

Car-jacking victim did the right thing

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The victim of a Thursday evening armed robbery and carjacking in Farmington Hills is "shook up pretty bad," said Hills Police Chief William Dwyer.

But, the 43-year-old Farmington Hills man still is alive.

"I believe the victim in this case is extremely fortunate he wasn't seriously injured," said Dwyer on Friday. "Because three suspects forced him out of the vehicle, took his belongings, his wallet and cell phone, and then ordered him back into the vehicle."

Dwyer said the victim's decision to not re-enter the vehicle probably was a very difficult one to make. On one hand, the victim could have been shot for not complying. But, "he probably prevented himself from being kidnapped or murdered," Dwyer said.

According to a Hills police department press release, three suspects flagged down the victim's car — on the pretense of asking for directions to the nearby freeway — after he pulled his vehicle into the Fox Point Townhomes on Halsted near 11 Mile roads, about 8:30 p.m. Thursday. One of the suspects pulled out a pis-

tol and pointed it at the victim's head.

The victim yielded his car keys, cell phone and wallet. Then, they ordered him back into the car or risk being shot. Instead, he fell backwards onto the ground and the suspects drove away — which triggered a brief car chase by the Livonia Police Department, along the Jeffries Freeway east from Middlebelt Road.

Once the vehicle, a silver, four-door 2001 Acura, reached the Detroit city limits, Livonia police called off the chase due to high speeds and hazards to other motorists.

Dwyer said the department is offering a \$2,000 reward for information to help solve what is thought to be a random crime. Anyone with information is asked to call the Hills police department, (248) 473-9694.

The suspects are described as black males, age 18-21, 5-foot-11-inches tall, 170 pounds, with short black hair, medium build, dark complexion, wearing a blue-and-white striped shirt and unknown baseball cap and a black male, age 18-18, 5-foot-7-inches tall, 135 pounds, with short black hair, thin build, dark complexion and unknown clothing. The third suspect is a black male, age 18-20, 5-foot-10-inches tall, wearing unknown clothing and with no other physical description.

DDA to present Center proposal

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Farmington city officials will get a peek Monday night at renovation plans that will create a new look for the Downtown Farmington Business Center.

Downtown Development Association Director Judy Downey said John Grissim of Grissim/Mez Associates, Inc. will bring drawings and detailed plans for the plaza/shopping center, which is located on Grand River. In addition to aesthetic improvements, traffic patterns will be examined.

Talk about redoing the area began after the DDA completed its eight-phase streetscape project in 1998.

At that time, Downey said, the DDA approved a 10-year improvement plan, which has

Farmington City Council members will see drawings of the proposed renovation at Downtown Farmington Business Center on Grand River during their regular meeting Monday night.

already resulted in renovation of the Masonic plaza planter at the corner of Farmington Road and Grand River, a brick pedestrian crosswalk between First United Methodist Church and Starbucks and brick pavers replacing the sidewalk on a small area of Warner, between Grand River and Thomas.

But those will all be dwarfed

by the latest effort.

"The most ambitious project on our part will be the renovation of the Downtown Center," Downey acknowledged, citing a price tag of about \$1.5 million.

Timing of the project coincides with reconstruction of the center's parking lot, which the city owns. Downey said work wouldn't begin until 2002, to give businesses a breather from construction on Farmington Road, slated this year.

Funding will also take some time; the DDA is working with a Birmingham-based company to locate grants. Downey said the Michigan Department of Transportation has four transportation enhancement programs that may be tapped.

The council meets at City Hall in downtown Farmington, beginning at 8 p.m.

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ing. She believed it was important to get her kids settled in when the family moved here from Maryland in 1997.

She and husband, Eric, a director for information technology at GMAC, have four children: Sharece, a graduate of North Farmington High School and a student at Oakland Community College; Jaya, a Warner Middle School student; Mich, a Forest Elementary school student; and son, Ricky, who attends North Farmington High School.

An emergency room and trauma nurse for 13 years, Christian admits she lasted longer than some who perform the grueling life-and-death work. She maintains some ties to her chosen profession, as a member of the Metro-Detroit Chapter of Emergency Nurses Council Alcohol Related Emergencies, also known as En C.A.R.E.

