

CHAT ROOM



JONI HUBRED

Resolve to be your best, but not on Jan. 1

Whether the new millennium began Jan. 1 or will begin next Jan. 1 is argued by many people, but one ageless, timeless truth remains: New Year's resolutions still mean bupkis on Jan. 2.

That day has passed, and I thought I'd solved the problem by just not making any. Truth is, though, I resolve to do something better almost every day. Most of us imperfect types are like that.

We're not just sorry when we miss the mark. We're devastated by our failures and anxious to do anything in our power to make up for them.

One of my most spectacular boobies (one of those highly technical newspaper terms) occurred shortly after I was first hired as a reporter. In a story about a teacher named Mrs. Fuchs, I made the only worst-possible-mistake you can make in spelling that name.

She was very kind and insisted we not make a big deal over the error, which made me feel worse. A crime of such magnitude couldn't possibly go unpunished.

So for months afterward, I proof-read everything that left my computer, whether original or submitted, with a fine-toothed comb. And then one week, I just got too busy to take the time.

The world didn't fall apart. I made other mistakes and survived. Resolved to do better countless times. Succeeded. Failed.

Never stop trying

It's just so easy to slip back into those behaviors that take the least amount of effort. But we never stop trying, do we?

Whenever something core-rattling happens to us, we respond by vowing to do better with our lives. A friend recently learned the spot on her mammogram was nothing more than an impacted milk gland. After long weeks of waiting and wondering ended happily, she urged the women she knew to make an appointment for the test.

Some did, I'm sure, just because of the reminder. Diana resolved to take better care of herself to be an inspiration to others.

When my father died almost two years ago, my mother grieved for a time, then seemed to throw herself even more into the volunteer work that had been their life's blood as a couple. She applied for membership on city committees and commissions, continued to do chores for, and deliver meals to, ailing or homebound senior citizens.

Mom sings with a group called "The Old Hats" ladies who travel all over western Minnesota, taking their music and laughter into nursing homes, senior apartments, churches.

She resolved not to let her sadness overcome her natural, God-given talent for helping others. That unspoken commitment resonates in everything she says and does.

A struggle with constant illness left my then-15-year-old daughter exhausted and wondering when she was ever going to feel better. For months, she stayed home, often in bed asleep, missing school and activities with her friends.

Finally, a doctor asked the right questions. With an accurate diagnosis and treatment, she was back on her feet again, anxious to move forward with her life.

A month later, she'd gotten a job. By her 17th birthday, she'd graduated early through an alternative education program, passing her tests with marks higher than anyone in that school had ever achieved.

My child resolved to make her life better by taking control of it, then went out and lived. I am surrounded by the kinds of every day heroes my father taught me to admire.

Co-workers who struggle through illness and hardships, remaining

Please See CHAT ROOM, B5

Gotta have art

Farmington gets full-time cultural arts coordinator



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRADLEE

New coordinator: Nancy Coumoundouros looks forward to meeting with all the arts groups in Farmington and Farmington Hills.

Farmington/Farmington Hills now has a full-time cultural arts coordinator to oversee the myriad of local programs.

By MARY RODRIGUE
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Think of her as a conductor leading an orchestra.

Hired just two months ago, Nancy Coumoundouros, the first full-time cultural arts coordinator

for Farmington/Farmington Hills, already appears well tuned in to her job.

"The fact that a full time person was needed is a wonderful statement of support for the arts here," she said in her office in the Costick Activities Center in Farmington Hills. "There is a lot of interest in the arts. I'm in this position to pull it all together. I like taking the many pieces and putting them all together to see something develop. Farmington has a wealth of artists and people who support the arts."

Already her file cabinets overflow with paperwork associated with the plethora of arts programs the community supports - over 20. And she has several ideas for new programs, like an artist guest lecture series, possibly to debut this spring. She hopes to start a quarterly arts calendar that would highlight art events from local schools, the cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills and area churches.

An arts showcase focusing on the various art organizations, possibly one a month, to air on the local cable television public access channel is another project in the works.

She has arranged bus tours from the Costick Center to the Detroit Institute of Arts for the much lauded Van Gogh exhibit coming this spring. When tickets for the first bus tour sold out in less than two weeks, she arranged for a second tour on a subsequent Saturday in May.

Although English was her major at

the University of Michigan, Coumoundouros minored in art history and costume design. She has painted murals in the past and worked in promotions, but doesn't have the time for such ventures now. Before coming to Farmington, she was Waterford's first cultural council coordinator. She held that position from 1994 to November 1999.

"That's part of the appeal here, getting in on the ground floor again."

Art revival

She is reviving the Artist in the Corridor series later this month with 1992 Farmington Artist in Residence Evangelia Samra. Samra's paintings will appear in both the Farmington and Farmington Hills city halls Jan. 24 through March 24. There will be meet-the-artist receptions with opportunities to discuss the work.

