

How youngsters get acquainted with school



Mrs. Winnifred Voorhees, a media specialist at William Grace Elementary School, welcomes pre-schoolers with a listen-while-it-tells-you-a-story session as part of the kindergarten orientation program. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

By RON GARBINSKI

As a new school year approaches, the Farmington School District reaches to welcome more exploring young minds into the educational system.

Each year around the beginning of April, the district prepares to enroll another group of school-age youngsters into its 17 elementary schools.

Before the children actually become students, however, they go through an orientation session that introduces them to the classroom setting.

We have a pre-kindergarten orientation program here at William Grace that gets the children used to coming to school before they start the following year, says Grace Principal Nicholas Abid.

We do this basically so the children spend five or eight days in their rooms when it comes time for them to leave home and start kindergarten on a regular basis," he explains.

We run down with the parents what's available for the students and also for themselves.

A LOT OF parents don't know what schools have to offer their children. So we give them an opportunity to realize what type of services we can provide. Abid notes.

William Grace, for example, offers a five-week pre-kindergarten orientation program for both the children and their parents.

The program gives youngsters an opportunity to experience typical kindergarten activities on a part-time basis.

These story-time sessions at Grace last for about 30 minutes on Friday mornings.

While children participate in the mini-classes, parents participate in parent-teacher sessions with learning and resource specialists.

It's quite a good program because the parents have a chance to talk with the different specialists each time they come to one of the sessions," Abid explains.

It gives both the parent and child time to discuss what they will be doing and what will happen once they enter school.

At Grace we project an enrollment of about 50 kindergarten students for next year," he says. So we must prepare them for several new experiences.

Grace Elementary is not alone in offering a pre-school orientation program for potential students.

Every elementary school in the district offers such programs.

DISTRICT POLICY calls for each school to set aside one-half day for pre-school orientations.

Most elementary schools in the district take advantage of the situation and provide the incoming student with a thorough introduction to the school program.

Generally, the district tries to show pre-schoolers coming into the system what activities they will be doing once they enter school, says Larry Friedman, assistant superintendent of elementary education for the Farmington district.

We try to make the children comfortable in the classroom and help them understand what goes on. At the same time, we attempt to understand the special needs of the child," he continues.

The districtwide pre-school orientation

program varies from building to building. Some schools like Grace have longer programs. Other schools have shorter sessions or a different format of activity for children.

The standard orientation session in the district is where parents get together with teachers to discuss problems and programs, while students get together in their own groups to learn about school," Friedman says.

Many programs change from year to year as principals develop new methods or change the way programs operate at their respective schools, he explains.

At Eagle Elementary, for example, the PTA handles the kindergarten orientation program over several weeks.

IT IS ALSO a matter of what the individual school wants to provide," Friedman says. Depending on their facilities, the principals can do almost anything they want.

But the important thing to remember is that children must be comfortable in the school setting. This is what the district tries to do—have the children get to know the school and realize that it can be comfortable once inside.

The district is flexible when it comes to the pre-school orientation program. There are resource specialists at each school and they are always available to the parents.

So if a parent has some concern that wasn't answered at any of the orientation sessions, they can go to any of the specialists and get an answer. Friedman concludes.

Bucket Brigade mothers use own manipulative devices while tutoring

By LYNN ORR

Dorothy Sharp, on a part-time basis, searching for a partner. (Sharp is 16, lives in a Sesame Street maze, and is a member of the Bucket Brigade.)

But that's not the use for more than 10 Farmington volunteers who tested their creative powers at a Bucket Brigade workshop in the Farmington Hills Library.

Dorothy Sharp, learning disability consultant to the Farmington district reading program, coordinated the semi-annual workshop where mother-volunteers copied and invented games to aid in their tutoring of elementary students who need extra help.

When mothers use their own manipulative material, they bring greater understanding to their tutoring, says the staff.

Bucket Brigade also stresses a volunteer project. Funding comes only from parent groups.

