

CHAT ROOM



TRACY FINLAYSON

Catching up with Miss Farmington

Ring in the New Year. Happy New Year and glad tidings. I hope this message finds you and your loved ones well. I have wanted to write for the past couple of months but time has just flown as it always seems to do.

I was busy organizing my educational business programs for work as well as preparing for my holiday Christmas party at the Masonic Temple for disadvantaged children, which by the way, was a huge success (more about that later). The countdown to Miss Michigan is on insofar as photos have been taken, paperwork is being analyzed, and I am fine-tuning my platform of Earth Education: Mission Possible, Planet Earth.

Christmas Past
I had the opportunity to attend the tree lighting ceremony in downtown Farmington at

■ Let me tell you - it was small town America at its best. I am filled with such pride to be part of such a cohesive community where the citizens take the time to come together to share in a small yet timeless tradition of Christmas.

the Warner Mansion in December. As I stood there mesmerized, underneath the gazebo lights, the Christmas tree on my left and the former Miss Farmington/Oakland County, Angela Corsi, on my right, I looked out into a crowd full of family members, professionals, community service workers, and friends: Citizens of Farmington. Let me tell you - it was small

town America at its best. I am filled with such pride to be part of such a cohesive community where the citizens take the time to come together to share in a small yet timeless tradition of Christmas.

Visions from the old movie *It's a Wonderful Life* flashed in my mind as I thought of the scene where Jimmy Stewart, holding his little girl, is standing next to the Christmas tree staring out into a loving crowd of family and friends that had gathered in his living room on Christmas Eve. I would also like to thank Dick Carvell from the Governor's mansion for allowing me to play the piano in preparation for the talent portion of the Miss Michigan competition.

My holiday party at the Masonic Temple took place on Dec. 18. Santa Claus was in attendance and made eyes, young and old, light up as he handed out presents and wished everyone a Merry Christmas. Thank you Papa John's Pizza in downtown Farmington for catering the luncheon. Their good food filled a lot of hungry tummies. A very special thanks to Sweet Dreamzzz Inc. and to the Farmington Goodfollows for their gifts of kindness that truly made this a Christmas the young children in attendance will always remember.

Girl Scout Troop #3550 from East Middle School and William Grace co-sponsored this event. There were 30 people celebrating together at the Masonic Temple from ages five to 75. Despite the 30 different backgrounds and multiple age gaps, friendships were created and lessons were learned. I am not talking academic lessons but life lessons in terms of highlighting what is most important in life.

Earth Education
Speaking of lessons, one of my goals as Miss Farmington/Oakland County 2001-2002 is to increase awareness of environmental issues in our community.

Expect to find my brochures at both Farmington and Farmington Hills City Council offices as well as at the Costick Center. These brochures outline easy steps to take in order to con-

Please see CHAT ROOM, C8

Child

Teen's generosity blossoms

BY KIMBERLY A. MORTSON
STAFF WRITER
kmortson@oe.homecomm.net

Undeniably, flowers help to convey our emotions without the use of words. Jenny VanReuter of Livonia has found a way to turn gifts of condolence into unexpected bouquets of happiness.

The 16-year-old recently was nominated as an Observer Friday's Child by Phyllis Nelson of Livonia. Nelson first met Jenny last summer and wrote to the Observer after the encounter.

"We have a lovely young lady that delivers our Livonia Observer. Last summer she rang my doorbell, on crutches. She was inquiring if we had any old small vases that would hold flowers. I asked her how she would carry them and she said she had a backpack. She said that she puts flowers in the vases and takes them to nursing homes."

The Churchill High School student got the idea from a relative to solicit funeral homes for flower arrangements left by families after the service. Jenny collects the flowers, makes smaller arrangements with vases she buys at garage sales, then delivers the flowers to local hospitals and nursing homes. Neely-Turowski

Funeral Home of Livonia has taken Jenny up on her request and provided flowers to her in recent months.

"I used to make cookies and pass them out to nursing homes," said Jenny. "Then someone told me about the idea of collecting flowers from funeral homes. It really brightens people's day. One lady even broke down she thought it was so touching."

