

THE WEEK AHEAD

Farmington Council: Officials will hold a study session Tuesday at 6 p.m. to discuss a public information plan for the upcoming sewer rehabilitation ballot referendum, planned this fall. They will also review plans for beautification awards. The meeting, held at City Hall, is open to the public.

MONDAY

Hills Council: Taking up their regular agenda at 7:30 p.m., officials will hold four public hearings regarding site plan approval for condominiums at 13 Mile and Halstead, rezoning at 33719 and 33711 Nine Mile and a zoning ordinance amendment regarding accessory buildings. The council will also consider a development agreement for 11 Pines. The meeting will be held at City Hall, 11 Mile and Orchard Lake Roads.

THURSDAY

Sweet treats: Don't miss the Marshmallow Fly & Fry, held from 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at Heritage Park's north picnic shelter. A marshmallow drop for participants ages 2 to 15 will begin at 7 p.m. Bring and roast your own hot dogs or buy them at the event. For information, call 248-473-1800.

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Appliance sting hits Hills store



BY KEVIN BROWN
STAFF WRITER
kbrown@oe.hometown.com

A Farmington Hills appliance repair company faces civil action and three of its employees face criminal charges following a visit to town by Michigan Attorney General Jennifer Granholm. Granholm announced the action against Sands Appliance Service Inc.,

24659 Halsted Road, in a press conference Wednesday at Farmington Hills City Hall.

"This case represents a consumer's worst nightmare - getting bilked out of money for wholly unnecessary parts and repairs. It gives legitimate repair service businesses a black eye," she said. "The company has no comment," said an unidentified man called to the

phone at Sands Appliance Service on Friday.

The investigation of Sands' business practices was launched at the beginning of the year. That's when Farmington Hills Consumer Protection Committee Chairman Jim Vandenberg contacted the attorney general's office, after getting complaints about the business.

"It's disappointing that this would exist in our community. It was encouraging to us that the attorney general's office was willing to listen," Vandenberg said.

An undercover investigation of the firm's repair practices was organized.

It included the attorney general's office, the Michigan State Police, the City of Farmington Hills Consumer Protection Committee, and consumer advocate Joe Gagnon. Gagnon is a consumer fraud investigator for the City of Detroit who hosts a Saturday morning show on WJR Radio on appliance repair, and writes a weekly column on the subject for the Observer Newspapers' At Home section.

Gagnon said that in the past 20 years he's heard of many, many complaints against the company.

To investigate Sands' business prac-

Please see SANDS, A3

Traffic stop



Ticketed: Tim Wardle recently protested a traffic citation and an officer's conduct.



Farmington Public Safety Director Gary Goss

Traffic citation spawns complaint, investigation

BY SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER
sbuck@oe.hometown.com

Timothy Wardle, a Farmington resident, said he just wanted to vent when he got the \$110 ticket for improper lane usage in disregarding a construction zone.

Venting took the form of a letter which Wardle sent to Farmington City Manager Frank Lauhoff, with copies to Farmington Public Safety Director Gary Goss and state Rep. Andrew Raczkowski (R-Farmington Hills). And, he sent a copy to the Farmington Observer.

"I don't feel I'm guilty," said Wardle, a 12-year Farmington resident.

For Wardle, the aggravation factor and time spent

Please see TICKET, A3

Attorney: Couple just tried to help

BY KEVIN BROWN
STAFF WRITER
kbrown@oe.hometown.com

Poster-sized photos of a girl from Cameron dining at restaurants with a Farmington Hills couple and their children were shown to an Oakland County jury last week, to refute her claims that she was enslaved.

"As long as the kids went with them, I had to go because I had to watch the kids," said the woman, now 18, who began living with the family in 1996.

Under several hours of cross examination from Ann Fisher, one of the Djoumessi's defense attorneys, the woman deflected lines of questioning that implied she was known to lie.

Parker also sought to portray the teen's living conditions as less grim than she alleged, in testimony earlier in the week.

