

## Festival sponsors, volunteers still needed

By JONI HUBRED  
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Suzanne Lichtman just has a feeling this year's Farmington Area Founders Festival will be a great event.

"Things are going well," she said Thursday. "All we need now is good weather."

That may be out of her control, but Lichtman, the FAFF board of directors and the ever-increasing contingent of volunteers coordinating this year's festival are doing all they can to keep everything else in line, from parking to staffing the hospitality tent. The festival has returned to its traditional dates, July 19-21, after a brief foray into June last year.

Parade chairperson Dick Tupper has sent out notices to scores of past parade entrants, abating the news that no fee will be charged for the Saturday event. So far, 20 applications have been received; the deadline is June 1. Anyone who wants to join in the fun can call the festival hotline, 248-470-FEST.

Farmington Hills cultural arts coordinator Nancy Coumoun-

douros, who is overseeing the arts area that will be located on the west end of Grand River, said interest from local artists has been overwhelming.

"We were really surprised by the response and found we had more artists than we could handle," she said. "We're looking to clean Oakland street to have a few more artists."

In addition to hands-on activities for kids, artists will be demonstrating their crafts and the entertainment stage will feature a variety of performers. Among them will be the 20-year-old University of Michigan student who holds the 2000 U.S. Scottish Fiddling Championship title, Coumoundouros said.

Lichtman has also been encouraged by an increase in participation among downtown business owners. She has been meeting with the Downtown Farmington Business Association and has made regular trips to answer questions personally, rather than over the phone.

"We have over double the merchant or get more excitement about the festival and parade," Lichtman said.

Among the ends yet to be tied

are acquiring additional corporate sponsorships. Three levels of support represent donations ranging from \$100 to \$4,499. A business can sponsor an event with a commitment of \$10,000.

But money isn't everything. Lichtman is looking for service clubs or other organizations to staff the "Founders Cafe" hospitality tent Thursday and Friday.

The Cafe will be a focal point, offering a limited menu of family fare, and live entertainment. A local band, Funtown, will play Thursday and Saturday. In addition, Lichtman is working with Michigan Artists, which promotes independent bands, musicians and entertainers.

"They're helping us get acts that are doing it just for the exposure," Lichtman said.

That fits well with the kind of spirit she's seen since she took over as the festival's executive director in March.

"The spirit in which things are being done is a real community spirit," she said.

To volunteer, pledge as a sponsor or get more information about the festival and parade, call the hotline, (248) 470-FEST.



Spruce up: Farmington Hills plans repairs on areas like this on Eight Mile Road.

STAFF PHOTO BY BILL DRESLER

## A new look Officials plan Eight Mile work

By TIM SMITH  
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A facelift of right-of-way property along Eight Mile Road in Farmington Hills is expected to begin soon.

The Hills city council and staff discussed the looming project during last Monday evening's study session. The project, earmarked for \$100,000 in community development block grant money over two years, would

spruce up an important corridor and gateway into the city.

"It's significant," said Dale Countegan, director of the Hills planning department. "The city won't rise or fall on it. But it's a significant corridor project. It sends a message that we care about the older commercial corridors."

Moreover, once crumbling concrete is removed, sidewalks are realigned and curbs are fixed — on the north side of Eight Mile

from Inkster Road west to St. Francis Street — officials hope the businesses along that stretch will want to do even more. That might include investing money for new facades.

"We have to come up with some kind of incentive, make them (businesses) feel connected with the community so that they'll want to re-invest" in their businesses, said councilman Jerry Ellis.

## Rackzkowski introduces new crime bill

State Rep. Andrew Rackzkowski recently introduced legislation intended to protect residents from criminals.

House Bill 4757 eliminates the statute of limitations for conspiracy to commit murder. Right now, no one can be tried for conspiracy to commit murder charge if the offense took place more than 10 years ago.

Crimes that have not statute

of limitations include murder. Rackzkowski was instrumental in approving a law that eliminates the statute of limitations for first-degree criminal sexual assault.

He also introduced a bill to modify the felonious driving statute. Current law applies to vehicles on the highway. The bill would include vehicles in places such as on a residential street or

in parking lot.

"This is a loophole in the law that must be closed. People who intentionally use their vehicles as weapons should be held to the same standard, regardless of where the act is committed. This measure helps safeguard all Michigan residents."

The bills now go to the House Criminal Justice Committee for consideration.

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