

FARMINGTON Observer

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Your hometown newspaper serving Farmington and Farmington Hills for 116 years

THURSDAY

January 16, 2003

75 cents

VOLUME 116 NUMBER 34

www.observerandeccentric.com

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Our Towns

Toys for tots

Mark Zehnder, broker/owner of Century 21 M.J. Corporate Transferee Service in Farmington Hills, received a certificate of achievement award from



Staff Sgt. Jerome Oswald of the U.S. Marine Corps, for M.J.'s participation in the Marines' Toys for Tots program.

This is the eighth year for the company's involvement.

"Each year we seem to collect more toys. I am proud of our entire staff for their contribution," Zehnder said.

Serious to silly

"From Serious to Silly", drawings and paintings by local artist Tynda Mokis, will be on display at the Farmington Community Library through Jan. 31.

Mokis is a member of the Farmington Area Artists Club.

The display will be open from noon to 6 p.m. Sunday, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

The library is located at 23550 Liberty Street, one block southwest of Grand River and Farmington roads. For information, call (248) 553-0300.

NFHS auction

The North Farmington High School Band/Ochestra Boosters will host a Fine Arts Auction on Friday, Jan. 31, at The Parthenon House, 5586 Drake Road, West Bloomfield.

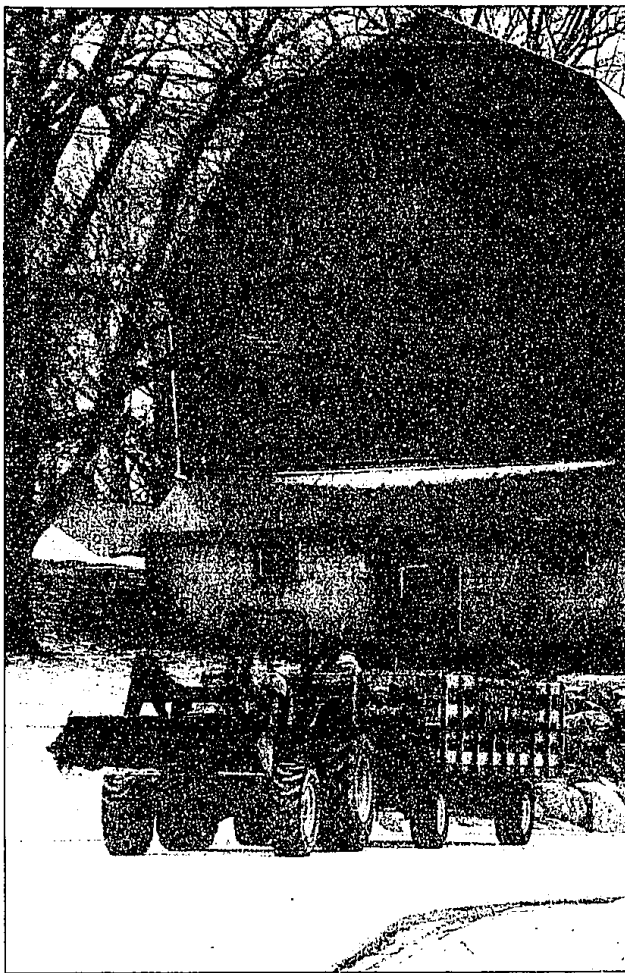
Proceeds will support the programs and services of the Instrumental Music Department of North Farmington High School.

The reception and art preview begins at 6 p.m.; the auction at 7 p.m.

Advance tickets, \$12 per person, can be purchased by calling Schwartz at (248) 553-7096.

Tickets will also be available at the door for \$15 per person.

For more information, call Schwartz at (248) 553-7096 or Barbara Vihasa at (248) 478-7461 or e-mail: bvuhas@hotmail.com



DELL BRESELM/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Dashing through the snow

Hardy souls enjoyed a ride in the hay wagon at Sunday's Winterfest, sponsored by the Farmington Hills Recreation Department. For more on the event, please see Page A3.

District looks at opening its doors

BY SUE BUCK
 STAFF WRITER

Trying to be proactive, counter declining enrollment and allow for more efficient use of buildings, Farmington school officials are considering an out-of-district Schools of Choice program.

Under this plan, students from other districts in Oakland County or the Oakland County Intermediate School District can apply for a limited number of slots in Farmington Public Schools.

The Farmington area is experiencing little growth, and school officials say parents who have college-age children are remaining in the district.

"When you lose students, you lose money," said Mark Morawski, principal of William Grace Elementary in Farmington Hills.

PLEASE SEE DISTRICT, A4

Mercy senior gives last MLK speech

BY SUE BUCK
 STAFF WRITER

Alexandria Marshall has been rehearsing Martin Luther King Jr.'s *I Have a Dream* speech, even though she already knows it from memory.

The speech holds special meaning for her.

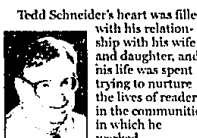
Marshall, 17, a Detroit and a Mercy High School senior, will recite the familiar words for the third time at the annual Candlelight Walk held in honor of King. Participants will meet at 6 p.m. Jan. 19, at the Costello Center in Farmington Hills.

Marshall remembers the first time she delivered the speech.

PLEASE SEE KING, A5

Editor loses battle with cancer

BY BRAD KADNICH
 STAFF WRITER



Schneider
 On Tuesday, both

PLEASE SEE SCHNEIDER, A5

Cusac named Hills top firefighter

BY PAUL R. PACE
 STAFF WRITER

You could say Paul Cusac has been firefighting in his blood.

His dad was a paid on-call firefighter for Farmington Township back in the early 1950s and it wasn't unusual for Cusac and his siblings to be taken along on runs.

"Back then, you brought your kids along for things like grass fires," said Cusac, a career firefighter with Farmington Hills. "He wouldn't let us go on house fire runs."

"That was in the days when the tiny township had only about 100 fire department

calls a year, compared with 6,500 today.

Cusac was named Firefighter of the Year at the annual Farmington Hills Fire Department award ceremony held Friday at Vladimirk.

"It was a shock to me," Cusac said of the honor. The award recipient was not announced until the very end of the ceremony. "I didn't think anything I did was more than normal."

Fire Chief Richard Marinucci said every fire chief who served the department promoted Cusac at least once during his nearly 30-year career with the city.

"He was named VFV fire-

fighter of the year in 1981," the chief said.

Marinucci commented that Cusac prefers to work behind the scenes, but plays a vital role in the department. In addition to being an inspector, Cusac keeps the fleet running with repair requests to the manufacturers and the DPW.

"He's a consummate team player. He's one of the most dedicated people to our cause," the chief said.

Cusac was a paid, on-call firefighter from 1974 to 2001 and became a career firefighter in 1977.

PLEASE SEE FIREFIGHTER, A2



DELL BRESELM/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
 Paul Cusac took home the leather helmet as Farmington Hills Fire Department's Firefighter of the Year.

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LOOKING AHEAD

Super Bowl Sunday
 In Sunday's Taste section: Put some spice in your Super Bowl party with a taste of Mexico.

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