

Buffet

Blue heron dives in

BY JOANNE MALLESZEWI
STAFF WRITER

Marion and Ken Wallace never had a clue their dinner guest would fly right out of the sky. "He was standing there just as big as you please," said Marion. The "he" was a large, blue heron, who, over the course of a number of days, set his sight and beak on the Farmington couple's decorative, 1,200-gallon outdoor pond, stocked with 50 goldfish.

The Wallaces had recently cleaned out the pond, which is inhabited by the fish ranging from 2-3 inches to 10-11 inches in size. "We had just counted the fish like we always do," Marion said. But the blue heron, whom Marion believes was just passing through her neighborhood on Longacre, decided the pond was a great place for a make-shift buffet.

Something was sure to be up when Marion and Ken noticed "guck" - algae - on top of the pond water. "Never in all the years that we had this pond did this happen," Marion said, adding she believes the presence of the fish prevented a large build up of the green slime.

When I opened the door, he flew away with a fish about 7-8 inches in his beak," she said. "It's like he got caught with his hand in the candy dish."

*Marion Wallace
-Farmington resident*

Sure enough, Marion, a guest and one of her neighbors saw the big bird swoop in on a number of occasions. And he kept coming back for seconds.

"I am a bird watcher. When I saw it, I knew who he was," Marion said. "I don't see a single fish out there now."

In fact, Marion grabbed her camera and photographed the leggy bird. "When I opened the door, he flew away with a fish about 7-8 inches in his beak," she said. "It's like he got caught with his hand in the candy dish." Generally, the Wallaces put a net over the pond in the fall to keep leaves out. But the big bird found his dinner before the netting went on.

"He sure didn't forget where his dinner was," Marion said. "The poor fish ..."



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BREWER

Town meeting: Farmington Public Schools district resident, Catherine Murphy, and daughter, Cara Fleming, 2, wait for the town meeting to begin. They attend the Alameda parent and tot program. Break-out sessions that night allowed parents to voice their opinions.

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"I believe that we're living in a far more competitive world and therefore we need for every parent in the community to see us as the best provider of services" for their young children, Maxfield continued. "... We know that the earlier we start dealing with kids the better chance they have to be successful."

Also to be explored is finding a way to make more programs available to families from all income levels. Despite a few dips in the enrollment road, overall enrollment is up - about 1,000 students are signed up for the district's three early childhood centers (Alameda, Fairview, Farmington Community School). There also are eight sections of tuition-based Educare, up from three sections during its inaugural year in 1997-98.

But the district knows it must look under every rock to keep the program viable well into the 21st century, particularly as two-income households result in more young children needing full-day services and programs.

The state funds public education beginning at age 5. Mary Lou Somerville, a committee member and Alameda principal, said the district's early childhood program isn't hurting. But now is the time to look to the future, and she noted that anything from tweaking to restructuring could come out of the committee's recommendation.

"Tonight what we wanted to hear was anything and everything," said Somerville, who moved over to Alameda from the Fairview helm. "Now the committee will look at what's feasible and hopefully, we will start some new initiatives based on what we heard."

Thursday's session could help the district find out where the gaps are, both with its own program and those in the business world.

"The program has been in existence for a long time and we've been living side by side with private organizations," said Terry Kleczar, a committee member and director of Farmington Community School. "The focus here is to make sure we're doing the

right thing and going in the right direction."

Following the introduction, and a detailed 32-year history of early childhood education in the district, breakout sessions in the cafeteria enabled parents such as Sandra Millman and Paula Guido a chance to discuss pertinent issues such as wish lists for the future, and pros and cons about the current system.

"They should change the (kindergarten) cut-off date from Dec. 1 to Sept. 1," said Millman. "Every state in the United States should have the same system."

Across the table, Guido answered the next question about current program strengths. "It's very child-oriented and makes the child feel so welcomed."

At other tables, participants listed age-specific playground equipment, classroom bathrooms, better teacher-parent communication and more flexibility in available hours and programs among wishes.

Maxfield said some of the main reasons for the focus group was to examine

whether current facilities and programs are adequate for an ever-changing population, and whether or not the district can compete with private businesses such as KinderCare.

Somerville said maintaining a competitive edge is "based on the market ... We want to look at those gaps, where kids and their needs are falling through."

After the town hall concluded, several parents said they were impressed to have such an opportunity.

"I'm thrilled about this," said Alameda parent Claire Petrak. "I didn't know what to expect. I thought it was going to be a lecture. When we sat at the tables to give our input I was so excited."

Fairview parent Cindy Kraft said she was disappointed more parents didn't come out for the session. "This is our future and these are our children," Kraft said. "This is very important. I wish more people would have come."

OBITUARIES

ELOISE D. TODD
Eloise Dickenson Todd, 88, of Farmington, died Sept. 24 at Beaumont Hospital. Mrs. Todd was an elementary school teacher and a homemaker. She was a member of Delta Zeta sorority, and St. Christopher/St. Paul Episcopal Church. She was an avid sports fan. She is survived by son, John (Linda). Funeral services were held Sept. 25, at McCabe Funeral Home in Farmington Hills. Memorial contributions can be sent to the Alzheimer's Association.

