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THE WEEK AHEAD

MONDAY

MLK: In celebration of Martin Luther King's birthday, Farmington city offices will be closed, as will 47th District Court. Farmington Hills city offices will be open. Several school programs are planned.

Awards: City of Farmington Hills employees will be recognized for years of service, 5 p.m. at the William Costick Activities Center on 11 Mile.

TUESDAY

Gathering: The Council of Homeowners Associations will meet at 7 p.m. at the Farmington Hills library branch on 12 Mile.

Call to Action: The community coalition will meet 6:30 p.m. at Farmington Training Center, 33000 Thomas Street.

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Manhunt continues

By JONI HUBBRED
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A massive manhunt continued Friday for an armed robbery suspect accidentally released from jail in Farmington Hills.

Chief Bill Dwyer said the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Violent Crime Task Force in Detroit have been called in to assist with the search for the 27-year-old Detroit man wanted in connection with a series of violent crimes that occurred between Dec. 30 and Jan. 1.

"We are still requesting information from anyone who would have knowledge of his whereabouts," Dwyer said. "We're thinking of offering a reward."

The suspect, who was to be arraigned Wednesday, was released by a detective who had intended to release a man in lock-up on a domestic assault charge. When asked, the man falsely identified himself.

No action has been taken against the detective at this point. Internal investigators are taking statements from everyone involved in the incident.

"Looking at the mug shot, I can see how it happened," Dwyer said. "This is the first incident of its kind in Dwyer's 15-year tenure."

Please see **MANHUNT**, A3

MEAP: Results are a mixed bag



By TIM SMITH
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It's an accomplishment Farmington school district educators won't be shouting about. Rather, the performance of high school juniors in last year's first-ever Michigan Educational Assessment Program's social studies test will be something to perhaps mutter about in barely audible voices.

Even though students at Farmington, Harrison and North high schools fared better than their counterparts from almost all other Oakland County districts, the accomplishment is a hollow one because only about 20 percent of eligible juniors took the new test last May. District officials estimate that 85 percent of juniors would need to take the test for the results to be meaningful.

"Because our numbers are not really representative of the population, you hate to say, 'Yeah, we did really well,'" lamented Kris Gekiere of Farmington's assessment, research and evaluation department.

Bob Maxfield, superintendent of the district, did say that those students who took the test and performed well should be congratulated for their efforts.

"Since a lot of effort went into social studies, I'm glad they did well," said Maxfield following Tuesday's school board meeting.

According to the test scores, adminis-

"Because our numbers are not really representative of the population, you hate to say, 'Yeah, we did really well.'"

Kris Gekiere
—Schools test coordinator

tered in May 1999, 50.7 percent of 164 Farmington district juniors either met or exceeded Michigan state standards, Level 1 or 2, respectively.

Beginning with this spring's high school MEAP tests (but as of now only in math, science, reading and writing), placement in those top two categories enable students to become eligible for \$2,500 scholarships. Gekiere said discussions to include social studies into the "money mix" are expected to soon take place.

Best in civics

For the social studies test, which this year will take place May 1-12, students were tested on civics, economics, geography, historical perspective and inquiry and decision making.

Gekiere said students at all three high schools fared the best in civics. Out of 12 possible points, Farmington High School students scored an average of 9.6. Harrison and North students tallied scores of 9.0 and 8.1.

Please see **MEAP**, A4

Authority created to pay for cleanup

By JONI HUBBRED
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If it is indeed possible to turn a sow's ear into a silk purse, Farmington Hills city officials appear on track to do it with the 11 Pines property, at 11 Mile Road and Halsted.

Officials voted Monday to establish a "brownfield redevelopment authority," which will help them finance the cleanup of a closed landfill on 25 acres on the southwest side of the intersection. The authority allows them to take advantage of the increased value of the property after it's developed.

"The purpose is to capture the growth in taxes," said Terri Arbenowake, assistant to the Farmington Hills city manager. "As the taxes come in, we will use those to pay for the environmental cleanup."

As a publicly owned property, the land currently has no taxable value.

When homes begin to generate property taxes, the city will use those dollars to cap the landfill, Arbenowake explained. The "increment" between the original and developed tax bills includes school and state taxes as well.

While they could have included the entire city, council members limited boundaries to a total of 191 acres on the southwest and northeast sides of the intersection, including the existing San Marino golf course and an adjacent property purchased from the school district. At a Saturday morning work session, officials expressed concern over the stigma of declaring the entire community a brownfield.

The next step in the process will be a public hearing, scheduled for 7:30 p.m. Feb. 14 to establish the authority, which consists of five members, who may or may not be council members.

Please see **CLEAN**, A3



Watchful eye: Elaine Conn helps kids stay safe through her involvement in the Child Watch program.

STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRADLEY

Safe House Volunteers needed

By JONI HUBBRED
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Elaine Conn still lives in the house where she grew up, in a quiet, tree-lined neighborhood street in Farmington Hills.

The world has changed a lot since she was a child, but Conn is doing her part to make it as safe as it felt back then. The mother of three elementary-aged children has volunteered her home as a "safe house" children can come to when they feel threatened or need help.

"I was involved with it when it was the 'Helping Hand' program," Conn said, recalling the large, pink hand she displayed in her window. The new Michigan Community Child Watch sign features the familiar "Neighborhood Watch" graphic. "Hopefully, they'll never have to use it, but I think if kids are aware of it, it'll make them feel safer when they're outside."

Though her children take the same path to get to the same school, traffic on the main thoroughfare has changed. They may still walk to school when the weather's nice, but Conn often drives as well.

"I went to William Grace when I was a kid," Conn said. "I remember walking to school with groups of other kids. Now we've got families in the neighborhood who don't all go to the same school."

She'd like to see more people living on those main roads volunteer for the Community Child Watch Program. In fact, Conn would like to see more people throughout the community involved.

At the first training sessions held in November, only 14 people showed up, despite pre-event publicity in Farmington area schools. In a community of more than

Please see **SAFE**, A4

Chamber president tapped for fellowship



By TIM SMITH
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As president of the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce, Carleigh Flaharty knows all about business.

Soon, she'll be able to add politics to her list of expertise. Flaharty, 27, recently was selected to receive one of just 24 fully-paid fellowships with the Michigan Political Leadership Program at Michigan State University.

The program's curriculum includes politics, public policy analysis, personal leadership development and effective government.

Besides learning more about law-making and consensus building, Flaharty said the MSU fellowship will benefit her in her position as chamber president.

"Part of our role and mission states that we're advocates for our business members," said Flaharty, noting there are more than 750 chamber members in the Farmington-Farmington Hills area. "There are a lot of activities happening at the state legislative level."

And, by knowing about those activities and how decisions are made in Lansing, Flaharty added that the chamber then "can present the best

The program's curriculum includes politics, public policy analysis, personal leadership development and effective government.

voice for businesses in our community."

She said she is excited about getting started with the program, because it will "teach people to be leaders in their community" and work in tandem with city and school district officials.

Flaharty, who holds a bachelor of arts degree in English literature from the University of Washington, became president of the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce in June 1998, after spending two years with the Canton Township chamber.

Following their footsteps

Since the program's inception in 1992, about 250 have graduated, including Mary Bush and JoAnne McShane of the Farmington City Council, and Cathy Webb of the Farmington Board of Education.

The MPLP is one of only a handful of public policy and leadership education

Please see **FELLOW**, A3

Bound for study: Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce President Carleigh Flaharty received a fellowship to attend a political leadership program at Michigan State University. She received one of 24 fully-paid fellowships.

STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRADLEY

