



Break time: Students Andrew Dennis (left) and Dan Goshorn take a break from one set of mind games only to throw themselves into another during Saturday's competition.

## Kids showcase results of their mind odyssey

BY AILEEN WINGBLAD  
SPECIAL WRITER

After months of hard work and preparation, groups of youngsters from several Farmington-area schools demonstrated creativity and organized team effort at the local showcasing of Odyssey of the Mind, a competitive problem-solving program for students in grades K-12.

Held at Farmington High School Jan. 30, the event was a dry run of sorts for the students, who will face countywide competition Feb. 27 at Waterford Mott High School. Winners go on to regional and national competitions.

This year's OM participants, who have been meeting weekly to work on "long-term" projects since being teamed together last fall, are made up of student groups representing Beechview, Forest, Highmeadow, Hillside, Larkshire, Power, St. Fabian and Our Lady of Sorrows.

This is the 10th year for the program, sponsored by Farmington Public Schools. Judging from

the enthusiasm and high-spiritedness shown by the OM teams, it is an event greatly enjoyed by both students and parents alike.

"This whole thing is great for creativity. For teamwork and problem solving, you can't beat it," said Farmington Hills resident Darlene Sherry, who, along with her husband, Kevin, coached the team of Larkshire Elementary second-graders and one kindergarten.

The youngsters, including the Sherry children, Samantha and Brendan, selected the "Li'l Gourmet" problem to demonstrate to the judges, showing what they had come up with after working together for the past few months.

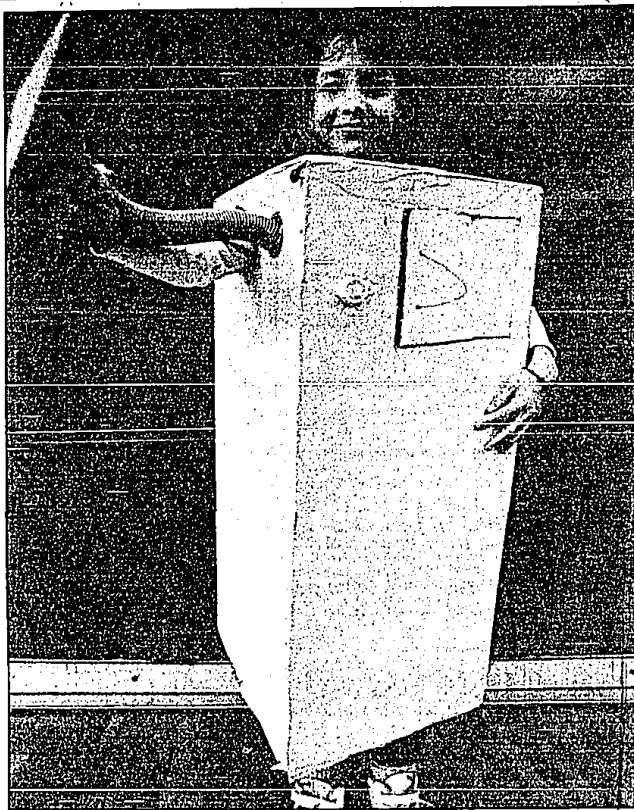
The OM team performed an original skit, complete with costumes they made themselves, that carried the theme of healthy eating. Brendan Sherry played a carton of milk; his sister Samantha was an apple.

"I liked it," said five-year-old Samantha. "It was really fun to do." Besides Li'l Gourmet, prob-

lem solving categories included Dinosaurs; "The Old Man and the Sea" analogy; Pit Stop, which required the design and production of a mechanically powered vehicle; Which End is Up, calling for construction of a weight-supporting balsa wood structure; and Folk Tales, wherein the kids performed an original story. The teams also faced spontaneous problems to solve.

Dan Bober, who coached the St. Fabian Folk Tales team of fifth- and sixth-graders, including daughter Nicole, agreed with the Sherry family that Odyssey of the Mind is a wonderful program and a great opportunity.

"It is good because the kids work in groups, and that way it is more like the real world when it comes to problem solving. They find it is not really about a right or wrong way of doing something — it's that some answers are good and some are better. It is convergent rather than divergent thinking. It's all about possibilities," he said.



Cleaning up: Jillian Clement plays the part of the "Creative Source" for St. Fabian School. Her job was to clean up the environment.

Teammate Katie Matous added that since "everybody has different personalities, we get different ideas, and that is good. This gets more fun every year," said Katie, who has participated in OM throughout her elementary school years. "And we get to meet lots of new people, too," she added.

On hand to catch a glimpse of some of the OM presentations was Farmington Schools Superintendent Michael Flanagan.

"The best thing about this is the creativity and sparkle you can see in the kids. And to watch parents take the lead as far as organizing this whole thing, it is amaz-

ing," said Flanagan.

He also praised Sylvia Kam-bouris, OM parent coordinator, and all those who worked to "pull it off. It's great; it's creative and higher-order thinking skill. So many skills that we put importance on are reached with this," he said.



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