

Nothing drastic with merger – yet

You read it in the paper, you heard it on the news: the biggest merger in history. AOL is merging with Time Warner in an all-stock deal where AOL will hold 55 percent of the new company (AOL Time Warner) and Time Warner will hold 45 percent of the new company. And of course, the articles spoke of stocks, corporate mergers and consolidation and the media industry. By now, we know what this means to the stockholders, but what does all this mean to Time Warner Cable subscribers?

Don't expect drastic changes to your cable service, at least not right away. There's a lot of paperwork and other regulatory approvals that have to be completed before this deal is final. And one approval may have to come from your local governments. Under FCC regulations,



KAREN COLLINS

the companies may have to submit an FCC Form 394 to the Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission, which represents Farmington, Farmington Hills and Novi, in order to seek permission to transfer control of the cable franchise, if appropriate.

In any transfer of control of a cable franchise, there is certain information which must be submitted that the cities review to determine whether a "transfer" will be approved. This transfer process has deadlines and procedures that are required by law.

One concern in a transfer is that the new owners will abide by all the obligations of the previous owner. Communities must also be assured that the new cable operator has sufficient financial resources to continue providing service to the local communities.

Cable transfers have been taking place all over Michigan. For example in several communities on the eastern side of Oakland County such as Troy and Royal Oak, TCI is now

AT&T cable. And most MediaOne cities such as Southfield will soon be AT&T. You may even recall that in 1994 we were provided cable service from MetroVision. Before Time Warner took over the cable franchise, your communities had to approve the transfer.

For the present, you should still receive the same cable service at the same rate. However, it is too early to tell what might change once the companies have merged and any required transfer has been completed. The companies haven't even announced their plans. So we will just have to wait and see what effect, if any, the proposed merger of AOL and Time Warner will have on our communities.

Karen Collins is the executive director of the Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission. The next SWOCC meeting is at 4:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 29, at Farmington City Hall. The next CAC meeting is at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 8 at SWOCC.

Honors from page A1

Michaelson's letter to Lauhoff recalled the Feb. 6, 1997, joint meeting.

"I made a passionate plea ... for more of us to connect and to focus toward more common goals to expand drug and violence prevention initiatives," Michaelson's letter stated. "You responded by saying, 'It is easy to become emotional with this topic ... but it is also imperative to substantiate those feelings with action.'"

The Call to Action essentially was "conceived by those words. Frank, you have always believed in advocating for change as long as change will truly benefit a community. I have come to rely on your honesty and your convictions as your word transcends political agendas," the letter continued.

Standing in a hallway after being honored – he receiving a ceramic coffee mug counter bearing the coalition's slogan "Changing Attitudes, Driving Change" – Lauhoff struggled to find words to sum up how he felt about the recognition.

Among the words he used were "surprised," "flattered" and "honored."

He also downplayed his contributions compared to those of the coalition.



Frank Lauhoff, city manager

"These people do so much here," Lauhoff said quietly. "This whole organization is a catalyst, it's a group that makes things happen. And, for me, being city manager, people think you're doing all these different things. But I'll tell you the most important thing we have here are the kids."

"So, for me, being involved in this is more important than all of the other stuff we do."

Coalition briefs

■ Also during Tuesday's Call to Action meeting, Margo Gorchow, administrator of hospital and community relations at Botsford General Hospital, detailed the second round of "Are

We Connecting" student-parent survey responses.

The survey, conducted in 1998 by Co-Operation Health (a partnership between Botsford Health Care Continuum and Farmington Public Schools), included questions about attitudes and behaviors pertaining to alcohol and drug use and other health issues. Students in grades five through nine and their parents answered the question.

Self-esteem issues seemed to dominate the survey. According to the survey results, 20 percent of students in grades six through eight and 25 percent of ninth graders "do not often or sometimes feel useful and important in their families."

Only 38 percent of students in grades six through eight said they didn't get enough praise or encouragement in school. Of ninth graders answering the question, 44 percent felt they weren't sufficiently praised in school.

Concerning home life, about 30 percent of students said their parents didn't talk to them enough about their activities and interests. The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (1997) reported that students "who felt strongly connected to their parents were less likely to experience emotional distress."