"It is not a school program," Christian said. "We do presentations all over the metro Detroit area. It was developed by nurses who present real-life scenarios to middle- and high-school-age children about drinking and driving. Sixth grade is the youngest I've done."

The family lived in Southfield before moving to Farmington, where they lived for five years. The Christians studied the Farmington area before making a decision to move.

"We looked at the school system and neighborhoods," Christian said. "My husband and I went to talk to the principals of each school. I was trying to hold down the fort. We mulled through all the information. Diversity in the community was important to us."

All the schools helped facilitate their children settling in. "It was a positive experience,"

Christian said. "I've always been active in the schools. I have a passion for working with kids, to work as an advocate for kids. I feel it is my responsibility as a parent and part of the community to give back."

Her report card for the school district: "They are pretty much on the mark. I would give them an A."

She wants to engage the community in education, including older people and parents without children in school, and facilitate better communication.

Financially, she believes the district is okay, considering the economic downturn. "They are fiscally responsible in managing it."

Christian will also go to bat for children with special needs, as the school district struggles to keep up with state mandates and the funds to pay for them. She believes as belt-tightening measures are taken, officials should look first to taking care of students.

"The school district has a vision. Our commitment needs to be with our children," she said. "That may mean limiting some of our capital expenditures, though I wouldn't like to see buildings falling apart. Let the dollars stay with kids in classrooms with small class sizes. We need to support all of our kids."

Christian has worked on the committee to evaluate graduation requirements and worked on a technology committee. She believes it's important for schools to keep looking at how to improve technology and that Farmington students are well prepared for college and the work world. "The district has done a good job working proactively," she said.

She's appreciative that the

district put a crisis plan in place before national incidents of school violence garnered so much publicity, and pointed out conflict resolution and peer mediation are available to students. "As a parent, that's comforting," she said, adding, "Parents have to make sure we monitor kids. It's a piece of all of us need to own in keeping kids safe."

In her first run for public office, Christian displays a great enthusiasm and desire for cooperation with the current board members.

"I believe in working proactively in the right spirit," she said. "I don't have any issues. I just want to see the school district grow and see challenges addressed. I want to see our kids be the very best they can be. That can be done by raising the bar of achievement. I'm committed to putting in the time and energy. I am very serious about this."

Christian holds a bachelor of science degree in nursing from Oakland University and is a certified critical care registered nurse. She practiced at Henry Ford Hospital, moved to Maryland in 1992 and practiced at George Washington University Hospital and other Washington D.C. health care institutions.

She lists involvement in many community service groups: secretary of Forest Elementary School PTA; Farmington Public Schools District Diversity parent outreach committee; Committee to evaluate graduation requirements — technology; Girl Scout leader; and Kenbrook Elementary, Committee to Evaluate Block Scheduling at North Farmington High School; and Coordinator for North Farmington Cheerleaders Parent Booster Organization.

Reid from page A1

a way of reminding myself not to expect to go in, wave a magic wand and things will be the way you want."

That means there are no quick fixes to the challenges facing the district, he said.

His goals include continuous improvement in test scores, increased parental participation, improving technology in district curriculum, and promoting "best practices."

"In looking back on my goals from four years ago, I am surprised and pleased that they remain consistent," he said. "The principal objective is always to increase student achievement, excellence and equity."

Reid, 49, has lived in the district for 16 years, in an area that has a Northville mailing address. He is a manager of engineering operations at Johnson Controls Automotive Systems Group in Plymouth Township. He and his wife have a daughter who graduated from Farmington Schools and now attends Eastern Michigan University.

Their third-grade son has been part of the Gill Year-Round program. Despite his son's involvement, he voted against the boarding the program when the board determined enrollments were too low to keep it going.

In addition to a positive working relationship with the existing board, Reid believes his strength lies in the alliance he has forged between state and federal legislators.

He also cites a strong knowledge of technology and a background in business and finance. Reid said he has worked with teams where everybody makes an effort to understand all points of view.

