

Local smoke shop owners wouldn't mind a ban

BY TRACEY BIRKENHAUER
STAFF WRITER

It's hard to find bids in the Farmington area.

The tiny cigarettes mostly imported from India have been attracting child smokers since the early 1990s. With flavors such as mandarin orange and mango, the hand-rolled cigarettes provide a smoky treat for youngsters.

Unfortunately, the great taste is deceiving.

Children tend to think bids (BEE-dees) are less harmful because they're small and taste great. Although they contain less tobacco, bids unleash much more tar and nicotine than regular cigarettes.

Bids made local headlines lately when the city of Warren discussed banning them. There's a bill in Congress to ban bid importation completely.

Locally, the only place The Observer could locate the funny-looking smokes with colorful packages was the Cigar Emporium in Farmington.

Many local shops stopped selling bids because they attracted children too young to legally purchase cigarettes.

Smokers and More in Farmington Hills carried bids until a year ago when the owners heard that underpaid and sometimes mistreated children were rolling them in India.



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL DEBLESER

Controversial: Indian cigarettes, called bids, come in different flavors.

Children are considered indentured servants, rolling up to a thousand bids a day for pennies.

"Besides, a lot of younger people tried to buy them," said store manager Robin Sabbagh. "I

'The government tries to tell you what to buy and what to sell.' He hasn't sold bids for a couple of years, but when he did sell them, he says it was mostly youths who asked for them. 'Maybe the younger kids like them because they look different. I don't sell to anyone under 18, so they didn't sell that well for me.'

Bob Thomas
—Smokers Only owner

think they liked them 'because they look like joints.' Sabbagh doesn't mind if the government bans bids.

"Let them ban all cigarettes," he said. "I don't care, really. Everybody would quit then, including me."

Bob Thomas isn't as fond of government intervention.

"The government tries to tell you what to buy and what to sell," said the owner of Smokers Only in Farmington Hills. He hasn't sold bids for a couple of years, but when he did sell them, he says it was mostly youths who asked for them.

"Maybe the younger kids like them because they look different," he said. "I don't sell to anyone under 18, so they didn't sell that well for me."

Tom Petros, owner of Farmington's Cigar Emporium, said he has very few teenage tobacco patrons. He attributes that to the upscale nature of his combi-

nation cigar and wine store. He's been selling bids for the

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Award-winning video offered on Natural Beauty Roads

The Farmington Hills Beautification Commission and the city's Video Production Division have created an award-winning video called "Natural Beauty Roads • Enhancing our Community."

The video is designed to edu-

cate the public about their importance to our community.

The video has been chosen to receive the Telly Award for excellence in video production.

The awards will be presented this summer at a national conference of production profession-

als. "Natural Beauty Road" is an official designation used to protect the rights-of-way of roads with unusual or outstanding natural features.

The video illustrates the various growth stages and informs

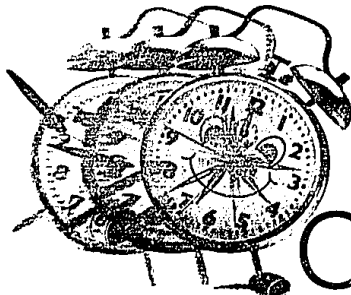
the public about proper tree planting and maintenance techniques.

The video has been playing on Cable TV Channel 8 and will be played more often as the planting season progresses.



By Tom Petros in Birmingham

(Don't let time spin away from you.)



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