

Turtle Island school aims for Native American ed

BY JEFF COUNTS
STAFF WRITER

About 200 students could be making history this fall, if a group of Native Americans are successful at starting a charter school in Westland.

Behind the push to start Turtle Island Learning Circle is Geo Fuhst of Redford, a Redford Union school board member. Groups of Native Americans supporting the school have visited area schools, including a recent stop at Warner Middle School in Farmington Hills.

"We're working to get our charter through Oakland University and we're hoping to start classes in the fall," Fuhst said.

If all goes well, the school would be the first Native American school in an urban area, he said.

"There are others, but they're located on reservations," he said. The school would be different from traditional public schools in that it would be based more on Native American traditions, especially the view of children.

"We see children as perfect when they're born, that's why Native American children weren't baptized. They're perfect the way they are," Fuhst said.

"We don't rear a child in our culture, we raise a child," said Adrienne Brant James, of Southfield, who is involved with the school.

Fuhst said a middle school will be established first and then it will be expanded into lower and upper grades.

"We're going after the middle school children first because that's where the trouble usually starts," he said.

There are about 20,000 to 25,000 people in the metro Detroit area who identify themselves as Native American.

It's hoped that the slots at the proposed school would go to those students. However, he said, nobody can be kept out of the school because of backlogs.

"The teachers in the school will have Native American backgrounds," said Fuhst. "We have about eight teachers, all with

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*Geo Fuhst
— Redford Union trustee*

state accreditation ready to teach.

"In fact, we have enough students and teachers to start right away," he said.

It's expected that Oakland University will make its decision on chartering the school by April, he said.

Both Fuhst and James said a Native American school is needed because Indian people see things differently than those from Europe.

"It's in our DNA," he said. "We know who we are."

Fuhst, who is Chippewa, said that his own education in suburban Detroit schools is a good example.

"When I started school I knew I was an Indian and was proud of it, but when I finished, I wasn't so sure," he said.

"We're going to be teaching to our own mindset," he said. "We're more from an oral tradition."

"When I was in school I learned as much outside the classroom as I did from reading books," he said.

And one of that philosophy will end up in the classroom, he said, adding that self-sufficiency is one Native American value that will be taught.

Another will be honor.

"This is a land of freedom, but not honor. Without honor, we destroy ourselves with freedom. We need to be honorable before we can be free," Fuhst said.

Also, the school will bring parents and others in to help the teachers. "Everybody is a teacher," he said.

"The parents will be obligated to participate. All parents have skills and we'll be bringing them



Making friends: Albert Porter greet Jeff Medlen after a presentation on Native American culture at Warner Middle School in Farmington Hills. The group that gave the presentation is trying to start a charter school for Native American students.

into the classroom," he said.

One goal of the school is to teach Native American children to live in both worlds, the Indian and European.

Wilson School, owned by the Wayne-Westland School District, is one good location because it's next to the Sasasfras Trails, a 64-acre nature center.

The development of a nature center at the site would be part of the school's mission, which is to become a resource for other schools in western Wayne County and Oakland County.

"The public schools see charter schools as a threat. But we see our school as a resource for the others," said James.

"People are starved for infor-

mation about Native Americans," she said. "We want to be viewed as a resource."

Fuhst said that although he is working to get the Turtle Island school a charter, he isn't a total fan of charter schools.

"I've been on the Redford Union school board for 10 years," he said. "We should be working on making all schools good. But this was the only way we could get Turtle Island going."

For more information about the proposed Turtle Island Learning Circle, Fuhst and James can be contacted at Indian World, a nonprofit center for Native Americans, at (313) 535-9728.



Native education: Adrienne Brant James shows students the wheel of life, which illustrates how Native Americans view the world.

Snow trail leads to arrest in bungled house break-in

BY GARY WORONCHAK
STAFF WRITER

Footprints in freshly fallen snow helped police track down a suspect after a break-in try at a Farmington Hills home in the pre-dawn hours Saturday.

