

Farm aid

Helping farmers at core of Senate report

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These are tough times for Michigan farmers. Prices for agricultural products, when adjusted for inflation, are at the lowest levels since the Depression. Apple prices are at their lowest in 25 years. "Furthermore, in 1998, the typical commercial hog farmer in Michigan lost close to a quarter-million dollars," according to the final report of the Senate Agricultural Preservation Task Force, issued last month at the launch of the fall legislative session. Sens. George McManus (R-Traverse City), Dianne Byrum (D-Onodaga), Joanne Emmons (R-Big Rapids), Ron Sikkema (R-Grandville), and Don Kolvisto (D-Ironwood) held eight hearings across the state, taking testimony from some 250 residents over the course of the summer to produce the report.

Along with a list of the problems facing Michigan agriculture, the report offers a list of 20 recommendations for assisting farmers. "The low profitability of farming has led to resources exiting the industry and being used for other purposes," the report concluded in its executive summary. "This includes land. Furthermore, given the current bleak operating environment, it appears that fewer and fewer young people are pursuing a career in production agriculture." The report received a warm welcome in the Senate. "Government - both state and federal - is in a position to help jump-start this critical part of Michigan's economy," Sen. Mike Rogers (R-Brighton) said. "Without the farmers, Michigan families would be at the mercy of importers and import prices for their food. We can't let abundance at the supermarket disguise the crisis that Michigan

farmers are facing." According to McManus, the single biggest obstacle to agriculture is that farmland is assessed for property taxation based on its potential development value. Currently, agricultural land is assessed by its "highest and best use." The result, McManus noted, is that the land on which a cherry orchard is located in his district is assessed at the same amount as nearby land on which a condominium complex sits. McManus proposes that agricultural land should be assessed on its current use. However, changing that may take an amendment to the Michigan Constitution. "We must provide," Byrum said as the report was released, "economic incentives to farmers, increase their access to credit, work vigorously to find markets for their projects and require foreign competitors to comply with fair trade practices." Additional recommendations made by the task force included:

- Maintaining the assessment cap on land when it is transferred from one generation to the next.
 - Strengthening the Right to Farm Act.
 - Amending the Farmland and Open Space Act to reduce the income threshold from its current 7 percent.
 - Exempt farming cooperatives from personal property tax.
 - Encourage the Michigan Economic Growth Authority to assist in the development of food processing.
 - Create Agricultural Security Zones.
 - Create a tax credit for old farmers who rent land to younger farmers.
- The list also includes recommendations for federal action, including asking Congress to investigate possible anti-trust actions against certain large companies in the food processing industry.

RECREATION NEWS

HAUNTED WALK
Join us for this spine-chilling, self-guided walk in the Haunted Hills of Hartley Park 7:30-9:30 p.m. Friday, Oct. 22, and Saturday, Oct. 23. Fee is \$5 per person payable at the site. Not recommended for children under the age of 7.

YOUTH BASKETBALL
Register now for Farmington Hills Recreation's Co-Ed Youth Basketball program that begins with two weeks of practice starting Jan. 3 before a 10-game season (Saturdays) starting Jan. 15. Divisions are made up of fourth-fifth grade, sixth grade, and seventh-eighth grade. The deadline to register is Friday, Dec. 3.

ICE SKATING MOORS
Following are public skating hours through June 11, 2000, at the Farmington Hills Ice Arena on Eight Mile Road: Monday-Friday noon skate, 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.; Tuesday, Friday, 7-8:50 p.m.; Saturday, 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.; Sunday, 4-6:50 p.m. Cost is \$3.50 for residents and \$5 for non-residents. The Parent-Tot Skate is 9-10:50 a.m., Monday and Wednesday, while the Adult Skate is 9-10:50 a.m. Tuesday and Thursday.

GLOWEVEN SKATE PARTY
Skate with the ghost and goblins 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 30. A costume contest is at 12:50 p.m. Try your hand at Spooktacular Carnival Games and win prizes. Admission is \$3.50 for Farmington Hills residents and \$5 for all others. For more information, call the Farmington Hills Ice Arena at 478-8900.

YOUTH CENTERS
The After School Youth Centers opened Aug. 31 for the 1999-2000 school year. If you are interested in attending or would like information, call (248) 478-1841.

SPORTS EQUIPMENT SALE
The Sports Equipment Sell or Shop Day is scheduled from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 4, at the William Costick Activities Center on 11 Mile Road in Farmington Hills. Parents wanting to sell items at the event must register by Wednesday, Dec. 1. For information, call Farmington Hills Recreation Division at (248) 478-9570.

MADONNA UNIVERSITY NEWS

Madonna University's registration for the winter 2000 term will begin Monday, Nov. 15, and continues through Friday, Jan. 7 for new and returning students. Office hours will be held from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays; and until 7 p.m. on Mondays and Thursdays, with the exception of Dec. 20 and 23 when the office will close at 6 p.m. All offices will be closed for Thanksgiving (Nov. 25, 26, 27 and 28) and Christmas (Dec. 24-Jan. 3). Classes begin the week of Jan. 10. The convenience of fax-in registration for all students is available and will be accepted Nov. 15-Dec. 17. Students may enroll in day, evening and weekend classes, and non-admitted students must obtain a permit-to-register from the admissions office. Transfer students are welcome. There is no application fee. Madonna University is the most affordable independent liberal arts university in Michigan and is at 1-86 and Levan Road in Livonia. It offers men and women associate's and bachelor's degrees in more than 50 career-oriented majors and 14 master's programs in diverse areas of business, education, health services, hospice and nursing. For more information, call the Admissions Office at (734) 432-5339.

Blues concert set
As part of a year-long project for secondary teachers focused on the theme "Our Urban Identity: Interpreting Detroit through the Humanities," Madonna University in Livonia will offer a folk and blues music performance by Robert Jones and Mt Watroba at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 11, in Kresge Hall. Jones is a nationally recognized musician who combines singing, playing of instruments, and storytelling to convey to audiences the importance of African-American Music and the impact of blues on American culture. He is the creator and host of Detroit Public Radio WDET's *Blues From the Lowlands* program.

Watroba is the producer and host of the *Folks Like Us* program on WDET and has performed folk music concerts and conducted workshops and assemblies all over the state of Michigan. He also holds a Michigan teaching certificate. This project on urban identity will serve as a model for schools, creating educational resources and curricular materials for use in secondary classrooms. There is no charge for admission. This series is partially supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities. For information, contact Dr. Richard Sax, dean, College of Arts and Humanities at (734) 432-5542 or Dr. Marjorie Checkoway, professor, education, at (734) 432-5653. Madonna University is at 1-86 and Levan Road in Livonia.

What if cancer is a



Wak... to our own humanity?

It's not enough to think of cancer as a disease. It's a challenge to everything we know about life. At the Providence Cancer Institute, we help you meet the challenge every day. The new Assarian Cancer Center, in partnership with the University of Michigan Health System, provides leading-edge clinical care and research along with the conveniences you and your family deserve. And the Center for the Healing Arts unites spirituality with science and the arts to provide support from diagnosis through treatment. The Providence Cancer Institute... dedicated to the health and humanity of every patient.

The Michael & Rose Assarian Cancer Center in Novi



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Cancer Center Network
University of Michigan Health System

For more information, please call us at 800.341.0801