Please see TRIAL, A2

Heritage Festival seeks artists

BY JONI HUBBED
STAFF WRITER
jhubb@oe.hometown.com

A festival celebrating the religious, cultural and ethnic diversity of Farmington and Farmington Hills returns to the William B. Costick Center Sept. 14-23.

From the "Get to Know Your Neighbor" mini-conference on religious Sept. 16 to the day-long festival Sept. 23, events will highlight the theme "Many Faces, One Future." Sponsored by the Multicultural/Multiracial Community Council, last year's festival drew an estimated 2,000 people who sampled a variety of international foods, enjoyed a diverse array of entertainment and viewed art work displayed on the walls in the Shannon Room at the Center.

Farmington Hills cultural arts coordinator Nancy Coumoundouros said

Please see FESTIVAL, A3

Hills chief meets with complainants

BY KEVIN BROWN
STAFF WRITER
kbrown@oe.hometown.com

There have been four written complaints lodged against the Farmington Hills Police Department since January, "a very low number" by Police Chief Bill Dwyer's assessment.

"In a year's time we probably have less than 10 complaints," he said. "Our investigations are thorough and we use in-car video tapes. In our experience they clear the officer of any misconduct, that's why it's such a valuable piece of technology."

The department has put together a booklet detailing its Professional Traffic Stops Training Program, to present to the 2001 Michigan Municipal

Achievement Awards Competition.

Dwyer said his department was one of the first in the tri-county area

to use in-car video tape to record traffic stops. Not only are the tapes a valuable tool to defend the department against charges of

improper conduct; they also serve as a reminder to officers their actions are scrutinized.

The department also has a set procedure for taking such complaints. "That complaint would be assigned by me to a supervisor for a thorough investigation and review, those findings ultimately end up in my office as far as any misconduct," Dwyer said. "If it was not substantiated, we would notify the complainant by letter on what actions the department is taking."

"If the complainant wants to meet with me, I have always had the policy to meet with anyone who has a

Please see COMPLAINTS, A3



Hills Chief Bill Dwyer

I-275 diamond grinding blocks lanes at night

■ State asphalt industry representatives say they're 'disappointed' the Department of Transportation didn't test an asphalt cap against resurfacing concrete; MDOT says this \$2 million project will be more cost-effective.

BY JONI HUBBED
STAFF WRITER
jhubb@oe.hometown.com

A project designed to mitigate noise on I-275 got underway Wednesday, frustrating nighttime motorists and leaving freeway neighbors wondering whether they'll finally get some relief from the constant drone that has disrupted their lives for years.

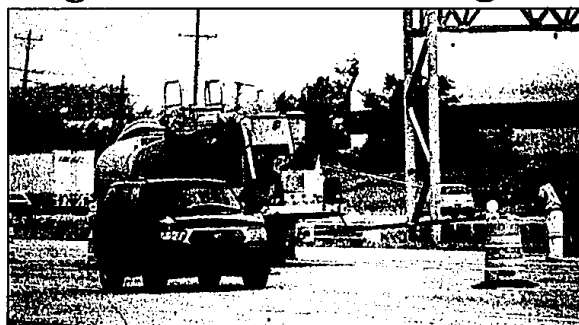
Diamond grinding between 5 Mile and 10 Mile Roads began in Farmington Hills. Originally scheduled to begin Monday, the work was postponed until Wednesday to comply with U.S. Department of Transportation regulations regarding the maxi-

mum hours logged by equipment operators.

Michigan Department of Transportation officials opted to close northbound and southbound lanes Mondays through Fridays, 7 p.m. to 6 a.m. Two lanes are available during project hours.

"We'll have to wait and see what it does for us," said area resident Chuck Vandusen. A consultant for the asphalt industry, he and other residents advocated an asphalt cap to reduce noise. "We hope it gets better. That was our whole purpose, is to get something that

Please see I-275, A4



Nightly grind: A worker begins to prepare road grinding equipment at the start of a ten hour shift on I-275.

STAFF PHOTO BY ELIZABETH CALDWELL

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