JAMES G. HANNA
James G. Hanna, 77, of Franklin Village, died Sept. 23 at Beaumont Hospital. Mr. Hanna was an engineer and a World War II Army Air Force veteran. During his service he received the Distinguished Flying Cross. He is survived by wife, Shirley; and one sister. Funeral services will be held at 11 a.m. Monday, Sept. 28, at McCabe Funeral Home in Farmington Hills. Visitation will be held from 2-4 p.m. and 6-9 p.m. Sept. 27.

POLICE AND FIRE NEWS

The following are police and fire incidents that occurred in Farmington and Farmington Hills during the past week.

THEFT
In Farmington Hills: Four laptop computers were reported stolen from Magna Interior Systems on Hallwood Court the night of Sept. 21-22. Someone stole \$53 cash from Infinity Salon on Grand River and Drake between Sept. 19-22.

A leather jacket, 100 CD's, men's wedding band, \$250 cash and tools from a unit in Flamingo Trailer Park between July 30-Aug. 12. The man living in the trailer died Aug. 12 and left the trailer unlocked, his mother told police.

An employee at T&T Clearing found someone stole his six Detroit Red Wings season tickets after a salesman from the club phoned to say someone else was trying to sell them to a prospective buyer Sept. 22. The buyer called the Red Wings to find out if the tickets were authentic before making the transaction. The 16 tickets in the lower bowl are \$65 each and worth \$1,040.

BURGLARY
In Farmington Hills: Police arrested two boys, 17 and 14, after two teens were confronted by the homeowner after they broke into a Crook Bend Drive residence around 3:35 p.m. Sept. 22. A 14-year-old boy and his mother were home when the teen received a call from another teen. He told the boy he was leaving and, 20 minutes later, the doorbell rang. When the family didn't answer, they heard someone come in through the kitchen door. The boy confronted the two teenage boys, striking one with a stick. The two boys ran off and met a third boy outside, peddling away on bikes. The 14-year-old boy knew the identity of two of the boys. Police apprehended the two boys while a third boy led them to the woods where a bag containing three game cartridges were found. The goods are believed to be from two burglaries at the same home Sept. 20 and 21. Burglars used a cinder block to break out a door's window to get

inside and steal a \$1,600 bottle of Remy Martin Louis XIII cognac and 800 cassettes of cigs worth \$2,000 between 12:55-1 a.m. Sept. 23 from Orchard Market Place on 13 Mile. A white four-door 1996 Chevy Lumina was seen in the area and at the scene of a similar burglary at party store on Farmington and 15 Mile roads in West Bloomfield around 12:30 a.m.

Someone broke a window but was unable to get inside the Radio Shack on Orchard Lake shortly after midnight Sept. 23. Two safety glass windows were broken in what appeared to be an attempted burglary, which caused \$800 damage.

Thieves stole a TV/VCR, typewriter and two AM/FM radios from the Diagnostic Center for Men on Orchard Lake Road the night of Sept. 23-24. An office door window was broken, but there were no other signs of forced entry. A computer was stolen from Pioneer Counseling Center on Orchard Lake Road the night of Sept. 23-24. There was no sign of forced entry.

SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES
In Farmington Hills: Police were called to Enterprise Leasing where a car was returned with two pairs of latex gloves and four rifle cartridges inside the trunk Sept. 24. Police asked that the 1997 Chevy Lumina not be leased out until Monday until more investigation can be done.

ASSAULT
In Farmington Hills: Police arrested a 36-year-old Farmington Hills woman after she rolled up the power windows on her car, trapping the right arm of her sister-in-law during an argument outside on Independence Sept. 22. The woman put the car in reverse and drove down the driveway with her sister-in-law's arm still trapped. She rolled down the window enough to let the victim remove her arm, which was scraped. The woman ran into her home when police tried to arrest her. Both women filed assault-and-battery complaints against each other

during the past few weeks, police reports said.

ANGER MISMANAGEMENT
In Farmington Hills: Police arrested a 42-year-old man after he became uncontrollable Sept. 22 at a group home on Medbury when a worker didn't give him money for cigarettes. The man, who has a closed-head injury from an auto accident, threw a wheelchair, upended a table and broke several ceramic flower pots after the worker told him he'd get him some cigarettes later. The man doesn't live in the group home but reports there as part of his independent living program. By the time police arrived, the man had calmed down and admitted he lost his temper.

ARSON
In Farmington Hills: Police believe a garbage can in a garage on Kingswood Square was deliberately set afire Sept. 22. Officers were able to put out the fire and remove the burning can from the garage. Witnesses said an 8-year-old boy was lighting papers in the garage earlier. However, the boy denied setting the fire.

DRUNKEN DRIVING
In Farmington Hills: Police arrested a 35-year-old Farmington Hills woman for drunken driving on a suburban 12 Mile near Plymway Court Sept. 23. The driver, who was also ticketed for having an open alcohol container in the car, had a blood alcohol level of 0.11 percent, which is slightly above the 0.10-percent level considered legally drunk in Michigan.

SHOPLIFTING
In Farmington Hills: Police arrested a 43-year-old Detroit woman for shoplifting, and she tried to conceal several bottles of cologne in a dress she took from a rack at Marshalls on Orchard Lake and 14 Mile Sept. 23. When confronted by store security, the woman walloped the employee with her purse with the cologne inside and threatened that she had a gun. Two unidentified customers came to the aid of the security person.

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