

# Farmington Hills honors its best and brightest

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Longevity and dedication were the themes for the evening as the City of Farmington Hills honored 75 employees with service awards on Jan. 22 at the Costik Activities Center.

Public Services Department Administrative Secretary Betty Runnells received the city's Employee of the Year award, which City Manager Steve Brock announced had been dedicated to the memory of Jane Kroupa, the 1995 Employee of the Year.

Kroupa died in November, after a long battle with cancer, Brock said. She had been employed with the engineering division for almost seven



Celebrating: Farmington Hills Employee of the Year Betty Runnells.

## EMPLOYEES

years.

"She continued to work through most of her illness," he explained in announcing the new award. "She was an example of great courage ... We dedicate this program to her outstanding example of service."

Also honored were Police Officer of the Year Eric Buckberry and Firefighter of the Year J. David Feichtner. Buckberry's award stemmed from his involvement in several high profile cases, including the prevention of an armed robbery at Howard's Discount store and the arrest and conviction of

career pedophile

Jim Thompson.

Staff from

Howard's closed

up shop early to

attend the ceremony. In a letter

read by Chief

Bill Dwyer, the

owner of the

store wrote,

"Your dedication

and outstanding

work may have

saved the lives of

friends and

employees, and

most important-

ly, the lives of

my wife and

son."

Feichtner's

efforts toward

computerizing

and updating

fire department maps and his work as a first aid and CPR instructor contributed toward his receiving the department's top honor. Fire Chief Rich Marinucci said Feichtner, who is a career firefighter and does paid on-call work for Fire Station No. 3, received 30 letters of appreciation, unit citations, three live-saving awards and an award for meritorious service.

Both men credited their wives and families for providing them with the support they've needed to do their jobs well.

Hills Police Assistant Chief Richard Niemisto received the city's first-ever 35 year employee service award, setting a new record for longevity. Niemisto started as a cadet in 1968, after graduating from Farmington High School. He had intended to study law at Wayne State University, until a friend of his older sister's stopped by the house one day while his mother was burning leaves.

"She asked 'Why don't you get Richard a job with Farmington police?'" he recalled. "He said they had an opening for a cadet."

At the time, Niemisto was working 80 hours a week in security. When he learned the cadet position paid the same for about 40 hours, he applied, and the rest is history. He may have taken the job for the salary, but he has stayed because of the diversity and the people.

"If I enjoy what I'm doing and the people I'm working with, why stop?" he said. "Of course, I could be swayed to use more vacation time if the chances of fortune smile on me tonight when they draw the Big Game."



Top firefighter: Police Chief Richard Marinucci presents the Firefighter of the Year Award to David Feichtner.

## Youth Summit aims to reach 'disconnected' students

BY TIM SMITH  
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They talked, and now it's time for action.

High school student leaders in the Call to Action Youth Summit met Tuesday at Farmington High School to discuss implementing strategies for sharpening communication skills and bringing divergent groups together.

And now, they will take a chalkboard-full of ideas and take them to other students, teachers and administrators at Farmington, Harrison and North high schools.

The youth summit then will reconvene on the morning of Tuesday, Feb. 13, at Harrison High School to pick up the topic where they left off during this week's session.

Some of the ideas to be discussed include scheduling assemblies and classroom discussions about the importance of understanding differences and learning about others.

Other suggestions included: holding classroom simulations, where people could experience how other groups experience discrimination; involving more students in yearbooks and videos; writing and sending out letters to faculty members explaining the importance of hosting classroom discussions.

Those kinds of efforts would help so-called "disconnected" students to better feel they are part of the school community.

See related Coalition story page C5

"A lot of people don't know how to approach you," said one student during the youth summit. "But once you initiate it ..."

Meanwhile, the value of youth summit leaders bringing information to others was emphasized by another student. "In this room, we all know what we want to be discussing, but we really don't know what kids in the rest of the high school are thinking."

"I think so often we do these things and it's very fragmented afterward," said North life management teacher Linda Lethemon, who attended Tuesday's meeting. "It doesn't get moved forward. So we need to do exactly what they're saying, meet with administrators and then reach out to the other kids."

Safe and Drug Free Schools Director Estralee Michaelson, Farmington Public Schools' administrator in charge of the youth summit, said the "challenge is to get back and make it happen."

"Every one of the summits has been very empowering," Michaelson added. "But what has been missing is the impetus to get kids to implement something in their own buildings."

