

# 2 principals take time to talk shop

## Her commitment--to develop true leaders

## Involving community is high on his agenda

**'The mission of the school is the same. Our philosophy is not just to teach for tests -- they need to know how to deal with the world.'**  
— Sister Regina Doelker  
Mercy principal

By Casey Hans  
staff writer

**L**EARNING EACH student's name at Mercy High School is one of Sister Regina Doelker's goals. With nine months on the job, she's half way there. The new principal has taken the helm during a key time for the 160 student private girls school in Farmington Hills. A five-year master plan is taking shape, and the school is preparing

for the technology of the future as the next century approaches. She believes the independence taught at the Sisters-of-Mercy-owned high school will help to graduate a group of true leaders. These leadership expectations are part of the tradition of which the school boasts, including father/daughter dances and white formal and red roses for graduation.

**PROGRESSION** IS apparent in the expanding curriculum and extra-curricular activities that furthers not only educational, but personal growth as well, she said. Students can select from up to 125 courses and 80 activities.

The progressive things and good student attitudes have made Doelker's job an easier one during the past six months.

"It is what I thought it was -- and more. It is more than I would have expected."

Truly a Mercy advocate, Doelker graduated from what was known as Our Lady of Mercy High School in Detroit in 1956. As a Sister of Mercy nun, she taught mathematics at the school for 10 years beginning in 1964, returning recently as the school's new leader. She brings administrative experience from time served as co-director of the vocations office in the Saginaw Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church.

**DOELKER GAINED** additional teaching experience at both senior and junior high levels. She has also served on boards of health, vocational and educational institutions and for conferences.

Sister Nancy Thompson, who was principal for the previous eight years, took a position within the Sisters of Mercy organization, leaving the door open for Doelker, who stepped in last July. Although a Catholic school, it

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staff writer

**M**ICHAEL DUFF wanted a challenge. The man who considers himself a "teacher above everything else" found it at Gill Elementary in Farmington Hills: a school filled with a lively bunch, an active parents group and a very special seat to fill.

The new principal at Gill began his job in February, moving from the Willow Run school district, where he served as elementary principal since 1979. He is the first elementary principal to be hired from outside of the Farmington school district since 1984. He replaced Nick Abid who died following an illness in 1986.

"A support base develops over the years," Duff said. "I recognize I have some big shoes to fill. My

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— Michael Duff  
Gill principal

style is probably very similar to his -- I believe in community involvement."

Duff's community involves not only the people living around the school, but staff and students that keep the school functioning daily. Although a district is run with a top level of administration, Duff believes much can be done at a lower level.

"MORE THINGS can happen at the building level," Duff said. "I have an overall commitment to making the school an overall educational environment."

This philosophy was explained further in a February letter sent to parents from Duff, introducing

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Mercy principal Regina Doelker, in the school's quiet study area.



Gill principal Michael Duff, in Ginny Webber's kindergarten class.

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Adat Shalom Synagogue in Farmington Hills held a Purim costume contest Sunday. Shown with a friendly mime are winners Tony

Pintor (left), 4, of West Bloomfield, and Allison Young, 7, of Farmington Hills.

## Purim

### Feast recounts Jewish victory

The Jewish festival of Purim was celebrated from sundown Saturday to sundown Sunday. It recalls the plot of Haman to exterminate the Jews of Persia. It commemorates the day when, through the intervention of Mordecai and Queen Esther, the Jews narrowly escaped the fate planned by Haman. Together, with the gay abandon of its celebrations, Purim is also a day of spiritual comfort. It's a reminder that tyrants perish and that evil can gain only a temporary victory in the struggle for freedom, according to the Jewish Community Council. Described in the Biblical Book of

Esther is a plot by Haman the Agagite to destroy the Jews of Persia during the reign of King Ahasuerus, 485-465 BCE (Before the Common Era). Thankful to God for their deliverance from destruction, the Jewish people established the feast of Purim. The word Purim is derived from the word "Pur" -- lots that, when Haman plotted to destroy the Jews -- he had cast to determine the month in which their destruction would occur.

**JEWS GATHER** in the synagogue on the eve of Purim and listen to the events portrayed in the Book of Esther, which is read from a special

scroll called a megillah. Whenever Haman's name is mentioned, the children make a loud noise with gragers (noisemakers) to express their condemnation of the villain. After the reading, sweets are passed around. Specially baked for the holiday are three-cornered pies known as hamantaschen.

Traditionally, gifts of food known as shalachmones are sent to friends on Purim. Charitable contributions are made to the poor.

Purim is a time for masquerade parties and carnivals held by many area synagogues on the Sunday closest to the holiday.



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