

Youth suspected in church vandalism

Farmington Hills police say they have a juvenile suspect in the vandalism of St. Toma's Catholic Church, under construction at 11 Mile and Drake Roads. The case maybe be related to an earlier incident at the church.

BY KEVIN BROWN
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The spraying of hate graffiti on the walls of a church is taken very seriously in Farmington Hills, said Police Chief Bill Dwyer.

Dwyer said his department has a juvenile suspect in the writing of graffiti

discovered Aug. 26 at St. Toma Syrian Catholic Church, which is under construction at the southeast corner of 11 Mile and Drake roads.

"It is defiling a place of worship. It is shameful and will not be tolerated," Dwyer said.

Words sprayed in black paint on the inside and outside walls of the 23,000-square-foot building included "sinners,"

"Jewz Rule Christians Drool" and "Purple Crew."

"It is kind of upsetting," said Mufid Alnajjar, who is on the church building committee. The church has 450 members; most from the Farmington Hills-Bloomfield area.

Of the graffiti writer, Alnajjar said, "I don't think they represent any kind of organization or have any kind of ideas or goals. But there is no way of knowing that."

He said several church members discussed the graffiti incident during services Sunday.

"We did talk about it in a meeting.

We felt that we have no obvious group or people that would do something like that that we could confront."

"We said the better thing is just to go reporting it to the police and have the police take some action. We said maybe we could put some security guards there nights and weekends when construction people aren't there."

Alnajjar said he does not recall any graffiti sprayed at the church's original location at 19 Mile and Farmington roads. Graffiti was discovered in May at the current construction site.

Please see **GRAFFITI**, A3

IN THE PAPER TODAY



Display: The Sisterhood of Adat Shalom sponsored a Hiddur Mitzvah - Celebrating the Holidays in Style, to help families get ready for Rosh Hashanah. See *HomeTown Life*, C-5

OPINION

Mansion dilemma: We urge officials to keep the Governor Warner Mansion as open as possible, while protecting its valuable treasures. /A10

ARTS & LEISURE

On stage: The Farmington Players stir up a little magic with the opening production, "Bell, Book and Candle." /B1

Rock on: The Verve Pipe's lead vocalist, Brian Vander Ark, talks openly about his role in the film "Rock Star" and his band's latest work. /B1

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A writer's story



All in the family: Rosaria Catalanotti, who has written poetry and songs for most of her life, penned a poem that is on display at the Statue of Liberty in New York. She'll travel there to see it for the first time in October. She's pictured above with her children, Jo, right, Vince, center and Vince's wife, Dorothy. Jo said folks in the senior apartment complex where Rosaria lives consider her a helpful "angel."

Senior author pens poem, translation

BY JON HUBRED
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When 80-year-old Rosaria Catalanotti leaves her Walled Lake home to visit New York City next month, she won't be as excited by the bright lights as she will by a simple display inside the Statue of Liberty.

There, in huge letters printed on glass, is a poem she wrote in 1986, called "Salute to Liberty." Then an Avon saleswoman, she was thrilled when her work was selected from among hundreds received by the com-

pany. According to her son, Vince, it is the first poem visitors see when they walk into a museum inside the statue's base.

"It's huge," he said. "It's printed top to bottom and lit from behind the glass."

The poem spells out "Liberty," with words designated for each letter. It begins: "LOVE for my country, my family, all peoples and all of God's creatures." But the ending was a little tricky, said Rosaria (called "Sarah" by her family).

"I couldn't think of a word for Y,"

she recalled. Her solution was the word "yes," as in saying "yes" to caring for your neighbor, taking part in the political process, protecting land and teaching youth.

Digging into the creative well was nothing new for Rosaria. She has preserved her art work and writings in an album. Years ago, she would come up with ideas for poems or songs while ironing.

"I had a little girl," she said, looking at her daughter, Jo, now a Realtor living in Brighton. "So I had lots of little dresses with ruffles."

Her husband Gaspare - better known as "Rino" - provided the inspiration for her greatest literary challenge. A long-time customs inspector and wine importer, he was educated and experienced enough to have been a college professor when he immigrated to America, but instead took a job working in a shop.

"He didn't learn English well enough," Vince explained. "He spoke seven languages, but he never mastered English."

Please see **WRITER**, A3

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Sincerely,
Susan Rosiek
Susan Rosiek
Publisher

Opening night



Gabfest: Rosie Alvarez (Jennifer Hoemke) yaks on the phone as talent agent Albert Peterson (Darren Dewitt) cringes in a scene from "Bye Bye Birdie" opening tonight on the North Farmington High stage. See *Hometown Life*, C-5 for details about this schools' community project.

STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BREZLER