

Farmingington Observer

Volume 92 Number 66

Monday, June 1, 1981

Farmingington, Michigan

36 Pages

Twenty-five cents

Millage vote spurs educators to waffle

By Mike Scanlon
staff writer

Shhhh!
There's going to be a tax election next Monday.

In what may be the least-publicized election in recent memory, the Oakland Intermediate School District will seek approval of a two-mill, \$22 million property tax increase June 8.

One reason for the tax election's almost preternatural lack of widespread understanding appears to be that few

people really understand what the Intermediate District does.

Another reason for the lack of publicity over the tax election is the common wisdom that voters are in no mood to approve taxes for anything, worthy or not. Many school officials are largely unwilling to take responsibility for the Intermediate District taxes. But more on that later.

NEARLY 20,000 Oakland County students — about 10 percent of the countywide school population — suffer

from a variety of disabilities that can impede their ability to learn in normal school settings.

Providing special school settings for those children costs nearly \$70 million a year countywide.

Those special programs are largely clustered in two categories — 1) magnet-style centers for children with any of nine "low-incidence," unusual handicaps, and 2) home district programs for students with more common disabilities.

The intermediate district directly funds the magnet-style centers. Whatever money is left is traditionally distributed among 23 local districts for use in helping students with more common disabilities.

But since the mid-'70s, a barrage of federal and state laws, rules and regulations has widely expanded the definition of disabled and greatly increased the number of students who must receive special treatment.

There are, for instance, 13 percent fewer county students now than five years ago, but there are 25 percent more special education students.

MEANWHILE, federal aid for providing special programs required by the federal government has dropped.

The result: There isn't much money left over any more after the intermediate district pays for the magnet centers.

And that forces local districts to bear more of the financial burden. In fact, in the past year it has forced many local districts to bear all of the financial burden. They do it with money that would otherwise go into general education.

Hence, the tax increase request, which if approved will be earmarked for supporting local special education programs.

ODDLY, however, there is less than widespread support for the tax increase from school districts that stand to make money if it's approved. Even the Intermediate District itself, which would directly collect the increased tax dollars, is keeping a low profile.

"We have no budget (to publicize the election) because we're not doing anything," said William Keane, superintendent of the intermediate district. "The intermediate district decided to



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Preparing for tragedy

Botsford General Hospital, with the help of some very willing "victims," last week practiced for the emergency which everyone hopes never will happen. Students from all three Farmington public high schools teamed with hospital workers to

practice for a disaster. Here Claudia Detling (on stretcher) of Farmington High School is aided by Patty Caraccio (center) and nurse Sandy Thompson. To see more about the emergency practice, turn to 3A.

Election gives recall new life

The overwhelming defeat of Proposal A in last Tuesday's statewide election and specifically the huge margin by which it failed in the 15th senatorial district was like throwing gasoline on an open fire for state Sen. Douglas Ross.

A recall movement against Ross D-15 District had its biggest day since petitions were distributed little more than one month ago. Ross constituents seeking the recall of the freshman senator from Oak Park rode the wave against Proposal A.

Ann Tomczyk, secretary of the Committee to Recall Senator Ross, said last Thursday that more than 1,500 signatures had been gathered near polling places on election day, bringing the group's total to more than 2,000.

But Bob Tomczyk, the group's chairman, said on Monday that signatures collected were close to half of the 24,242 written endorsements needed.

"I'm not going to give you a number," Bob Tomczyk said. "We want to keep Ross off balance. People are circulating (petitions) well. . . People that claimed they would get 20 to 40 (signatures) are getting 100 with little or no effort."

THE RECALL chairman added to that would only be released in the future if the group were either going to file or abandon the recall.

The recall supporters have until July 20 to submit 24,242 signatures.

"We stand very well," Mrs. Tomczyk said. "Not what we did it (Proposal A) go down, it went down big."

The recall group has suggested in the past that a major defeat of Proposal A would directly correlate to the success of their anti-Ross campaign.

This is based on the senator's saying that he was representing the views of his constituents by supporting the placement of Proposal A on the May 19 ballot.

ANN TOMCZYK said that petitioners who turned out at the voting places, focusing on Commerce Township, Milford, Farmington Hills and Southfield, said their success in gathering signatures depended upon where the parking lots were. Recall advocates were directed to collect signatures at least 100 feet from the polls, probably because the petition contained statements opposing Proposal A.

The group's secretary added that if the 100-foot restrictive area included the poll's parking lot, petitioners recorded poor results.

