



STAFF PHOTO BY GAIL BARBER

Preparing: Linda Wilson of Books Abound in Farmington shelves books that students will use in the "Battle of the Books" competition.

## Get ready ...

# Middle school students dive into annual 'Battle of the Books'

BY TIM SMITH  
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Area bookstores and libraries are bracing for an onslaught of young, literary lovers.

Beginning Friday, Jan. 16 was the "Battle of the Books - Middle School Challenge," a reading incentive program for students in grades 8-8, sponsored by Farmington Friends of the

Library.

And, from Feb. 23 through March 29, Farmington Public Schools is sponsoring "Book Parade," geared for fourth and fifth grade pupils. (Titles for "Book Parade" won't be made available until Feb. 23, however.)

Bring on the readers, said Skip Rosenthal, owner of Books Abound in downtown Farmington, one of the stores currently stocking all 10 titles for "Battle

of the Books." The titles, mostly available for \$3.99 at Books Abound, must be completed by Tuesday, March 23, when semifinal rounds will be held at schools.

"We just like to see kids reading," said Rosenthal. "And anything we can do to cooperate, we do... This is a wonderful program."

He also isn't ashamed to admit there's a spinoff benefit for book-

stores, too - that kids get hooked early on the joy of buying and reading books, whether they are part of an incentive program or not.

This year's list for "Battle of the Books" includes the following titles:

- "The Apprenticeship of Lucas Whitaker," by Cynthia C. DeFelice;
- "Far North," by Will Hobbs;
- "The New Nick Kramer, or

- My Life As a Baby-Sitter," by James Howe;
- "The View From Saturday," by E.L. Konigsburg;
- "Ella Enchanted," by Gail Carson Levine;
- "After the War," by Carol Matas;
- "The Fear Place," by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor;
- "Brian's Winter," by Gary Paulsen;
- "Who's There?" by Stephanie

Tolan;

- "The Thief," by Megan Whalen Turner.

The books also can be checked out at the two branches of the Farmington Community Library, at 32737 W. 12 Mile Road in Farmington Hills (248-553-0309) or at 23500 Liberty Street in downtown Farmington (248-474-7770).

# Farmington High School recovers from water main break

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Rumpled up sheet music and a "rippled" gym floor are some of the reminders of the water main break over the holiday vacation at Farmington High School.

Other than that, and some water-ruined electrical instruments found last week in the high school music department, it's essentially business as usual, school officials said.

"They lost a very valuable collection of sheet music," said Farmington High principal John Barrett. "It's just a historical loss in one respect, and an inconvenience in another."

But matters could have been much worse had school custodial crews not responded as fast as they did to a building alarm, said Ron Aten, of the district's maintenance and operations department.

The crews rushed to the school on Sunday, Dec. 27, and quickly began removing much of the standing water, reducing the potential for long-term problems. Barrett said the cost to replace the sheet music and musical instruments will be about \$30,000, but that other damage estimates have not been finalized.

"Custodians did a great job," Aten said Wednesday. "It happened at 10 a.m. and they were there from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. getting the water out of there."

The sprinkler system leak

stemmed from bond issue construction at the high school. A temporary wall erected near the auditorium was not sufficiently insulated, "the cold came in and froze that pipe," Aten explained.

When it did, a rubber gasket used to fasten 4-inch-thick pipes

in the sprinkler system - built in 1970 - lost its grip and the pipes broke.

"After 28 years, that rubber gasket loses some of its elasticity," Aten said.

Gym classes and winter sports, such as basketball, continue

despite the uneven condition of the floor, said James Myers, executive director of K-12 student services.

Additional areas with water damage include the cafeteria, auditorium and corridors in the southeast part of the building.

Myers said.

"The biggest area (of damage) was the gym floor, which is cupped," Aten said. "You can refinish the (floor boards), but ... there's probably just one sanding left."

Conches told officials that the

condition of the basketball floor isn't poor enough to warrant canceling games or moving them to other facilities. Any repairs will have to wait until after the school year.

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