

Active homeowners share common area

By JUDY OWEN

FARMINGTON HILLS — Subdivisions and homeowners associations are generally peculiar to the suburbs.

An urban city may have its block clubs made up of neighbors who are concerned about problems that their street or groups of streets may face. A homeowners association usually found in the suburban communities is much the same. It represents involvement in the community at the grassroots level.

The associations develop right along with the subdivision, sometimes helping to soothe growing pains that often accompany new developments.

THAT'S WHAT happened in Canterbury Commons, north of Thirteen Mile Road and west of Orchard Lake Road.

The 10-year-old subdivision is served by a highly-structured, energetic board of directors that oversees maintenance of commonly owned property, provides a volunteer protection patrol and organizes social activities.

Two-story colonial homes, many with four bedrooms, line the neatly curbed streets.

A creek meanders through the commons property on the west side of the subdivision. Picnic tables, a playground, walking trails and a well used

skating rink are in the commons, which serves the 284 families who live in Canterbury Commons.

JACK KARAGOZIAN, president of the association, said the subdivision was one of the first in the area to have commonly owned property maintained for recreation within its boundaries.

It was this distinction which rated it recognition a number of years ago in Better Homes and Gardens Magazine. Karagozian, in his last month of a one-year term of office, heads a nine-man board of directors which meets about nine times a year.

Board members oversee various committees to serve residents.

ONE OF THE MOST important committees is the one in charge of maintenance.

Commons property requires constant upkeep, Karagozian said.

The committee has an extensive fertilizer and weed control program to keep the grounds maintained.

Trees in the commons require pruning.

EACH YEAR, the creek becomes the focus of a commons clean-up day which is usually held in the spring.

Residents armed with rakes, shovels and pruning shears spend the day sprucing up the area. To help spread the word and insure a good turnout, a team of 31 block captains has been organized.

One of the more unusual committees is the property protection patrol which rolls into action when there

is a high incidence of vandalism or home break-ins.

Karagozian said the patrol was more active when the subdivision was developing.

"Many of the problems we had as a new subdivision have now subsided," he said.

WHEN NEEDED, the group usually patrols on Friday or Saturday nights. Through an arrangement with Hunters Ridge to the north, the volunteers are armed with walkie talkies and can communicate with security personnel at the Hunters Ridge gatehouse who in turn notify police.

A community affairs committee keeps track of city council, planning commission and school board agendas for items which may have a particular concern to residents.

The closing this fall of Bond School, just east of Canterbury Commons, brought action from the board.

A letter was sent to the school board expressing the association's opposition to the closing and urging maintenance of neighborhood schools.

RESIDENTS in the subdivision formed a private citizens committee which took a more active role, Karagozian said.

"Safety was a big factor" in the opposition, he said. "We are concerned about what they are going to do with Bond. We feel that someday it should be reopened."

Other committees welcome new residents, publish an annual directory, and organize social events ranging from corn roasts to the annual dinner dance.

A newsletter, detailing association activities, is published four times a year.

Association membership is required of all residents, who are annually assessed \$48. Most of the funds go toward upkeep.

"BONES move fast here," Karagozian said. The large number of four-bedroom homes attracts larger families.

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Auto kills pedestrian

FARMINGTON HILLS — The city recorded its second traffic fatality of the year Saturday night with the death of a pedestrian.

Earl A. Clark, 31, of 3599 Thirteen Mile, Farmington Hills, was dead on arrival at Botsford Hospital after he was struck by a car driven by Gerald Koss, 17, of 2991 Ravencroft, Farmington Hills.

Police said that Clark appeared to be hitchhiking along the eastbound lane of Thirteen Mile Road at 8:30 p.m. when the accident occurred.

There were no charges.

The first fatality resulted in the death of Gary Smilie, 27, of Ferndale who died Jan. 8 after the car he was driving collided with one driven by Carl Gehrke, 63, of Royal Oak.

Gehrke and his wife, Loueda, 53, who was a passenger in the car, were hospitalized at Botsford Hospital.

No charges were filed in that accident.

In 1974, the city recorded five fatalities. There were 19 traffic deaths recorded in 1973.

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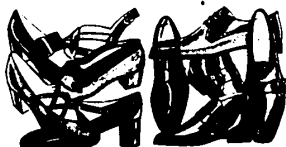
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