But of those recall advocates who could approach and discuss the issue with voters, Ann Tomczyk said, "They were met with virtually little resistance."

"We were definitely encouraged to

Please turn to Page 5A

Please turn to Page 5A

Group bites off big chunk in war on blindness

By Mary Rodrigue
staff writer

Brothers Stewart and Steven Merritt are giving six months of their lives to help cure blindness in Nepal.

The Merritts and three cohorts hope to raise \$250,000 for that cause in a six-month quest.

On June 10, Stewart, 23, and three other stalwart souls plan to backpack down the continental divide from Waterton Provincial Park in Alberta, Saskatchewan, to Mexico — a 3,000-mile trek through mountains, snow and desert.

Meanwhile, Steven, 25, expedition coordinator, will stay home to garner pledges from businesses and individuals. So far, \$7,000 is pledged and the team has gotten donations of food and supplies.

The Merritts, both North Farmington High and University of Michigan graduates, are volunteers for the Soci-

ety for Epidemiology and Voluntary Assistance (SEVA). SEVA is joining the World Health Organization in a \$5-million, six-year program to prevent blindness caused by malnutrition and trachoma in Nepal, a small Himalayan country between India and Tibet.

As many as 300,000 of Nepal's 13 million inhabitants are blind.

The groups plan on setting up a nationwide system of eye camps to cure cataracts, buy antibiotic ointment to cure trachoma and deliver Vitamin A to protect children from malnutrition blindness.

ONLY ONE member of the Merritts' team is a wilderness expert, Clarke Ball, who traveled the southern half of the great divide alone in 1972.

The other team members, Patricia Ball and David Kahn, are novices. All four have passed rigorous tests and training at the Center for Fitness and

Stewart Merritt and three other stalwart souls plan to backpack down the continental divide from Waterton Provincial Park in Alberta, Canada, to Mexico — a 3,000-mile trek through mountains, snow and desert.

Sports Research at U-M.

"We're strong as horses," Stewart said.

They've also been jogging five to 10 miles, four times a week in preparation.

"I feel very confident," said Stewart, who graduated from National Outdoor Leadership School.

For the trip, dubbed Sight Trek, the team has gathered 240 U.S. Geological Survey maps and 1,200 pounds of

freeze-dried and canned food that will be dropped off at points by Outward Bound volunteers along the way.

They hope to average 20 miles a day, encountering eagles, deer, moose, elk and (they hope not) grizzly bears. The route winds through Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado and New Mexico, with snow expected through July and again in September in Colorado.

In their 50-pound backpacks, expedition members will carry clothing, rope,



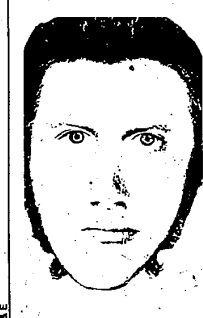
Stewart Merritt

water-purifying tablets and tents. They expect temperatures to vary from below freezing in the mountains to above 100 degrees in the desert.



Steven Merritt

"The trip is a hold off from getting into the work world," joked Stewart, who has a bachelor's degree in computer science.



Police seek clues in two assaults

Farmingington Hills police are looking for two suspects in connection with sexual assaults on two women.

The first incident occurred on May 19 at 1:45 p.m. in a home near Nine Mile and Halsted.

The suspect entered the home without force after misrepresenting himself to the 55-year-old victim.

He is described as 28-35 years old with blond curly hair, 180-200 pounds, 5-feet-8 to 6-feet-11.

THE SECOND incident occurred May 21 at 10 p.m.

The 19-year-old victim was assaulted while she was walking along Eight Mile between Middlebelt and Grand River.

The assailant fled with the victim's purse after she screamed for help.

The suspect is described as 20-23 years old, 6 feet, 160 pounds, with light brown hair cut in a punk rock style — short in front, feathered on the sides and combed off the forehead.

Anyone with information should call the Farmington Hills police detective bureau at 474-6181.



what's inside

Community Calendar . . . 8B
Editorials . . . 7B
Inside Angles . . . 3A
Obituaries . . . 9A
Shopping Cart . . . Section B
Suburban Life . . . Section B

The time had come for David Paltino to part with his 1974 Olds Cutlass. So he advertised in his hometown Observer & Eccentric Newspaper. As soon as the paper hit the street, he had a caller and a buyer. "He came with your paper in his hand. I have never sold anything so fast in my life and I got my full price too."

Remember, one call does it all.

644-1070