

Farmington Observer & Eccentric

Volume 85, Number 97

Monday, September 23, 1974

Farmington, Michigan

26 Pages

Fifteen cents

School board approves lunch volunteers

By DIANE HUBEL

FARMINGTON—All elementary school children in the Farmington School District will be allowed to eat lunch at school if an effective volunteer noon aide program can be set up.

The proposal to allow establishment of volunteer lunch programs at each school passed 5-0, with William Gravis and Dr. Mervyn Ross abstaining. As part of the proposal, each school would have one paid noon aide for two hours a day.

Guidelines for the program were presented Thursday night to the school board by assistant superintendent of schools Lawrence Freedman.

Until such a program is established, children who live within the square mile boundaries of main roads and who regularly walk to school still will be required to walk home for lunch.

Parents of elementary school children have been upset since the school board changed its lunch time policy and began requiring some children to eat lunch at home.

The principals in the elementary

schools have been spending much time with parents, Freedman said.

MAKING EXCEPTIONS has been difficult, he said. Principals have found a deterioration in school-community relations because of the new lunch policy.

So, the administration is considering the feasibility of a volunteer program. Parents would be responsible for developing the program and presenting their plans, under guidelines set up by a special administration committee.

The principal and Freedman then would review and evaluate each program.

If a program did not succeed, the school would revert to the present policy.

The program is to be reviewed regularly by the principal for recommendations and improvements.

THE ADMINISTRATION said it would encourage the children to continue walking home for lunch. The teachers, it says, have seen an improvement in the afternoon atmosphere, since the children have been returning home.

Lenore Heimforth, who teaches at Kenbrook School, said in a letter, "May I express to you what a joy afternoon teaching has been, the past eight days?"

"Children have gone home for lunch. They have had an opportunity to vent their feelings, positive or otherwise, and then start the afternoon anew."

"At 12:30 the teachers are teaching. We are not compelled to take 15-20 minutes of academic time to arbitrate playground disputes that have occurred during the lunch hour. Children are returning to their jobs-school with a much more enthusiastic attitude toward learning."

Several schools already have begun to establish a volunteer program. Parents from Kenbrook, Middlebelt and Shiawassee schools said they have begun working on such programs.

"I THINK the volunteer program is highly desirable," said trustee Anne Struble. "It is good to have parents involved in the lunch program."

"The more people who come into the schools, the better the chances for

improved communications with the parents."

Some parents, teachers, however did not think a volunteer program would solve the problem.

Dale Haskins, a Middlebelt School parent, said the program contained many of the inequities the lunch policy contained.

The burden of volunteering probably would fall on those parents whose children live too far to walk home comfortably but too close to ride the bus, he said.

The volunteer program also does not consider that many of the children who must stay have working mothers who may not be able to volunteer, he added.

HASKINS ASKED the board to rescind its original decision requiring the children who live within the square mile boundaries and who walk to school to walk home for lunch.

He suggested the board conduct a survey to find out how many children suffer because they are required to walk home.

An engineer, Haskins did a time study which determined that a small

child should not be expected to walk more than three-fourths of a mile in the summer and no more than one-half mile in the winter.

His figures, he said, gave the child enough time to walk at the rate of 2.4 miles an hour and spend 20 minutes for lunch. He allotted time for taking off boots, coats and gloves and washing up.

"I am in sympathy with the board," he said, "I think they are trying to make the best of a difficult situation."

"However, I just feel that with a little more time and effort they may have been able to come up with a program which would not have alienated so many people."

Board trustee William Corliss read a statement from the Farmington Education Association (FEA) which said, "Unfortunately, the majority of the community appears to see little relationship between millage defeats and the quality of education offered to their children."

"PARENTS HAVE been to a large degree nurtured in this belief because

of the administration's and board's willingness to allow parent groups to buy back particular programs either via financial grants or volunteer labor. This formula is financially short sighted and provides inherently a double standard of educational opportunity for the district's children."

Trustee Ross suggested that the item be tabled to allow the board to consider it longer before adopting it.

"I was opposed to reducing the number of noon aides in the first place because it penalizes certain segments of the community who are gainfully employed, who live a relatively long distance from school, or who have an unsafe route to walk."

