

All SOS offices stay in Livonia

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
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Those keeping tabs on Livonia's three Secretary of State branches can be assured they will all remain.

Secretary of State Candice Miller gave that word Thursday, which means the Livonia West branch at 19220 Newburgh near Seven Mile has been spared. There are also Secretary of State branches at Livonia Mall on Seven Mile and 36131 Plymouth Road, near Livonia.

In January, city and state elected officials met with Miller to ask that all three remain open.

"After studying the Livonia branch offices we found that they are performing very well and will be making no changes in either their location or service levels," said Miller in a written statement.

One elected official who lobbied for the branch to remain is pleased with the news.

State Sen. Thaddeus McCotter joined state Reps. Laura Toy, R-Livonia; and John Stewart, R-Plymouth; and Mayor Jack Kirksey in a meeting with Secretary of State staff Jan. 25.

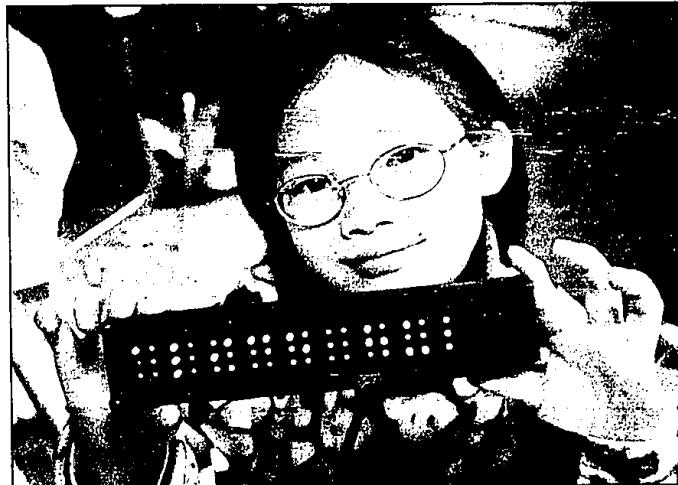
"It was a team effort," McCotter said.

"They (Miller and her staff) were very fair and objective. They didn't make any promises. We presented our case and they agreed."

The basis of local officials' argument was that residents are familiar with the Newburgh branch, and it has easy freeway access. Aside from northwest Livonia residents, people from Plymouth and Northville also use the office, they said.

"We didn't want people to show up to find it closed and not know where to go or have to travel further," McCotter said.

The Secretary of State regularly evaluates all 178 branch offices, monitoring number of transactions, lease agreements, physical state of the building, population trends and traffic volumes.



STAFF PHOTOS BY BILL BREWER

Learning other ways: Practicing newly learned Braille, Alice Hu spelled out her name.



Volunteer: Diane White helps students Pauline Knighton and Jillian Eshaki with a RealVoice augmentative communication device.



Blindfolded: Student Chris Lindsay attempts to find his way around the class using a white cane.

Disabilities program comes to Kenbrook

BY TIM SMITH
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Students who do not have special needs discovered some amazing things during Tuesday's Disability Awareness Day at Kenbrook Elementary School.

They tried to eat using adaptive food utensils. They made their way through a wheelchair obstacle course. They worked on a Braille typewriter instead of a spanking new PC.

They also teamed up with classmates who do have some kind of physical disability or special need, working with each other at one of the interactive, hands-on stations set up in the gymnasium.

General education fourth graders and special education students participated in the workshop, sponsored by Oakland Schools. Kenbrook was the first Farmington elementary school to host the program, which is offered free of charge to

■ 'I'd like to see this done in all the schools.'

Shellie Ravitz
—Kenbrook parent volunteer

every elementary school in the county.

"It involved all of us," said Kenbrook special education teacher Joyce Rice. "It's like it ... gives us empathy toward a lot of people, and I hope it will have been an eye-opening experience. It's a beautiful program."

Rice coordinated the program from the Kenbrook end, along with teachers Chris Baker and Lindsey Brody.

"They (students) were just really interested in everything," Brody said. "I don't think they all understood that 'Oh, they need this.' I think this definitely will make an impact down the road."

Helping out were other teachers and 20

Kenbrook parent volunteers, who worked at various stations.

Among the latter were Carole Porcari, Shelle Ravitz and Mary Rose Zazian. They went around the school with a checklist to make sure the school is adequately equipped for those with disabilities. Items on the checklist include whether sinks are low enough for wheelchair users to have easy access to, for example.

"It's about awareness for kids," Porcari said.

Concurring was Zazian. "This makes them aware of the disabilities that are around us. Going to the bathroom is not that simple for someone with a disability."