The Call to Action Youth Summit involves students in the district's high schools and middle schools. Meanwhile, Michaelson also heads up the community-wide Call to Action coalition group.

## Board recognizes art teacher

BY TIM SMITH  
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Harvey Goldstein thanks one person for the accolades — from hometown to national — that he continues to receive for his efforts as art coordinator for Farmington Public Schools.

Goldstein will travel to New York City in March for a reception touting his recent selection as National Elementary Art Educator of the Year for 2001 by the National Art Education Association. But during last week's Farmington school board meeting, the 33-year educator was low-key and humble about it.

"I was a very shy, bashful kid who sat in the back (of the classroom) hoping not to be noticed," said Goldstein, who, besides chairing the district art department, teaches classes at Highmeadow Common Campus. "But I didn't feel that way in the art room. That's where I

came alive."

The

teacher at

McKerrow Ele-

mentary

School in

Detroit

where he

helped

promote

his "Joy of

discovery"

was Irene

Zack.

"I still

can't comprehend the mag-

nitude of a national award,"

Goldstein said, during the

board's Evidence of Excellence

segment. "I've become very

introspective, thinking about

my career. I can't help but

remember my elementary art

teacher (Mrs. Zack)."

Many years later, Goldstein

tries to instill in his own stu-

dents the personal approach



H. Goldstein: National art award winner.

Mrs. Zack took. To that end, Highmeadow fifth-grader Erik Harbert is tentatively set to have art work displayed on the big screen in Times Square.

Erik created what Goldstein described as a tissue paper painting, "a silhouette over a colored background. It looks like a sunset."

The teacher apparently is as excited about his student's artistic creation as Mrs. Zack was toward his artwork.

"This is what drives me, to witness that creative pact every day," said Goldstein, who has worked for 28 years in the Farmington district, the past 13 chairing the district art department.

Goldstein will be honored at a special reception in the New York Hilton and Towers, as well as at the National Art Education Association Conference in New York City, from March 13-19.

## Summer camp fair on tap for parents, kids

If you are looking for the right summer camp for your children, mark Sunday, March 4, on your calendar. That's the date of the 12th-annual Super Summer for Kids: A Camp and Activities Fair.

Co-sponsored by The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers and Metro Parent Magazine, the free camp fair will be held 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in the Birmingham Public Schools Confer-

ence and Training Center, 31290 Evergreen Road, corner of 13 Mile Road, adjacent to Groves High School.

Fair attendees, both parents and children, can meet with representatives of more than 75 programs, including day camps and traditional residential camps.

Specialty programs — including teen travel, horseback riding, computers, music, art and

drama, sports and wilderness adventure — will be highlighted. There will also be information on programs for children with special needs. Those seeking summer employment in camp programs are welcome to attend.

A free reference directory with a description of all programs is available. For more information, call Elaine Sturman at (248) 851-7342.

## Fire Dept. responds to small blaze at Harrison

Farmington Hills Fire Stations 2 and 5 were called to Harrison High at around noon on Wednesday, responding to the smell of fire at the bottom of a stairwell.

Firefighters forced entry into the building near the stairwell and extinguished some burning material, according to Deputy Fire Chief Pete Baldwin.

The cause is still under investigation, because department personnel couldn't find anything that would have started a fire accidentally, he said.

Students were "locked down" inside the building until the fire was contained and the smoke vented.

"What we tried to do was move smoke out of the building without moving it through the building," Baldwin said.

## FARMINGTON POLICE CALLS

Following are police items from the City of Farmington.

### VANDALISM

A 40-year-old Waterford man, who was awaiting a pre-trial conference about 11 a.m. Wednesday, Jan. 24 at 47th District Court, was cited for causing \$100 damage to the holding cell he was sitting in.

The man picked up a seven-foot section of a bench and,

using it like a battering ram, smashed it into the metal portion of the cell.

### MINOR CONSUMING ALCOHOL

At about 3 a.m. Saturday, police responded to a report that a man jumped a fence in the vicinity of Birchwood and Meadowlark, and threw snowballs at a resident's window.

When officers arrived, they saw a man sitting alone in his car. The man, a 20-year-old from Farmington, admitted throwing the snowballs in an attempt to get the attention of a woman who lives in the residence.

A moderate odor of intoxicants was found on his breath, and a subsequent test registered a blood/alcohol level of .10. He was ticketed for consuming alcohol as a minor.

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