Coumoundouros was there when 1998 Artist in Residence Danguole Jurgutis donated her painting "Essence of Nature" to the City of Farmington Hills recently. It became an instant hit with city hall workers when it was hung, she noted.

"We're hoping that the cultural arts division will become a clearinghouse," Coumoundouros said. "I've been very busy. It's not been boring."

"We're already looking at ways to use the Civic Theatre for cultural events. It's an exquisite place for small concerts. I think it's terrific that the city bought the building. We're going to turn it into a cultural gem."

Already meetings are under way regarding the 2000 Festival of the Arts week scheduled April 29 through May 7 and for the annual Farmington Founders Festival to be held in July.

"In Waterford the cultural council was the driving force behind Summerfest," she said, noting the benefits she can garner from that experience.

She plans to attend at least one meeting of every arts group in the community.

"I want to see how we can support them," she said. "I was very involved with the running of the nonprofit cultural council in Waterford. I know the challenges they face."

Please See ARTS COORDINATOR, B2

Unitarian minister takes new jobs

By MARY RODRIGUE
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Although Suzanne Paul has retired from the ministry at the Universalist Unitarian Church of Farmington, she won't be sleeping in on Sunday mornings anytime soon.

"I sent out letters to congregations to be a minister at large," said Paul, who left her local post effective Dec. 31, 1999. "I'm booked solid for the month of February. It will be the best of both worlds. I'll be filling in on Sundays, providing assistance for weddings, funerals and child dedications, but not having the day-to-day responsibilities of the ministry."

Paul knows well how demanding that can be. She provided over the Farmington congregation for 11-1/2 years. During her tenure, she watched the congregation swell from 65 to 230 members.

"When I came in 1988, there were 11 children in the Sunday school program. Today there are 125," she said.

"The congregation was originally Farmington-based. But a 1967 move to Halsted Road and the expressway led to a wider area to draw from. Today's members live in Commerce, Walled Lake and Canton. That has changed the dynamics."

But geography had little to do with Paul's decision to leave.

"I just felt that after 11 1/2 years, it was a healthy move for myself and the congregation: to re-evaluate where they were and where they wanted to go."

There will be an interim minister at the church for up to two years while the search for a replacement continues.

Paul, meanwhile, will keep busy volunteering in the community as well as with two new part-time positions. On the volunteering front, she and Denise Tawney just chaired the Farmington Civic Theatre grand re-opening celebration. Appointed by the Farmington City Council last October, the two women brainstormed ways to celebrate the city's purchase and renovation of the old theater and town landmark.

The result: rolling back admission to 1940s prices (25 cents for adults and a dime for kids), an auction of theater memorabilia and a Saturday night gala with a 1940s theme. By all accounts, the weekend was a huge success.

"Every single item for the auction sold, and we grossed just over \$10,000," she said.

Tickets for the Saturday gala, limited to 288 due to the size of the theater, sold out in less than two weeks. Guests began the festivities in Legato salon, adjacent to the Civic. After cocktails and hors d'oeuvres, guests watched a screening of the 1940 Academy-Award-winning "The Philadelphia Story." The evening culminated with dessert and coffee at Legato.

Legato owners Kelley and Mike Nowak were so gracious to open their space to us, especially for that number of people," Paul said.

"I was honored to be asked to help. It was a privilege to work with the city council. Their spirit of cooperation and enthusiasm is boundless."



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRADLEE

Career change: Suzanne Paul left the ministry at the Universalist Unitarian Church of Farmington after almost 12 years. She accepted two national level part-time jobs.

With the party behind her, Paul can move on to her new jobs. Effective this week, she is program administrator for the Humanist Institute which is headquartered in Minneapolis. The semi-

nary is in New York City. "I will report to the board of directors in Minneapolis but I can do most of my job from home," said Paul, who lives in

Please See MINISTER, B2

Community bands welcome new century

On Sunday, Jan. 23, the Farmington Community Band will join the Birmingham Community Band in a concert to welcome in the new century.

Each band will perform individually under the direction of conductors Paul Barber for the Farmington band and Grant Hoemke for the Birmingham band. After each band has performed several pieces, the two bands will give a combined performance under the

direction of Douglas Bianchi, director of bands at Wayne State University.

This is not the first time the Farmington and Birmingham community bands have performed together. For the past 18 years, along with four other community bands, they participated in the Festival of Bands concert in Novi.

The festival was discontinued this year. Because the festival had been popular, Barber and Hoemke decided

to schedule a combined band event so audiences could still enjoy two bands in concert for the price of one.

This concert is free. But donations are always appreciated.

The show begins at 3 p.m. in Birmingham Groves High School, on the north side of 13 Mile just west of Evergreen. For more information, call (734) 261-2202 or visit the FCB Web site at www.fcbband.org

The Farmington and Birmingham community bands performed together at the Festival of Bands, now discontinued. This free show gives audiences a chance to hear both bands perform together again.