

Safety lobbyist aims to save lives

By Shirley Ross Eden
staff writer

Fire deaths make Ed Greenfield see red.

For five years now, the subject of fires in hotels and public buildings and how to prevent fatalities because of them has consumed him.

Because of his "terrible drive" to correct the problems that cause fire deaths, Greenfield's bluntness as a lobbyist, speaks publicly, keeps abreast of fires and the statistics they produce, and writes an awful lot of letters.

"Just ask Gov. Blanchard about the letters," said Greenfield, a one-man lobbyist. "I think he's getting tired of my letters."

Greenfield's game plan right now is to get as many other people as he can to write letters to the governor. New legislation to write uniform fire codes is to be introduced shortly. It's a good time, he contends, to send a letter to Blanchard.

"We watched the movie 'Miracle on 34 Street' during the holiday season and I smiled at the scene where the judge orders the post office department to bring in the letters sent to the movie Santa Claus," he said.

"I LOVE that scene where mountains of letters were heaped in. That's what I'd like to do for the governor. I'd

love it if he got buried in letters." Greenfield's passion to fight for new fire codes which would be retroactive to older buildings has become his mission. He believes that most of the deaths, and many of the fires should not be happening at all.

Making fire regulations retroactive is one thing, but no retroactively can change the tragedies already shouldered. For Greenfield, his wife, Fay, daughter Linda, and son, Steven, the anniversary of their own tragedy has just passed.

At first, it was an adventure for the West Bloomfield family, a clan vacation, together in Las Vegas, staying at the Hilton Hotel. Five weeks before, the MGM Grand had burned (November 1984) and 84 persons died.

Greenfield says the state of Nevada upgraded the fire codes, but they were never implemented yet when his family checked in. On Feb. 10, fire engines screamed again in Las Vegas, this time to the Hilton.

Before the fire was out and the hoses rolled up again, eight had perished in the flames.

ONE of the eight was Frank Greenfield, 22. "He had gone back to the room before dinner. The fire happened in minutes and since there were no sprinklers, spread rapidly."

GREENFIELD'S basic task is to get new fire codes passed in Michigan and all states. "We need a uniform fire code and it should be retroactive," he said.

"In the recent crash of an airplane into a California mall, at least 200 lives were saved because there was a sprinkler system."

"In the hospice fire in Southfield, six people died unnecessarily because sprinklers are not required by code. An automatic fire door helped contain the fire or it could have been much worse."

Greenfield rates the Sheraton Hotel in Novi as the safest in the area, because Novi has a strict fire code. "The codes are as per each individual city," he said.

"In the Ramada Inn fire in South-

field, in July, 1983, one person died and what did they do — they painted it, cleaned it, and opened again without making any corrections.

Greenfield concedes there will always be fires. "What we must do is to protect the people in the buildings at the time a fire occurs and we must get involved."

FOR HIM being involved has been an education about fire safety, what it is, and what it should be.

"Now I have a basic shopping list of demands for our governor and our legislators," Greenfield said. "Sprinklers, smoke detectors, alarms, exit doors painted (fluorescent orange), elevator signs the same, and fire extinguishers the same."

In his family, one checks out fire safety before checking into hotels.

"Putting in sprinklers ultimately benefits hotels, because their insurance will drop immediately," he pointed out.

Greenfield quotes Lt. Timothy Bur of Eugene, Ore., as saying, "The American fire problem is an obsession."

And Capt. William R. Rucinski, Michigan State fire marshal, has said "This state's fire codes are a mess."

To counter this and the statistics researched, Greenfield is trying to convince the Michigan Legislature that the people need the security of better fire safety codes, uniform ones, retroactively.

A bill to these ends will be introduced soon by Senator Richard Fessler and State Rep. Joe Young Jr. Greenfield believes this is the only way to get safer schools, office buildings, churches, and hotels.

"We've got to swamp Gov. Blanchard with letters and tell him that the time is here to improve fire laws," he said.

Those who agree with Greenfield should write: Gov. James Blanchard, State Capitol, Lansing, Mich. 48909.

He's convinced it's time to get fired up over fire safety.

Students rank tops

One hundred percent of Flanders Elementary fourth graders passed the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) tests taken last fall — a first for the Farmington Public Schools.

The perfect scores were tallied in both reading and math tests.

The MEAP tests fourth, seventh and 10th graders each fall in the areas of math and reading. This fall, science will be added to the test and the tests rewritten, according to Connie Mason, district MEAP coordinator.

Aiding the test-revision effort will be Marilyn Carlson, middle school reading consultant, selected to help write the new questions.

Farmington ranks about 10 percent ahead of state averages across the board for 1985-86 tests, she said. Girls in all three grades outscored boys at the same levels.

Interim Superintendent Graham Lewis stressed the results will be used as a tool. "MEAP recommends the direction we should take," he said.

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Naturally Aged and Tender

recreation news

Each week, the Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Division will present a synopsis of upcoming activities in this column. For more information about division programs, call the office at 474-6115. To discuss Farmington Hills City Council agenda items, call the division newsletter: 476-3838.

SOFTBALL REGISTRATION — The Recreation Division is accepting registration for adult softball teams for the 1986 summer season. Returned teams from the 1985 summer season have until Jan. 31 to make a \$50 deposit for a league selection. New teams will be taken on a first-come, first-served basis starting Feb. 3. League information for the 1986 summer season include men's, women's, co-ed and men's 35 and over. For further information, call 474-6115 Ext. 288.

SENIOR TAX ASSISTANCE — Senior adults can receive assistance with preparation of 1985 federal, state, homestead and energy audit forms. Be prepared when you come. A copy of your 1984 tax return is helpful. All assistance remains confidential and is free. The program will be held at the Senior Adult Center from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. every Tuesday from Feb. 4 through April 8.

YOUTH BOWLING — A youth bowling class specially designed for children in grades three through five who are interested in learning the correct fundamentals, stance, lane approach and delivery will be taught at Bel-Aire, Country and Norwest Lanes. The program begins the week of March 3 and meets once a week for four weeks.

Class fee is \$15 and includes shoe rental. Registration deadline is Friday, Feb. 28.

YOUTH SOCCER — Registrations are being accepted for children in kindergarten through the third grade for the spring soccer program at the recreation office. Games will be played on Saturdays, with teams practicing once a week. A six-game schedule will be played. Registration fee is \$14 per player.

CPR — The American Red Cross course, co-sponsored with the City's Fire Department, is a nine-hour comprehensive class and refresher course. The session will run 7-10 p.m. Tuesday, March 18, Thursday, March 20, and Tuesday, March 25, in Dunckel Middle School. The class fee is \$5 and includes books and handouts. Pre-registration is required.

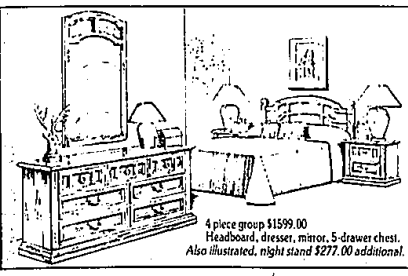
CANOE/KAYAK CLUBS — Families and individuals can become a member of the Canoe/Kayak Club by registering at the recreation office, \$5 for an individual and \$7 for family. The club welcomes beginners to experts. Activities include lessons, trips, newsletters and special events.

COFFEE HOUSE — Individuals 14 years and older who are mild to moderately and/or physically impaired can enjoy recreation and socialization every first and third Friday of the month 7-8:30 p.m. at Oakland Community College, Orchard Ridge Campus, "11" building. The fee is \$1 per person at the door.

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