"I'd like to see this done in all the schools," said Ravitz about the Disability Awareness Day, adding that learning about and accepting people with disabilities needs to be a priority in a community that openly embraces diversity.

Author to speak at Adat Shalom tonight

Moshe Waldoks, co-editor of The Big Book of Jewish Humor, will appear 7 p.m. Sunday, March 4. The program is jointly sponsored by Adat Shalom, Temple Israel, the Jewish Community Center and Anti-Defamation League.

Waldoks teaches Jewish cultural, spiritual and ritual renewal. He's also co-editor of *The Big Book of New American Humor* and edited the forthcoming *The Whole Megillah, Jewish Humor for Purim and the Whole Year*.

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Bates said, "It's about people and quality of life."

With a population of approximately 85,000, the city is the largest in Oakland County, although Troy is expected to take over that spot in 2002, she said. Bates cited the collective effort of community volunteers, individual and corporate "heroes" who work for families and children.

City manager Steve Brock said officials constantly worked to maintain and improve roads and infrastructure while keeping tax rates among the lowest in the state. On the horizon are the widening of Orchard Lake Road, which began last month, reconstruction of Northwestern Highway, widening of Farmington Road and a grant to re-time all the city's traffic signals.

Brock said a plan to cap the abandoned landfill at 11 Pines, a city-owned property, should be approved by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality soon; the Planning Commission is expected to review site plan this spring.

The Special Services Department will be moving to make way for the new 47th District Court building, which will be built on the city's municipal campus at 11 Mile and Orchard Lake Roads. And a new franchise agreement with Time Warner Cable will bring high speed Internet access to the city within the next six months.

While at least one resident who has written to Brock worries that Hills neighborhoods are becoming islands in a sea of traffic, he said, "Isolation is when

he has recently been ordained as a post denominational rabbi by his mentors, Rabbis Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, Arthur Green and Everett Gendler and serves as rabbi of Temple Beth Zion in Brookline, Mass.

Waldoks was consultant and actor in a feature film *The Imported Bridegroom* and in the PBS documentary *Breaking the Silence* about children of Holocaust survivors.

Waldoks currently lectures at Tufts University. He completed

his doctorate in Eastern European Jewish intellectual history at Brandeis University and has served on the faculties of Brandeis, Tufts and Clark universities, Wellesley College, the College of the Holy Cross, and the Boston Hebrew College.

He is a recent recipient of a B'nai B'rith International Humanitarian Award.

The community is welcome. There is no charge. For more information, call Adat Shalom at 851-5100.

anyone, for any reason, doesn't feel part of the community."

Brock encouraged everyone to become engaged and involved.

"I like to think of each one of us as an asset," he said. "The state of the city is fine. The state of the community is up to all of us."

Head count

Announcing the 75th anniversary of Farmington's vote to incorporate, city manager Frank Lauhoff said the aging of the community has led to a slight decline in population over the years, as children grew up and moved out.

"We're hoping the 2000 census will stay the same," he said. "There may be some reduction in population."

Those numbers will have an impact on revenues, Lauhoff added.

While the population may have declined, the formation of a Downtown Development Authority has increased the state's equalized value of that business district by 12 percent, an estimated investment of time and resources is important in March.

Like his Farmington Hills counterpart, Lauhoff talked about infrastructure improvements and the need for reinvestment in aging facilities. The city is looking at an alternative method of rehabbing four and a half miles of connector pipes that stretches to Telegraph and 8 Mile Road, that would drop the cost from \$25 million to \$3 million.

As a way of leading by example, the Farmington City Council took ownership of the Civic Theater, completing the last phase of renovation last month. The city has invested approximately \$1 million in the project, Lauhoff said.

"We attracted 65,000 patrons last year. At this point in time, the theater is in excellent shape," he said.

proposition," he added.

Although Jack Demmer's departure has left a vacant building on the east end of Grand River, Lauhoff said Ford Motor Company has had several dealerships looking at it and may have the building filled in the next few months. He also spoke to the difficulty of redevelopment in what is, essentially, an established area of the community.

"It's a delicate balance trying to improve older districts and meet the needs of adjacent residents," he said.

Lauhoff believes ending redevelopment efforts would be "giving up on your community, and you can't do that. Having strictly enforced zoning codes to improve certain areas, the city will undertake a zoning code revision in March."

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While older communities have higher debt structures, Lauhoff said Farmington has a tax rate that ranks on low end among Oakland County's older cities.

Farmington has maintained a conservative character, and with excellent leadership, has a very bright future and is in excellent shape," he said.



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