Taking the time

While the idea sounds simple, Jenny said there's a lot of phone calling and leg work involved. "I have to call tens of funeral homes and have my name put on their lists. They call me if they have flowers available, so I don't always know ahead of time when I'm going to be able to make up vases."

The daughter of Shirley and Lindbergh VanReuter of Livonia and sister to 12-year-old Samuel, Jenny is a member of Christadelphian Church in Livonia. She attaches a faith-based pamphlet to each vase.

There's always Time to Volunteer



"My church is really important to me. This way I can give people information about the Bible and help make them feel better," she said.

Because garage sales are seasonal, Jenny and her mom stock up on vases during the spring and summer months. She hoped to spend time some of her Christmas break making deliveries if a funeral home calls her.

Jenny said going into hospitals has really helped to put her life into perspective. "There are a lot of really sick people out there. This is my way of helping to make them happy. To make up vases."

The daughter of Shirley and Lindbergh VanReuter of Livonia and sister to 12-year-old Samuel, Jenny is a member of Christadelphian Church in Livonia. She attaches a faith-based pamphlet to each vase.

Jenny VanReuter Volunteer

see the look on people's faces when I give them the flowers - it's worth all the effort."

Described as a "go-getter" by her mom, Shirley, Jenny has been involved with the Bible and Help

Clubs at school as well as the youth choir at church.

"She gives 110 percent to everything she does," said Shirley VanReuter. "She gets up and she's going non-stop until she goes to bed. She likes going the extra mile for people and that shows in how much she cares."

Jenny met Phyllis Nelson for a second time last summer when the teen and her mom were out bargain shopping. "She also came to our garage sale looking for the same thing. She definitely is a good example of a Friday's Child," said Nelson.

If you have vases Jenny VanReuter can use for her project, please contact her at Exploring the Bible, P.O. Box 510953, Livonia, MI 48151-9828, Attention: Jenny VanReuter.



Last set: Personal trainer Lauri Sam keeps a watchful eye on her client, Pat Nickol of Birmingham, as she nears the end of her workout.

STAFF PHOTO BY TON HOFFMEYER

Quest for fitness

Today's way is with a personal trainer

BY NICOLE STAFFORD
STAFF WRITER
nstafford@oe.homecomm.net

There's not much to say about late January. At best, it's a period of transition, murky in focus and direction; holiday memories linger, winter vacations are a few weeks away.

People don't do much in January. Except, they do exercise.

Gyms and health clubs are never busier than in January thanks to new year's resolutions to shape up and lose weight.

Yet even health club regulars see their resolutions falter and new routines fall away come January's end.

It's tough to stick to an exercise pro-

gram, which helps explain increased use of personal trainers.

But it's not the only reason working out with a trainer - a service once ascribed to the jet set - has become a mainstream lifestyle trend.

In today's health-savvy culture, people want knowledge about fitness, says Travis Summerville, a physical therapist at William Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak who's also a personal trainer. "They want an educated experience or opinion."

At the same time, ideas about getting fit have changed.

On the one hand, exercisers are looking for convenient ways to incorporate

fitness into their busy lives.

On the other, the fitness industry recognizes the need and call for an individual approach.

"I think people want a little more personal attention," says Summerville. "And there are many exercisers who want to train at home, rather than at a club or gym."

Also, many exercisers consult trainers after working with a physical therapist, says Summerville. And, in recent years, physicians have been making greater use of physical therapy treatments.

Working with a trainer costs between \$20 and \$100 per hour.

Everybody needs a little help

Growing use of personal trainers can also be understood from a different perspective, says Jennifer Jansen, a trainer at Oakland Athletic Club in Birmingham. Society has become comfortable, if not accustomed, to seeking out professional support and external motivation, particularly when self-improvement is at stake.

"Everybody has those days when they don't want to come in," says Jansen, whose clients run the gamut, from working professionals to stay-at-home moms to senior citizens.

Please see FITNESS, C10