The attempted break-in was at a home on Rhonwood near Halsted, where police said the 46-year-old resident was asleep on the couch when he was awakened by a noise from the kitchen around 3:30 a.m.

When he got up to check it out,

the resident heard glass breaking in the rear door and yelled, causing the would-be intruder to run away.

Police said the burglar had entered an unlocked enclosed porch and tried to push open the rear door, then broke the glass next to the doorknob lock.

Police were called and began to follow footprints, apparently belonging to the culprit, in the fresh snow. The prints, which had the distinctive design of a gym shoe, led to Eight Mile

Road, where they ended due to blowing snow.

But officers' tracking was enough to lead them close to a suspect, a man who was seen walking east on Eight Mile. Police observed that the man was not dressed for the weather, wore shoes with a tread design similar to those in the tracks police had been following, and was bleeding from a fresh cut on his finger.

The man, a 26-year-old Clarkston resident, was arrested.

Hills police ring up 2 after pair of shoplifting incidents

BY GARY WORONCHAK
STAFF WRITER

Two men were arrested Saturday after a two stores along Orchard Lake Road were hit by shoplifters that afternoon.

Police were alerted that two men had stolen shoes at 4:30 p.m. from Famous Footwear and learned later, after arrests were made, that the Gap had also been a victim to thieves.

The manager at Famous Footwear told officers she watched as two men took new shoes from their boxes and put them under their coats. She tried

to stop them from leaving the store, but one had exited before she could reach the door and the other pushed her to the side and left.

Following the culprits outside, the manager saw them get into a green Geo Prizm and got the license number before the car was driven away southbound on Orchard Lake.

Police spotted a Geo headed south on Orchard Lake north of 12 Mile Road and stopped it in the parking lot of Comerica Bank. Along with two pairs of shoes worth \$120 in the car, offi-

cers found several pairs of pants and other items from the Gap, still with tags on them.

Later, police reported that a 16-year-old employee of the Gap had seen two men behave suspiciously and act nervously in the store, but was not aware that any merchandise had been taken.

According to police, Gap items found in the car included 12 pairs of pants, three shirts and a set of jogging pants, with a total retail value of more than \$800.

The men arrested were Inkster residents ages 38 and 30.

City sets commission, board line-ups

The Farmington Hills City Council recently made several appointments to city boards and commissions. Those listed are appointed to serve three-year terms which will expire on Feb. 1, 2000, unless otherwise indicated.

- They include:
- Commission on Aging — Mary Lou Barnard and Danio D'Vitto.
- Arts Commission — Haroune Alameddine
- Beautification Commission — Abe Aon, Carol Kurth, Lavonne Roberts and Marcia VanCreveld
- Building Authority — (two-year terms to expire Feb. 1, 1999) Kathryn Dornan, Carl Evangelista, Daniel Hobbs and Jerry Neyner
- Cable Access Committee — Larry Bohner
- Board of Canvassers — (four-year terms to expire Dec. 31, 2000) Michael Breshgold and Shirley Wolf; and (three-year term to expire Dec. 31, 1999) Martin Krohner and Maria Weigold
- Commission on Children, Youth and Families

— Mark Bender, Marla Parker and Mandi Skeggon.

■ Historic District Commission — Bernard Ludwig.

■ Historical Commission — James Dermody.

■ Library Board — (four-year term to expire March 1, 2001) Clark Doughty.

■ Parks and Recreation — Norma Henderson, Joseph Miller and Jeff Stewart.

■ Planning Commission — Sharon Garms, David Haron and Michael Sweeney.

■ Board of Review — Gordon Meyers.

■ Zoning Board of Appeals — Betty Cook, Gregory Kosab and Robert Hollinger (alternate).

Anyone wishing to be considered for future appointments to city boards and commissions is encouraged to write a letter expressing that interest to Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi, Farmington City Hall, 31655 Eleven Mile Road, Farmington Hills, 48336-1165.

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