



Sun care
Doctors offer some advice about the dangers of the sun.
Health, C4

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Chatroom Zander recaps a busy year

Welcome to the conclusion of a wonderful year as Miss Farmington Oakland County.

I was blessed this year to have the opportunity to represent my community, but little did I know about the experience of a lifetime that would be forever ingrained in my heart and soul. Looking through my community service book, I noticed that in the past year alone I was involved with more than 40 community projects and in some capacity I am proud to report that I helped raise funds for many organizations. Of all the organizations that I volunteered with this year, well over \$140,000 was raised for their causes.

Some of my favorite times include working with the children in our community. I recently spent time at Lanigan Elementary School, where I enjoyed an ice-cream social. With the help of my friends from the Detroit radio station 95.5 FM, my friend Gallagher and I were auctioned off for yard work and child care service.

I also would like to send a hello to the students of William Grace Elementary School. I enjoyed my time with them at their field day and into the evening at their fun fair. What I really admire about our community is our service. It is wonderful to see adults come out to support our schools and students.

MENTORSHIP

It is the support that has really propelled me this year. I would not have known such potential without the help of two very special people. I would like to thank Ginny Morris and Jennifer Hoemke. Ginny has been one of the pivotal people in my life this year as my director. I would also like to thank "Thief, my coach." These two pushed me to find the best in myself and others. They are my director, coach, friends and my mentors.

This year, I have talked about my platform, the need for mentors, and two of the best examples were with me all the way. Thanks Ginny and Jennifer.

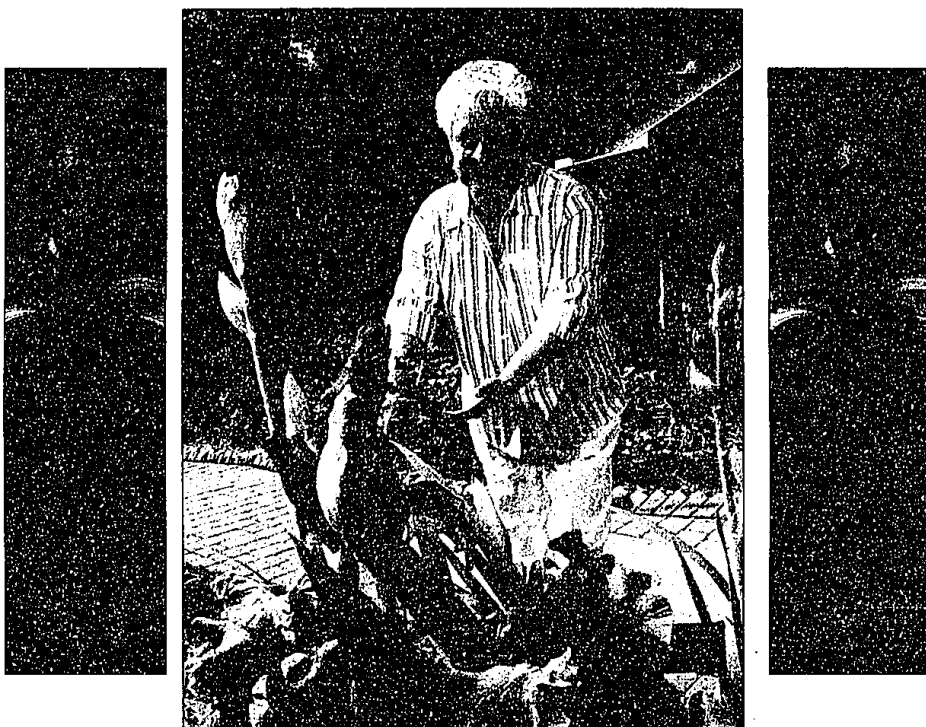
Along with these two extraordinary women, my family deserves all my thanks and gratitude. My mother, Janet, father, Alan, and sister, Laura, were always there for me from the moment I was crowned last July until I stepped off the stage at the Miss Michigan Pageant. Thank you to everyone for helping me to arrive where I am today.

After a wonderful going-away party at the Masonic Temple where friends and family wished me well, I left to compete at the Miss Michigan Scholarship Pageant in Muskegon. I didn't come home with the crown, but I did come home with the experience of a lifetime.

The wonderful women that I not only competed against but became best friends with each taught me something about their platform, themselves, and helped me learn something about myself. I saw dedication in its true form. These women were dedicated to their platform, their own character, and the Miss America Organization.

That is why I ask you to come and support the next Miss Farmington/Oakland County and all her endeavors when I crown her July 12 at the William Costick Center. From what I have learned this year, the only advice I have to give to our next representative and to you is to never stop reaching for your goals and remember to never stop lending a helping hand.

Kelly Zander is the current Miss Farmington/Oakland County.



Lora Dixon is rightly proud of her gorgeous irises.

PHOTOS BY BILL BRACKEN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Spectacular gardens are a labor of love

BY JONI HUBRED
STAFF WRITER

Over the past seven years, Lora Dixon has created a little slice of Eden around her Farmington Hills home. "The basics were here ... the steps," she says, looking over the terraced backyard. "It was all very bare."

Now the lush green space teems with lilies of all varieties, hostas, peonies, clematis, azaleas, rhododendrons, iris and honeysuckle. One-hundred-year-old trees tower over the backyard, casting broad shadows.

Raised a "farmer's daughter," Dixon has been a gardener throughout her life. Her favorites are the lilies — Asiatic, Oriental and day lilies bloom in clustered patches in front of her house and beds along the driveway. "Those I really love. I mix them with a lot of plants," Dixon said.

While flowering annuals bloom throughout the growing season, her gardens consist mostly of perennials. She plants a lot of bulbs in the fall, to keep ahead of the squirrels and chipmunks who often raid her gardens.

Aside from weeding, her maintenance plan includes putting down bone meal in the fall and spring.

"Plus, I use good dirt ... that helps the plants," she added.

The gardens aren't planted in any particular design; Dixon gets her ideas from HGTV and reading about gardening. She does adhere to common sense practices. For instance, hostas are planted on the slope of the land, because they love damp conditions.

A number of container gardens are maintained by the terraced steps and on the patio, which makes the area "nice and cozy," Dixon said. In all, there are four levels —



The Dixon backyard is terraced. While most plants are rooted in the ground, container plantings abound.

the front area by the house, the patio, backyard and the lowest beds near a stream behind the house.

It's a lot of work to maintain, but for Dixon, it's a labor of love. She works a full-time job, she says, to support her "habit."

"When I'm down here and I'm working, I feel so peaceful," she said. "I'm away from the world, and everything is well."

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Guest artist visits St. Fabian Middle School

Caran d'ache. Collages. Acrylics.

These are just some of the media used by Girija Viswanath, the professional guest artist, who visited St. Fabian Middle School in May. Her presentation, offered without charge to the school, was part of the middle school's annual Art in the Park Day, put on by the Art Smart program.

Each year, a guest artist is invited to do a workshop for the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades in the school's courtyard.

Born in southern India, Viswanath began her interest in art at a very young age. She moved to the United States in 1975 and has resided in Michigan ever since. She began her career as a self-taught artist, but has since taken courses at the Birmingham Bloomfield Art Center. Viswanath is a member of the Farmington Art Club, the Art Manifesto Group and the plein Air Society.



A work by Girija Viswanath