

Here's a look back at what happened in 1999

With 1999 a fading memory, we look back at some of the major events that were publicized over the past 12 months in the pages of the community life section of the Farmington Observer. Here's what went on.

January
A self-described "directionally challenged" school librarian turned her disability into the topic for a new book, *Linda Grekin*, on staff at Hillside School in Farmington Hills, admitted "I would never go out somewhere without intense preparation." Her book, "I'll Never Get Lost Again - The Complete Guide to Improving Your Sense of Direction," was published by RDR Books (\$12.95).

Tina Jensen was lauded for community volunteerism by being named the 1999 Farmington Area Citizen of the Year. Sponsored solely by the Farmington Area Jaycees for the first time, the banquet was held at the Glen Oaks Country Club. The Junior Womens Club, Farmington Families in Action, the Langrage House and Farmington Public Schools have benefited from Jensen's tireless volunteer efforts over the past two decades.

February
A pilot program at Farmington High School got students to focus on a five-year plan for success - Winning Futures, a school-community mentorship program. The two-month program encouraged students to create a five-year plan for success. Fifty students took the challenge. Senior Marshall Williams took the grand prize: a \$1,000 scholarship and the use of a Chevrolet Corvette for a week.

March
Yaël Waxman, from the Michigan Israel Connection, squared off with May Sokolay, a Wayne State University professor of Palestinian history, at the Birmingham Temple in Farmington Hills for a passionate debate. Their topic: Can there be a peaceful solution to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict? While both sides agreed peace is sorely needed, there was no consensus on whether peace is possible, given the current conditions in the Holy Land.

TV's Suzanne Somers told an audience at Adat Shalom synagogue in Farmington Hills a gritty tale of her early life with an abusive alcoholic father. Before 1,000 women attending the Choices event of the Women Allied Jewish Campaign, Somers revealed much of the contents of her published autobiography, "Keeping Secrets."

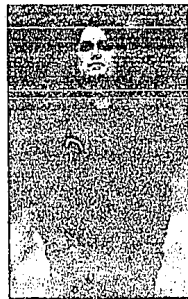


Suzanne Somers

April
A new foster mom told what it's like to be a parent to a little girl. She and her husband found the road to adoption through the foster parenting program of the St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center. "It's the most rewarding thing we've ever done," said Texas transplant Gayle Chappell, who with husband, Tom,



Radio personality: Industry veteran Jimmy Launce found a new home for his mid-day show at WYUR. He has since retired from radio.



Miss Farmington: Leslie Reinbold has become a spokeswoman on eating disorders.

and has swelled into a multi-dimensional organization with a home base in the Costick Activities Center.

August
Farmington area residents began mulling over the repercussions of Y2K. Sentiments ranged from complete oblivion to amassing everything from food to fuel to hard cash. It inspired West Bloomfield businessman Rick Helligman to open the Y2K Warehouse in Farmington Hills. Farmington Hills singer and songwriter Rufus Harris kicked off the first free concert in the park on the grounds of the historic Warner Mansion. Free hot dogs, beverages and balloons rounded out the evening, as well as a clown to entertain youngsters.

September
Judith Barr, a domestic abuse survivor, told members of the Farmington area Zonta Club about her early life with an abusive, alcoholic father and how she overcame her past and now works professionally with other victims of abuse. Zonta financially supports the First Step Shelter of western Wayne County, a refuge for battered women and their children.

May
Farmington Hills game maker Ellie Kells continued her battle with corporate giant toy maker, Ty Inc., maker of Barbie Babies, with her board game, "The Beanie Chase." Sued for copyright infringement, Kells was allowed to recoup her \$100,000 investment but not profit from the game. After she totally revamped the game, now called "The Bean Bag Chase," Ty, Inc. came after the harried home-maker a second time. In the end, Kells won her second legal battle but decided to drop her game idea altogether because of the stress.

June
Radio listeners rediscovered popular longtime on air personality Jimmy Launce, who lives in Farmington Hills, at WYUR-AM 1310 radio. He retired at year's end.

The St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center honored Bezell Worldwide Inc. with an award for volunteer group of the year. Advertising agency Bezell was honored for giving time and talent to support various center programs.

July
Leslie Reinbold, a Michigan State junior majoring in journalism, was crowned Miss Farmington/Oakland County in the 26th annual local pageant, which was held at Vladimirs.

The Farmington Hills Senior Activity Center celebrated its silver anniversary: 25 years worth of programming for local senior citizens. The center started in 1974 as The Gathering Place

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A local family, the Martins, described the relief Angela Place has brought them in providing a permanent home for their developmentally disabled adult daughter. The non-profit Christian organization provides homes in the metro area for developmentally disabled adults and had just opened a residence in Farmington Hills.

Two good friends - production company co-owner Rex Cooperman and Farmington comedienne Allie Fayo - talked about their battles with cancer. Cooperman raised public awareness about breast cancer when her own battle was publicized in several segments of WXYZ-TV news with Robbie Timmons. Comedienne Fayo had raised money for Gilda's Place in honor of her



Robert Plepenburg, Artist in Residence for 1999

mentor, Gilda Redner, before learning she had lung cancer. Ms. Fayo died in November.

October
Joyce Williamson and Wynne Nowels proved that love can be as sweet the second time around. After 60 years of friendship and happy marriages to others, the widow and widower became husband and wife in a ceremony performed by former Farmington Mayor Blary Buah.

Moms in Touch International spread to the Farmington area where groups of mothers assemble on a regular basis to pray for their children and their schools. The non-denominational interfaith group has a goal: to have moms praying for kids in every U.S. school by 2003.

Reigning Miss Farmington Leslie Reinbold candidly spoke about her long battle with the eating disorder anorexia. In the aftermath, a number of young girls confided to their parents similar problems with anorexia or bulimia.

Two Farmington Hills kids, Mary Maloney and Matt Dugler, both students at Our Lady of Sorrows school, starred in the Michigan Opera Theatre production of "Werther" with famed Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli.

November
The Farmington Hills senior center ran a program matching middle school kids with senior citizens to teach the older folks how to use the Internet and other computer skills. It proved to be a mutually beneficial program.

The Ecumenical Institute for Jewish Christian Studies, which works to foster harmony and understanding among people of different religions, held its first auction, which was conducted by Park West Galleries.

The annual Festival of Trees held at Cobo Hall transformed a

sterile ballroom into a winter wonderland with the help of hundreds of arroy metro area residents. All proceeds went to Childrens Hospital of Michigan research programs.

December
Hanukkah, the Jewish Festival of Lights, was Dec. 3 to Dec. 11 and featured a myriad of activities. Bais Chavod synagogue in Farmington Hills erected a large outdoor menorah to remind passersby of the religious holiday.

Three hundred party-goers enjoyed the third annual holiday tea sponsored by the Farmington Hills senior center. It featured a Victorian fashion show with a wide array of bustles, hoops, satin, lace and bonnets - all modeled by Mercy High seniors.

The St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center celebrated a successful completion of its \$4 million capital campaign. The money was used for the first renovation of six 1920s era residential cottages, which house 60 special needs children.

-Compiled by Mary Rodrigue



Tina Jensen, Citizen of the Year

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