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FARMINGTON Observer

Mesmerizing

'Beauty and the Beast' heading to Fisher Theatre. Arts, B1



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OUR TOWNS

Council favors 'living wall' concept

BY PAUL R. PACE
STAFF WRITER

While it will be an uphill climb, Farmington Hills officials are eager to move forward with plans to be the first city in the U.S. to build a "living wall" along I-275.

The project is designed to protect nearby neighborhoods from pounding road noise. White walls made of natural vegeta-

tion along roadways and train tracks are already a standard in parts of Europe, Hills officials say the concept remains foreign in the U.S.

Hills Mayor Nancy Dates invited residents who live along the highway to hear a discussion during a City Council study session Monday.

Residents in attendance agreed they like the concept.

A steel structure would act as a skeleton to hold up an earthen slope that

would act as a sound barrier.

City Manager Steve Brock said the walls need to be built as close to the road as possible to be effective.

Special foliage that can withstand exposure to road salt would also be planted, he said.

"They can be built 50 feet high," Brock said of the natural walls. "And they require little or no maintenance."

The council agreed to move ahead with the concept.

Councilwoman Vicki Barnett said the idea is exciting and could put Farmington Hills in the national spotlight.

"You get the idea of what's possible," she said.

A developer, who wants to build 61 homes even closer to I-275 than the homes already near the highway, said he's willing to kick in \$200,000 for a

PLEASE SEE WALL, A3

Chamber golf

There's still time to get in on the Farmington Hills Chamber Golf Outing's Early Bird registration special - for those who act by May 1.

The annual event, held Wednesday, June 18 at the Links of Novi, includes a full day of golf, prizes, food and networking. And anyone who shoots a hole-in-one will drive off in a 2004 Grand Prix, courtesy Bob Sellers Pontiac-GMC. Register before May 1, and the cost is \$150 per golfer; after May 1, it's \$165.



Sponsorship opportunities are still available, and door prize donations are being accepted.

For more information, call the chamber, (248) 474-3400 or visit the chamber Web site, www.fhchamber.com

Fly a kite

Spring has arrived and soon the sky will be dotted with brightly colored images of kites and radio-controlled toy airplanes. While enjoying the outdoors, Detroit Edison reminds kite fliers to play safely around electricity.

Detroit Edison offers these rules to fly kites and radio-controlled airplanes safely:

- Select a level and open space away from utility poles and overhead power lines.

- If a kite or other object becomes lodged on a utility pole or tangled in the wires, don't try to remove it. Call the utility at (800) 477-4747 to report the location.

- Don't fly kites in threatening weather. If a kite is hit by lightning, wet strings can conduct electricity.

- Use strong, cord for kite string.

- Don't use kits containing metal or wire parts such as cotton-wrapped wire string. Wire and metal will serve as conductors if they come into contact with electrical equipment. Use lightweight wood for kite frames.

- Avoid traffic areas such as streets, highways and railroad rights of way.

- Don't fly kites and toy airplanes from rooftops or other elevated structures.

For additional information on safety, visit OTE Energy's Web site for kids, www.otekids.com.



Jim Patterson displays some of his artwork in his home studio.

Exhibit opens this weekend

Farmington Artist Club shows off finest

BY PAUL R. PACE
STAFF WRITER

More than 130 members strong, the Farmington Artist Club is one of the most respected artists' groups in the metro area.

The public will once again get an opportunity to view the best of their works during a Spring Art Exhibit, starting this weekend at the Centrick Activities Center in Farmington Hills. Guests at Saturday's Starry Night Gala will preview the exhibit.

PLEASE SEE EXHIBIT, A8

Shooting concerns resident

BY SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER

The Rev. Brian Brewer became alarmed about 7:45 p.m. April 17 after he saw police arrive in his Valleyview Circle neighborhood and disappear from view across the street from his Farmington home.

"Suddenly I heard two gunshots," said Brewer, who pastors at Victory Baptist Church in Farmington Hills. "I called 9-1-1 to say police are across the street from my home and I heard two gunshots."

The dispatcher, he said, answered that the officers were there to shoot a raccoon.

When Brewer questioned why the police discharged a weapon in a residential area about 50 yards from his home, an officer told him the animal was sick.

Brewer wondered why animal control wasn't called. He drove to the police station and talked to the officer at the desk.

He told officials Monday he was concerned about safety.

After contacting area police departments, Brewer said only Detroit offi-

PLEASE SEE SHOOTING, A8

HHS principal: 'Tired of getting beat up'

BY SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER

With strength from within, Harrison High School staff and parents plan to promote the attributes of the school.

A second strategic planning meeting is slated at 7:30 p.m. Monday, April 28, in the media center. The first was held March 31 and included Farmington Schools Superintendent Bob Maxfield, Deputy Superintendent Sue Zurvalec and Jan Colliton, assistant superintendent for instruction. They assisted with breakout sessions to discuss Harrison's

strengths and weaknesses.

"We're getting tired of getting beat up," said Principal Rande Horn. "We don't deserve it. We want to debunk the myths. We are a very good school. The school is safe."

Citing one extreme perception, Horn said Harrison doesn't have "roving gangs of kids who block kids in the hallways and beat them."

However, these and other things are repeated by outsiders, and those who don't have students in the school, school officials say.

All Harrison parents received an invitation to attend the first meeting, which drew about 70 people. Monday's meeting is advertised on the message board in front of the school, located on 12 Mile west of Middlebelt.

The goal is to identify issues and ways to do things better, Horn said. His call to action was the result of the badmouthing he hears; some parents also made comments about the school during and after the Feb. 7 In-district Schools of Choice

PLEASE SEE PRINCIPAL, A6

Speaker gives Lanigan students a view of Haiti

BY SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER

When Jean-Woodly Dormeus returns to Haiti, he plans to get a dog, one he will name Shiwawsee to remind him of the days he spent in the Farmington area.

Dormeus, a seminary student, spoke recently at Lanigan Elementary in Farmington Hills. The 29-year-old will graduate May 31 from Ashland Theological Seminary's Detroit Center in

Southfield. He's been living with Bruce and Carol Carr in Farmington Hills. Bruce formerly taught at Mackenzie High School in Detroit and is active with World Medical Relief and has been a missionary. He accompanied Dormeus to Lanigan Elementary.

"The Peace Corps has been strong in Haiti," Carr said, adding the Corps has taught simple ways of health care and



PLEASE SEE HAITI, A8 Jean-Woodly Dormeus spoke at Lanigan Elementary about life in Haiti.

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LOOKING AHEAD
Cinco de Mayo
In Sunday's Taste section, read about Cinco de Mayo and the unique flavors of traditional Mexican food.

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