"These concerns still stand. If the volunteer program fails in a certain building, these factors would still be in effect."

"I think it needs further analysis to avoid any more of the anxiety and uproar we have experienced in the past two weeks."

Ross abstained at the vote, saying he was concerned about the ramifications of the program, but did consider it a start.

Bus drivers don't have a contract

By DIANE HUBEL

FARMINGTON—Fifty school bus drivers in the Farmington school district are currently working without a contract as the school board and the Farmington Bus Drivers Association continue negotiations which began in April.

Robert Coleman, director of labor relations for the school district, said the bus drivers have not bargained in good faith.

The bus drivers, he said, have escalated their demands over the summer.

According to Coleman, the two groups were less than five cents apart when they stopped negotiations in the middle of summer.

However, he said, when the negotiations resumed at the end of the summer the bus drivers had altered their demands, and were asking for higher wages than they had demanded previously.

THE BUS DRIVERS Association is seeking a pay raise that would put them on the same pay scale as truck drivers in the district.

The truck drivers who deliver the mail and equipment for the district received 31 cents an hour more than the bus drivers last year. They want their pay scale raised to a more equitable level.

Charlotte Van Wicklin, the head of the negotiating team for the bus drivers said, "As bus drivers we are required to do a great deal of physical work, loading and unloading trucks."

"We have offered them the highest three-year package we have ever offered a non-certified group," he said. "We are trying to be fair, but we have to work with the money we have available this year."

THE BUS DRIVERS are asking for \$4.65 an hour as the top wage, complete Blue Cross coverage, and a paid holiday, for the day after Thanksgiving.

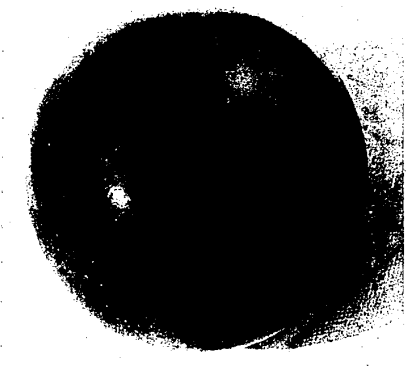
They also want to receive the same hourly wage for field trips as they do for their regular school runs.

"You know we have already lost two bus drivers this year," Mrs. Van Wicklin said. "They have gone to



Fall's here

The Floyd Howards have been growing apples at 26940 Halstead in Farmington since they were married 34 years ago. His work with grafting and developing new varieties results in examples like the near-perfect five-inch apple below, that is if he can avoid enemies like the one at left. A bumper crop is in and you can pick your own, according to Mrs. Howard. The farm is at the corner of Howard Rd. and Halstead near 11 1/2 Mile. (Photos by Fran Evert)



Observer & Eccentric Newspapers

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PLEASE RETURN REGISTRATION BY OCTOBER 1

Club members invited to publicity seminar

So you're the new publicity chairman for your club, group or organization and are leery about what's ahead during your year in office. How do you get information about Farmington and Southfield Observer & Eccentrics? When do you have to get press releases to the editors? What do you do about pictures?

Will the newspaper run a story in advance of a major promotion you are planning?

Now is the time to ease those worries.

The Farmington and Southfield Observer & Eccentric newspapers are planning a publicity-press-relations seminar Wednesday, Oct. 9.

IF YOU ARE interested, please fill out the attached entry blank and mail it to: Observer & Eccentric, P.O. Box 69, Southfield, Mich. 48075.

The session will be held in the new offices of the Southfield and Farmington newspapers at 22170 W. Nine Mile Road, Southfield, in the Plum Hollow Office Park. The office, which is immediately west of Lahser Road, is conveniently located for both Farmington and Southfield publicity chairmen.

The evening will be divided into three 30-minute periods for the news, photography and suburban life departments. Editors and staff members will discuss deadlines, how press releases should be written, what person to call with news tips and how to inquire about photographs.

This will be an opportunity to learn about the inner workings of your community newspaper. You will be able to meet with editors and reporters to learn how you can work together.

Perhaps the best part is it is free. Nothing is required except that you fill out the application and attend on Wednesday, Oct. 9.

Please send your application in early so you are sure to have a seat.

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