Instrumental in developing a January town meeting about how the community wants to measure student success, Reid said, "We have a lot of pressure at the state and federal level for accountability. Accountability should first be measured at the local level."

Reid was also on the front end of those who recommended a capital improvement plan, now in its fourth year. The building projects have affected learning and restored performance and fine arts spaces, he said.

While some have criticized school officials for a lack of communication, the board has made a good effort to communicate through newsletters, a survey, Reid said. He believes the problem today is so much gets lost in the shuffle.

Reid's commitment to improving schools and knowledge as a board member was accelerated by participating in courses offered by the Michigan Association of School Boards. He achieved the certified board member status and the master board member award in recognition for participating in advanced course work and leadership skills.

In his first four years, as a

school board member, he served as treasurer, vice president, and this year president of the Farmington Board of Education. He also served as chairman of the Oakland County School Boards Association legislative committee for the past two years.

Reid is a strong advocate for the state government to step up to its obligation under the Headlee Amendment and provide proper funding for mandated programs, specifically special education. State mandates may not have an apparent cost, but when implementing them in a district of Farmington's size, the costs become clear and substantial, he said.

"Special education is one major issue where we clearly disagree with the state. We believe we are underfunded in excess of \$3.8 million," he said. "What it means is general education dollars must be used to fund those programs."

Reid holds a bachelor's degree from Grand Valley State University and has done graduate studies at the University of Illinois.

He served as a representative to the technology advisory committee, was a member of the study committee for the senior citizens center, co-chair of the district Blue Ribbon Financial Strategies Committee, president of the Farmington Old Village Association for 10 years and member of Music Friends of Farmington High School, among many other volunteer activities.

Child's play?

Mature-rated games not appropriate for kids

Summer vacation is nearly here for the 1.7 million students attending Michigan public schools.

How will your children spend their free time?

Chances are, thousands of our kids will spend at least part of their day playing video or computer games. The average teenager spends nine hours a week playing video or computer games, according to the National Institute on Media and the Family. The average teen boy plays 13 hours per week.

And with more time off during the summer months, our youth have many opportunities to visit arcades, surf the Internet for games, or host friends for marathon game sessions in the comfort of air-conditioned homes.

Some people say there's nothing wrong with innocent game-playing.

That's true. Problem is, many of the video and computer games that our children buy — or that adults provide to them — are extremely violent.

Causes for concern

A disturbing study by the National Institute on Media and the Family last month reported that children who play violent video games:

- See the world as a more hostile place.
- Argue with teachers more frequently.
- Are more likely to be involved in physical fights.
- Don't perform as well in school.

The Michigan Education Association is one of 19 organizations working with Michigan's attorney general to educate the public about a voluntary ratings system for video and computer games. The ratings system was developed by the Entertainment Software Ratings Board to help the public — parents included — identify appropriate games for children of varying ages.

The coalition partners are concerned about the apparent ease with which minor

children were able to buy Mature-rated video games at some retailers during a shopping sting conducted last year.

As teachers, school staff and parents, we are appalled that children as young as 9 were able to buy games that the manufacturer voluntarily deems inappropriate for children under the age of 17.

Room to improve

In the study released last month, just 13 percent of adolescents said their parents "always" or "often" put limits on the amount of time they're allowed to play video games. Fifteen percent of the 600 eighth- and ninth-graders surveyed said their parents always or often check the ratings before renting or buying video games.

That leaves a lot of room for improvement.

What can we do? We can educate ourselves on the ESRB ratings. Some retailers post information about the ratings, or you can phone the ESRB at 800/771-3772, or visit its web site, www.esrb.org.

Shop at stores that honor the ratings and have policies that restrict sales to children of mature and adult-only games.

Monitor the games your children play. Limit the amount of time they spend playing video or computer games.

Find alternative activities. There are lots of interactive things you can do with your children to help them while away long summer days.

And, yes, you could even play a video game together. But please make sure the game is suitable for the age and maturity of your children.

Childhood is a magical time. Let's protect our children — and our future.



Lu Battagliari
MEA President