members in a study session Monday to begin presenting plans for their new building — and their plans for raising the necessary funds.

Sunrise Development of Fairfax, Va., recently donated \$175,000 to the Players, who have in turn agreed to put \$225,000 from fund-raisers and their surplus account toward the project.

Greg Switaj, development coordinator for the project, said the Players plan to seek the remaining funds from corporations (\$300,000), individuals and season ticket holders (300,000) and city and state governmental bodies such as Farmington Hills (\$400,000).

Sunrise Development will begin construction of an assisted living facility on the site in July 2000. After that, the Players will perform their shows at William Tyndale College until the new facility is built near the current one. An opening gala is tentatively planned for September 2001.

The Players have been using the old dairy barn for a theater since 1960.

Some members of city council questioned whether the city should get into the donation business.

"I'm concerned about putting public tax dollars into a private facility that doesn't primarily serve the residents of Farmington Hills," said Councilman Jerry Ellis.

But Ellis also said he was open to suggestions about how to make the theater more of a com-

munity meeting place. He suggested two-tiered pricing for residents and non-residents and making better use of the facility during non-show times.

Councilwoman Vicki Barnett suggested using the theater as a training ground for young thespians and crew members.

"There are a lot of kids who want to learn the technical aspects of theater," Barnett said.

A memo from City Manager Steve Brock, who was not at the meeting, suggested using the new Players Barn as a shared community resource.

"The potential for a 'shared use agreement' could satisfy many of the expressed needs for space to conduct arts performances," Brock wrote in the memo.

Switaj said about 75 percent of season ticket holders are from Farmington or Farmington Hills. The remaining 25 percent hail from West Bloomfield, Livonia and other outlying areas.

He suggested making the new theater more community oriented by booking the expanded lobby space for speaker series, receptions, performance space for schools and a meeting space for community groups.

The air-conditioning could open the building up to more summer events, but summer shows are unlikely.

"Right now our membership doesn't support more than four shows a season," said Cynthia Tupper, president of the Farmington Players.

The Players presented a scale model of the Players Barn they want to build, complete with a lift-off lid showing individual rooms.

"It's still going to look like a barn," Switaj said. "Ninety-nine percent of all the public space is

on the same level. The entire facility is barrier free."

Keeping most of the new Players Barn's public space on the ground floor is one of the biggest improvements, he said. The upper, or loft level, will be used for meeting rooms.

Seating capacity will be increased from 173 to 242, a 40 percent expansion.

The play viewing area in the current structure is on the left, or second level of the barn, and the restrooms are on the ground level. The stairs can be a challenge for some people when nature calls, he said.

"It's not even good for able-bodied middle-aged people," Switaj said of the stairs separating the stage from the restrooms.

But the most exciting improvement, at least for the players themselves, is having more space in which to perform.

"The thing we players are excited about is the stage," he said, which will be about 16 percent larger than the current stage. The stage area will also have a full amount of "fly space," ideal for building high sets and an orchestra pit.

"We feel that this is a very sophisticated community theater," Switaj said. "We feel it will meet our needs for the next 50 years."



STAFF PHOTO BY ENL DECKER

Rally: Alyse Schwartz, 7, tries out her low-speed skills on the bike rally course. She's followed by little brother Justen, 2½, and Mom Kim. Volunteer Steve Unger times her during her low-speed run.

# Kids lasso bike safety at city's first-ever rodeo

Saturday's first annual Bike Safety Rodeo at Shawwassee Park in Farmington drew a turnout of about two dozen youngsters, probably enough to warrant a second such event next spring.

"It went very well," said Farmington Public Safety Cmdr. Maria Putt, who also is a member of the city's bicycle patrol unit. "We had about 20-to-25 kids, a nice course. One of the boys mentioned that the course was challenging."

Bicyclists made their way through seven different stations at the rodeo. They completed a variety of handling tasks (turning, braking) and demonstrated their knowledge of hand signals and rules.

Targeted for the rodeo were younger kids so

that they find out more about bike safety; and say hello to the helmeted police officers at the same time.

Co-sponsoring the event was the Farmington Public Safety Department, Health & Fitness Bicycle of Walled Lake and State Farm Insurance.

Meanwhile, the public safety department issued several bicycle licenses for a nominal fee.

Putt said the department now will discuss holding a second bike rodeo.

"We're considering it for once a year," Putt said. "If we do it will be in the spring."

She said there were no injuries or incidents reported at the event.

- Tim Smith

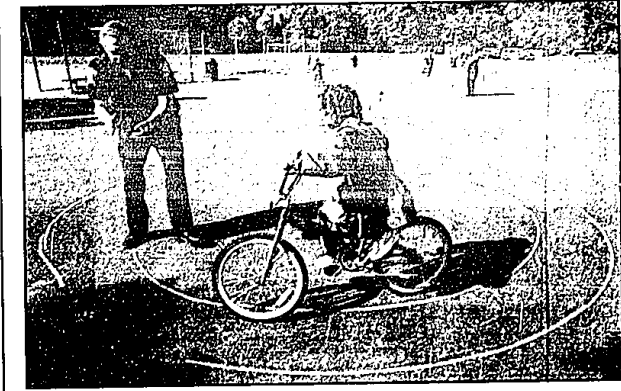


Figure eights: Larry Sklar watches Raquelle Wilson as she successfully maneuvers her bike through a figure eight.

# Annual Pumpkin Patch Sale starts Oct. 15

The third annual Pumpkin Patch Sale, sponsored by the youth of Orchard United Methodist Church in Farmington Hills, 30460 Farmington Road, will begin Friday, Oct. 15. It will be open daily from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. through Oct. 31.

There will be a variety of sizes, shapes, and prices of pumpkins including miniature pumpkins and gourds. The proceeds will be used to fund the youth's annual mission trip to Tennessee where they do home repairs.



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