■ Meanwhile, the coalition's official Web site was unveiled by Sharon Vincent and Gerald Furi. The Web address is <http://www.farmlib.org/calltoaction/>.

Primaries from page A1

other hand, lists Steve Forbes, Orrin Hatch, Alan Keyes, John McCain, Gary Bauer and George W. Bush. From a partisan standpoint, therein lies the rub.

Marks said Democrats could vote for Republican candidates and select the ones who apparently have the slimmest chance of winning.

"If they're going to do that," he pointed out, "why not just pull it away and have it a vote of the people?"

While both political parties have strong representation across the country, Marks sees a shift toward voting for the person instead of his or her political affiliation.

"Most people today are running independent anyway," Marks said. "I think the day and age of following (a political party) blindly are over."

Local Democratic leader Vicki Barnett doesn't think it'll ever be possible to take the politics out of elections, but she would like to see a serious effort to hold "closed" primaries, where crossover would be a thing of the past.

"I don't think the lines are ever clear," she said. "Because of the potential for that, the Democratic National Committee has a policy that primaries must be closed."

An example of how the system can be abused occurred in the 1972 presidential primary, when Democratic presidential candidate George Wallace received more votes than there were Democratic voters registered.

Barnett agrees the independent vote has a tremendous impact. But there can be an unanticipated side effect.

"They will choose the person instead of the party," she said. "Unfortunately, with the person, you also get the party."

Michigan Democrats will choose their major candidates during precinct caucuses sched-

ed March 11 at sites throughout the area, including Farmington Hills City Hall. Participants will choose between two candidates, Vice President Al Gore and Congressman Bill Bradley.

This year, Democrats may also vote by mail. Applications are available by writing to, or stopping by 606 Townsend, Lansing, 48933, by calling the party at 517-371-6410, by faxing at 517-371-2056, or e-mailing midem-party@aol.com.

A copy can also be downloaded from the Michigan Democrats' Web site at www.midemocrats.com.

Applications must be returned by 5 p.m. on March 3. All vote by mail ballots must be returned by mail or in person by 5 p.m. on March 10. No e-mailed or faxed ballots will be accepted.

A person may vote by mail because of disability, religious belief, absence from the caucus zone in which the person resides, or being 60 years of age or older. Anyone interested in more direct participation should show up for the March 11 caucuses by 11 a.m.

To register to vote, contact the clerk's office in Farmington at 474-5500, Farmington Hills at 473-9561, or register when applying for or renewing a driver's license with the Secretary of State.

OBITUARIES

RUTH A. FARWELL

Services for Ruth Ann Farwell, 87, of Farmington Hills were held Jan. 10 at Heeneys-Sundquist Funeral Home in Farmington with the Rev. Timothy Halboch officiating.

Mrs. Farwell was born Dec. 19, 1912 in Canada and died Jan. 6 at Botsford Hospital in Farmington Hills.

She is survived by son, Douglas.

JAMES B. WIGHTMAN

Services for James Byron Wightman, 48, formerly of Farmington Hills were held Jan. 15 at St. Fabian Catholic Church in Farmington Hills.

Mr. Wightman was born in Detroit and died Jan. 15 at his home in Livonia. He was a commercial graphic designer and also worked in public relations. He was a member of Knights of Columbus and enjoyed golf, bowling and computers.

He is survived by children, Wendy and Scott; parents, Robert and Wendy; and siblings, Gerald, Ronald, Thomas and Sharon.

Arrangements made by McCabe Funeral Home in Farmington Hills.

WALTER S. TYZA

Services for Walter Stephen Tyza, 24, of Farmington Hills were held Jan. 16 at Heeneys-Sundquist Funeral Home in Farmington with the Rev. Scott Thibodeau officiating.

Mr. Tyza was born Jan. 10, 1976 in Livonia and died Jan. 13.

He is survived by his parents, Walter and Linda; sisters, Amy (David) Anselm and Molly Tyza; and grandmother, Anna Tyza.

Memorial contributions may be made to Visions Unlimited, 23781 Research Drive, Farmington Hills, 48335.

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