



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BEEKER

Change: Lots of it came to the city of Farmington. For example, a bread tour (above left) preceded the opening – at long last – of the Great Harvest Bread Company in the Downtown Farmington Center. Also accomplished in 1999 was the construction of the Kids World PlayScape in Shiawassee Park.

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facility ... but equally important is the esprit de corps, the sense of community" that enabled the project to become a reality.

Richards wasn't the only one who put in enormous effort toward the project, which finally opened in August. Others included planning commission chairwoman Mardy Stirling and parent volunteers Bruce Lilley and Nancy Tashman.

Meanwhile, other notable Farmington happenings during '99 were the March completion and opening of the renovated Department of Public Services headquarters and Damman Hardware's commitment to take over the long-vacant Farmer

1999

Jack store in the Downtown Farmington Center.

It is expected that Damman's occupation of the space will become one of the city's top stories for 2000.

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1997 bond issue projects is bringing students an exciting blend of educational opportunities.

Both Maxfield and Brouillette recently amplified on their letter.

"It's been an important year," Maxfield said recently. "Schools are nearing completion, (implementation of) many new programs is starting to near completion."

Block scheduling was successfully embraced at North (High School) and we're over the hump at Harrison. I'm very optimistic about the future."

When Harrison High School goes to block in 2000-2001, all three of the district's high schools will be on similar schedules – which are designed to enable students to take electives as well as benefit from longer classes.

Brouillette echoed Maxfield about how calendar year 1999 was one to be proud of.

"I think we've reached a stage of steady upward momentum, with facilities that are able to support the programs that are best for learning," Brouillette said.

Besides the physical improvements being made to schools across the district, such as completion of a music wing at Farmington High School to name just one, Brouillette mentioned a couple elementary study programs now entrenched.

Those include foreign language taught earlier than ever – in the fourth grade instead of seventh grade – and expanded student assistance services.

About the latter, Brouillette said the program enables "a safety net for kids," with trained counselors in every building to help youngsters deal with complex personal issues that teachers might not be equipped to handle.

"If there's a crisis in their life, such as a family disruption or health," explained Brouillette, "now, at each of the elementary schools, there is somebody trained to help them. And that's hugely important."

Although individual teachers can do what they can to help their students, Brouillette emphasized that they might not "have (access to) all the resources that a student might need."

Meanwhile, as 1999 turns into 2000, the school board also is moving forward with state legislation regarding "safe schools," complete with a crisis intervention plan that will be unveiled at the Tuesday, Jan. 11 board meeting.

Well connected

But Brouillette said the district had set the foundation for such a plan well ahead of the Columbine tragedy and Gov. John Engler's subsequent mandate to districts.

"When we were faced with implementing (the legislation) ... we found we were already very well prepared for that," she added.



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Kudos: Top winner Lindsey Misch gives a hug to Winning Futures facilitator Kathy Tsoian. Winning Futures is one of many programs in the Farmington School District.

According to their joint letter to staff, Maxfield and Brouillette referred to how well the district "connects" with all facets of the school community.

"These connections have been dramatically evident during the past year as so much has been accomplished," the letter stated. "Continuing facility renovations made possible with the community's support of the (September 1997) bond issue help connect the past with the future by providing enhanced learning environments and technological resources for our students and staff."

Helping continue to make those connections, their letter continued, will be the approximately 100 faculty members and support staff who joined "Team Farmington" in 1999.



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BEEKER

How to: Garmo and Phil Watha compare notes on a very long 24 hours in the "Baby Think It Over" program.



First: Farmington Hills drew attention in 1999 with the death of a young French woman who arrived here following an Internet romance.

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problems, we find ridiculous."

City officials have asked DTE to do a system-wide review and replace aging equipment.

The company claims it is spending upwards of \$40 million on clearing trees away from power lines, which reduces the potential for power outages. While they're one of the community's finest selling points, Farmington Hills' picturesque, tree-lined streets pose a special problem, DTE officials said.

They also point to a rash of summer storms as a primary cause of frequent outages within the city, but officials complain the company just doesn't respond quickly enough.

After a July 31 storm, at least 9,000 electrical customers were affected. Crews were working as late as Aug. 3 to restore power to a block of 80 homes.

Residents also said they experience blackouts at various times, even when the skies are clear, and local officials have grown weary of taking the calls.

"I'm tired of carrying their water," city manager Steve Brock said following a rash of blackouts this summer. "I've got people calling asking us to put them up in a hotel room."

Local officials have argued that until DTE Energy hurts as much as residents hurt, nothing will change. They've suggested the company be forced to provide dry ice and



Bye: Aldo Vagnozzi, the first directly elected Hills mayor, completes his term in November.

generators, and to pay customer damages when power is off for an extended period of time.

Without question, damaged lines and power outages can be dangerous. A 32-year-old electrical worker contracted to help DTE with line work died this summer while working on transmission wires downed during a storm.

The Singer family, residents in the Ramblewood subdivision, learned a water heater mechanism designed to shuttle out carbon monoxide wouldn't work without power. Alerted by the smell of gas, they discovered the problem before it became life-threatening.

Still, Janet Singer said, "It's a nightmare."

PSC commissioners at the Nov. 29 hearing said they would study the information they gathered, then sit down with DTE and try to resolve the issues. PSC Chairman John Strand said if that's not possible, negotiations could move into the Appeals Court.

"The Courts of Appeals are always trying to figure out where our authority ends and where it begins," he said. "The Michigan Supreme Court told us last year that we are 'creatures of the Legislature.'"

If the state says the PSC has the power to do something, they'll do it, Strand added.