

# Farmington Observer

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## MEAP doesn't score

District officials were hoping more juniors would take the MEAP this year. But it appears the percentages will be only slightly higher than last year.

By TIM SMITH  
STAFF WRITER  
tsmith1@oe.hometown.com

High school juniors in the Farmington district - again - aren't exactly knocking the doors down to take the MEAP.

School officials had hoped last year's 16 percent participation rate was an aberration and that at least 60 percent would decide to take the Michigan Educational Assessment Program high school test.

But midway through the two-week test, indications were that participation was only slightly better this year.

"I'm simply angry," said Farmington Public Schools Superintendent Bob Masfield. "Oakland Schools area superintendents worked really hard to address parents' complaints ... and nothing happened."

Estimates for Monday, April 19, the first day of the test, were 13 percent for writing and 20 percent for math. About 20 percent took the second part of the writing test Tuesday, April 20, said Carolyn Mahalak of the district's assessment department.

Mahalak said participation ranged

Please see MEAP, A8

## He gives teens a voice

By LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER  
loconnor@oe.hometown.com

Teens now have a voice, says a Harrison High sophomore David Kinchen.

If they realized they do, "they'll learn to use it," Kinchen said.

Although a high school sophomore, Kinchen speaks up on a variety of teen issues in several ways. He hosts a cable access program, "Teen-Age," on Channel 8 and is a representative on the Farmington Area Commission on Children, Youth and Families.

Kinchen's largest platform, though, will come this week as one of three teens in the country to serve on a youth council for the National League of Cities.

On Friday morning, Kinchen left for Boston for the first meeting of NLC's Council on Youth, Education and Families, which is chaired by Boston Mayor Thomas Menino. Farmington Hills Mayor Pro Tem Nancy Bates is also on the council.

The council will look at various issues: school safety, getting teens politically involved and ways to incorporate them more into the family structure.

The council's first meeting coincides with the country's horrific tragedy involving teens in Littleton, Colo. "This only pushes our efforts," Kinchen said. "We have to learn more

Please see TEEN, A8



On tour: Kaitlin Risk and fellow seventh-grader Lindsay Dougherty do a "rain dance" during the tour of the rain forest at Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church. At right is guide Carly Tracey, an eighth-grader.

## Celebrate Earth Day everyday

By DIANE GALE ANDREASSI  
SPECIAL WRITER

During a two-day program celebrating Earth Day at Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic School, second-grade student Chris Horn vowed: "Whenever I'm drinking a juice box, I won't leave it outside anymore, because it's polluting."

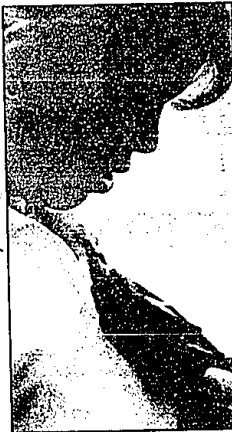
Horn was among some 900 students in kindergarten through eighth grades who took part in learning about rain forests, trying to understand how they can save animals that are on the verge of becoming extinct and tips on how to improve the environment.

Student guides took turns taking other students down a dimly lit hall replicating the lighting of an actual rain forest.

A black curtain began the tour complete with a forest canopy above, a range of flowers below and every imaginable rain forest inhabitant in between. And everything was hand-constructed and placed in the exhibit by the students.

Toucans and other birds were elaborately crafted by students with authentic beaks and colorful feathers; paper monkeys swung overhead; snakes slithered here and there; a 5-foot jaguar was ready to pounce and a 6-foot long alligator sat lazily at a waterfall while insects peeped the ground.

For a moment, students might have thought they were visiting a Disney park as guides pointed to and gave pertinent facts about the



Hold on: Lori Bussa of the Organization for Bat Conservation, holds a fruit bat from South America.

species. Vines of green construction paper chains contained a handwritten word on each loop, like "recycling," explaining how to help improve the environment.

Visitors were ushered into rooms to meet a costumed gorilla, also known as seventh-grader Chris Shilakee; and an elephant who came to life with the help of Chris Jones, who acted out what these animals would eat and how they would behave. Kaitlin Risk and Lindsay Dougherty

dressed as rain forest natives in grass skirts and war paint and gave tour groups a hearty rain dance that included decapitating a plastic foam bug replica.

At the end of the exhibit, students invited other students to take a sniff test of common scents, like tea, cinnamon and vanilla, that are found in rain forests.

"It was really fun and when you work together as a team you can achieve more goals," said Travis Aline, a fifth-grade student.

