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# FARMINGTON Observer

**TAX SALE**

Look for the Oakland County Notice of Delinquent Tax Parcels Subject to Foreclosure inserted into today's Farmington Observer.

THURSDAY  
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75 cents

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## Our Towns

**Rescue mission**  
Air Force Senior Airman Zachary Gyokeres, a helicopter flight engineer, is a member of the 347th Rescue Wing at Moody Air Force Base in Georgia and is responsible for rescuing injured airmen during combat. He is the son of Mike Gyokeres of Farmington Hills.  
Air Force pararescuemen make regular training jumps into the ocean on simulated missions.  
When Air Force pararescuemen aren't out rescuing airmen, members of this elite unit train to rescue people in all types of terrain and under all sorts of conditions.

**Stoney count**  
Friends of the Rouge, a non-profit group dedicated to restoring the Rouge River, is looking for volunteers to participate in its annual winter stoney search to take place Saturday, Jan. 11.  
Volunteers will search Rouge tributaries for the aquatic insects.  
The goal of the program is tracking changes in water quality over time by using volunteers to sample many sites. Stonies are sensitive to pollution, so their presence indicates clean water.

Volunteers will gather 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 11, at Oakland Community College, Building H, 27055 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills.  
Interested volunteers are asked to call Friends of the Rouge at (313) 792-9621 or e-mail [piccordina@froh.org](mailto:piccordina@froh.org) or register for the event. Pre-registration is required.

**County winter fun**  
Open skiing is available at three Oakland County golf courses: Glen Oaks in Farmington Hills, Springfield Oaks in Davisburg and White Lake Oaks in White Lake Township. There are no designated trails and gates are open when weather conditions are favorable for skiing. Visit the Oakland County Parks Web site at [www.co.oakland.mi.us](http://www.co.oakland.mi.us) for a complete listing of winter activities, park maps and discount coupons or call (248) 858-0906.

**Valentine invite**  
Every February, loved ones exchange candy, flowers and gifts all in the name of St. Valentine. But here's another idea. The Schoolcraft College Foundation presents its Valentine Dinner Dance at 7 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 8, featuring a gourmet dinner and dancing to the sounds of the Johnny Trudell Orchestra.  
The festivities will be held in the college's new VistaTech Center - Waldman Wing. Tickets are \$40 each.  
For reservations, call (734) 462-4670.



Aldo, accompanied by sons Steven, Paul and friends, walks to the Capitol for Wednesday's swearing-in ceremony.

## Vagnozzi didn't walk this time

BY PAUL R. PACE  
STAFF WRITER

After his successful fourth bid to win a state House seat, Farmington Hills' Aldo Vagnozzi finally got the chance Wednesday to raise his right hand and pledge his oath of office.

Vagnozzi joined 109 colleagues who were sworn in as members of the 92nd House of Representatives.

By his side, sons Paul and Steven snapped pictures of the special occasion. And more than one colleague was overheard asking Vagnozzi if he had walked to Lansing that day.

Before the November election, Vagnozzi (then 76, now 77) walked from Farmington to Lansing to prove his vigor and his dedication by meeting folks along the way.

Vagnozzi said he ran unsuccessfully for the state House twice in the 1970s and in the 2000 election against incumbent Andrew Raczkowski.

But on Wednesday, those past defeats didn't seem to matter as he sat at his desk

**'I spent most of my day answering complaints about unemployment benefits.'**

Aldo Vagnozzi  
state representative

on the House floor, shaking hands and waving to his colleagues.

Before the event, Vagnozzi invited friends to his office, which he had just occupied Tuesday.

"I spent most of my day answering complaints about unemployment benefits," he said in his office on the eighth floor. A perfect view of the Capitol building is to the left, outside his window.

The freshman legislator said he has also rented an apartment in a nearby high-rise, where he plans to stay overnight a couple of times a week.

Vagnozzi said many concerned citizens have called

PLEASE SEE VAGNOZZI, A5

## Unique proposals could win prizes

"Will you marry me?" Those four simple words, uttered a zillion times since Adam and Eve, continue to stir the heart, raise legions of goosubumps and even tickle the funny bone.

They're not always accompanied by wine and roses. Sometimes, they're written across the sky, announced at sporting events or delivered by a messenger in a gorilla suit.  
But always, they're so meaningful.

In honor of Valentine's Day, the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers is sponsoring its second annual Lessons in Love Contest. Winners receive a romantic evening on the town Thursday, Feb. 13.

We want to hear about your romantic -- or funny -- wedding proposal. In 100 words or less, tell us how he (or she) popped

the question. You could be one of two lucky couples to receive the following:

■ Transportation, compliments of J.R. Tours, Inc. of Novi.

■ A dozen red roses from Wesley Berry Florist of West Bloomfield.

■ A romantic dinner for two at Little Italy in Northville.

■ Candy from Killwin's in Birmingham.

■ A \$270 gift coin from Oris Jewelers of Northville and Garden City.

■ One-night stay at Fraser Inn of Northville.

■ Two tickets for the Feb. 13 Red Wings game.

Sorry, you'll have to buy the fancy duds, tip your hair stylist and pay for the hazy sitter -- a small price for romance.

On a romantic note,

PLEASE SEE CONTEST, A5

## Benchmark seeks smaller location

BY SUE BUCK  
STAFF WRITER

Benchmark Outdoor Outfitters plans to relocate from its present location at 32715 Grand River in Farmington, where it's been for about 25 years.

"We have an opportunity to move out of our lease which doesn't work

within the financial scope," said Bruce Lilley, a co-owner. "We want to scale down slightly. This is a big footprint."

He's looking for an area about 10,000 square feet, a reduction from 15,000 square feet. A smaller location will make it easier to fill with merchandise and have the store look full, he said.

"We want it to be more reasonable from a personnel standpoint," Lilley said. "We want more visibility and foot traffic."

Lilley has looked at the former Shoe Carnival location in the Downtown Farmington Center at Grand River and Farmington.

PLEASE SEE BENCHMARK, A5

## Changes delay court project

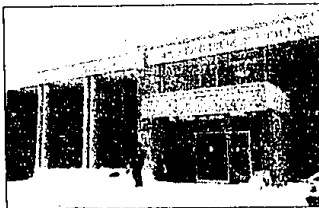
BY PAUL R. PACE  
STAFF WRITER

One thing newly elected 47th District Court Judge James Brady didn't get this holiday was a new courtroom.

But that gift should be ready to unwrap soon. It's not likely the new 47th District Court building in Farmington Hills --

originally slated for a mid-November opening -- will be ready to open this month since work on a basement entrance for prisoner transport is taking longer to finish than officials had anticipated.

Court Administrator David Walsh said a specific opening date for the two-story facility has not been set, but should happen



Construction continues on the new courtroom.

between early February and late March.

Otherwise, the building is "coming along well," said Walsh. "Most of the

first floor is complete and the second floor, where the courtrooms are, they

PLEASE SEE COURT, A5

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**LOOKING AHEAD**  
Comforting casseroles  
In Sunday's Taste section: The casserole is back. After a long reign that peaked in the 1950s and '60s, its popularity is on the rise again.



**Love and marriage...**  
go together like a horse and carriage



So the song goes. Weddings don't go together at all without a lot of intense planning. Look for our 2003 Wedding Guide on Sunday, February 16 and discover ideas, advice and interesting features to assist with your wedding.

Advertisers: There is still time to reserve your space in this popular section. Call 734-963-2163 or 248-961-2500

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