Along with the student exhibits, professional speakers from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, the Michigan United Conservation Club and the United Conservation of Bats gave live demonstrations with snakes, bats, turtles and mink; as well as a detailed discussion about wetlands during the learning extravaganza sponsored by the student council.

"Every student made something to contribute," said Carly Tracey, student council co-president with Emily Morris.

While working on the rain forest exhibit, Melanie Sabbagh, a fifth-grade student, said she began thinking about the animals that are in jeopardy of becoming extinct.

"Like the toucan, they're a beautiful bird and they're really hard to find," Sabbagh said. "This teaches you a lot about nature."

Joe Sema, a sixth-grade student, stressed the important role people

Please see EARTH, A8



One touch: Travis Alias and Melanie Sabbagh talk to first-graders about chimpanzees. Matthew Novak gives the chimp a hiss.

## A-MAY-ZING MOM

Moms ... they're amazing people. Granted, they can't leap buildings in a single bound or stop a speeding train like Superman, but when it comes to juggling the demands of work, home and their children ... Well, they're just amazing.

In recognition of their amazing status, the Observer Newspapers is looking for the most "A-May-Zing Mom," living in Livonia, Plymouth, Plymouth Township, Canton, Reedford, Farmington, Farmington Hills, Westland or Garden City.

In 60 words or less, tell us why your Mom is so amazing. Be sure to include her name, address, telephone number and a photograph as well as your name, address and telephone number.

Entries should be sent to Sue Mason, The winner "An A-May-Zing Mom" contest, announced in 35254 Schoolcraft, the Sunday, May Livonia 48150, by 9, edition of the no later than 5 p.m. Observer. She Friday, April 30.

will receive a complete makeover at Gerald's Salon in Northville Township, a \$200 ensemble from Bon-Loot in Northville and dinner for two (a \$50 value) at Ponte d'Amore Ristorante in Livonia.

And all eligible "A-May-Zing Mom" nominees will be recognized in the May 9 edition.

## WEEKEND

**Canceled: Heavy rains forced cancellation of Saturday's fifth annual fishing derby at the Rouge River.**

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## Residents want more pressure

By LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER  
loconnor@oe.hometown.com

At his Corn Street home, Gary Rimer said turning on the tap brings a lot of shake, rattle and roll.

Bill Haley's music is not the problem. His water pressure is too low, he said. "It makes the pipes rattle like hell," Rimer said. "You can't run a sink in the kitchen or flush the toilet. ... It won't pop the sprinkler heads."

Another Farmington Hills resident has experienced similar problems. Springbrook subdivision resident Glenn Jeffrey's water pressure was so bad he couldn't wash the suds off his dishes.

Jeffrey made phone calls to the Oakland County Drain Commission and Detroit Water and Sewer Department.

"All the questions must have made someone nervous. The water pressure went back to normal," Jeffrey said.

Rimer said his water pressure dipped to 30 pounds per square inch, or PSI. The required minimum is 35 PSI unless fire-fighters are tapping into hydrants, which lowers that standard to 20 PSI.

A two-story home should have at least 60

Please see PRESSURE, A7



## Join in: Festival of the Arts offers it all

By JOANNE MALISZEWSKI  
STAFF WRITER  
jmaliszewski@oe.hometown.com

You name the art form you are interested in and there's a pretty good chance you can get a taste of it during the week-long Festival of the Arts now open and running through Sunday, May 2.

Open to the public and free of charge, the festival is at the William Costick Activities Center on 11 Mile, east of Middlebelt.

The arts festival is a celebration of the more than 20 arts oriented organizations in the Farmington, Farmington

Hills community. It's also a chance for these organizations and their hard working members to shine, strut their stuff and encourage others to join in and participate.

A committee - with representatives from the arts organizations - coordinates the festival. Everyone has a job to do, including publicity, finance, volunteers, staging, performing groups,



senior citizen involvement and the "Starry Night" gala that kicked off the festival Saturday night.

"Everyone has been so harmonious and gracious," said Paul Barber, music education director at Farmington Public Schools and a member of the festival's planning committee.

"People have really come out to help and in every way," Barber continued. "It is wonderful to work in this kind of environment."

The arts festival was a natural happening. Consider that the Farmington Area Arts Commission annually presents its "Artist in Residence" and

"Distinguished Service to the Arts" awards, as well as the high school student art awards in April.

The Community Band also performs for seniors and handicapped guests in May. And the Farmington Artist Club has its Spring Art Show about the same time.

A festival was born. "We are trying to do good for the community," Barber said. "There is room for everybody at the festival."

The following is a schedule of events during the festival. Throughout the fes-

Please see ARTS, A7