EXPLAINING THE "Bucket Brigade" concept, Mrs. Sharp says, "It's a matter of taking the child's own material and using it to help them learn."

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AS A VOLUNTEER of the Michigan Association for Children with Learning Disabilities (MACLD), Mrs. Sharp has traveled more than 25,000 miles in 19 states to make "travel" presentations.

She will spend two weeks in California in August she will coordinate a workshop for the International Convention for Learning Disabilities.

This year's goal is to expand Bucket Brigade through sixth grade. All Farmington elementary schools use the program with the exception of Title One schools, which are federally funded for additional help.

More than 200 out of the 800 school districts in Michigan use the program, and Mrs. Sharp hopes that number will increase. She recently made a video tape of her presentation that the MACLD will use throughout the state.

Working in her role as a volunteer, Mrs. Sharp says, "Whatever little glimmer of light you see is worth all the hours that are spent."



Grace speech pathologist Mrs. Terri Crane discusses with parents of potential kindergarten students what it will be like when their children enter elementary school for the first time. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)



Discussing the effects of the bucket brigade concept are (from left) Joyce Brown, of Middlebelt school, Dorothy Sharp, Farmington learning disability consultant and Kathy Erditz, consultant for the Washburn Intermediate School District. (Photop by Glenn Tinnam)

Wyatt named Masonry head

James C. Wyatt, 1225 Canton Road in Farmington Hills, has been appointed executive director of the Detroit Masonic Lodge Association.

He replaces John Heston, who will continue as executive director of the Masons Institute of Michigan.

Wyatt has held executive positions with the Carrier Lumber Company and Detroit Lumbermen's Association. He has more than 30 years of management experience in the construction industry.

In making the announcement, association President Stanley Dierksen stated this appointment has been made to meet the ever increasing needs of the association in the areas of labor relations and management development for Mason Contractors in southeastern Michigan.

Wyatt is married and has three children. He has attended the University of Cincinnati, Xavier University and Wayne State University.



JAMES C. WYATT

Student is on the job

Among the 41 engineering students from Michigan Tech. who are participating in the summer program while learning program is Kevin D. Sheehan of Farmington Hills.

Sheehan, a junior majoring in mining engineering, is spending his summer with the Detroit City of Detroit. He is working on a project for the city.

The program enables students to gain insight into their vocational choices so they can decide where their actual job interests are. The opportunity to earn while learning is another benefit of the program.

Sheehan is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Gerald D. Sheehan, 3182 Nottingham.

LAST WEEK FOR THE EASTER BUNNY and a chance to help the EASTER SEAL SOCIETY!

This is the last week to meet the Easter Bunny and receive a FREE Sander chocolate bunny! Brilliant color photos are available in attractive folder for \$2.50—with a portion of the proceeds going to the Wayne County Easter Seal Society.



THE EASTER BUNNY MEETS A FAN...

Pictured with Bunny is one of his biggest little fans, the American and Canadian Champion English Bulldog, Huffy Snowman. Huffy is being shown about 125 of his friends, who will be at Livonia Mall Friday and Saturday, April 19 & 20 for the Pure Breed Dog Demonstration—sponsored by the Dog Breeders Registry of Michigan.

MEET WWJ PERSONALITIES:



SONNY ELIOT at the Mall Wednesday 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.



BOB ALLISON Thursday 2-4 p.m. LAKERS MALL, 4000 W. 13 MILE RD. LAKESIDE, MI 48065



OOPSY THE CLOWN at the Mall Saturday 12-2 p.m.

SHOW FOR CHILDREN!

Giant-Screen, Fun Musical about Easter

Thursday, April 15th—7:00 p.m.

(One Hour showing will be in the Sears Court)

Presented by the Brightmoor Tabernacle

TALK TO THE ANIMALS—

See, close up, the elephants, tigers, camels and other animals from Circus World, Wisconsin in the Southwest corner of Livonia Mall's parking lot—Tuesday through Saturday. These are the Animals that star in the Shrine Circus!

LIVONIA MALL

7-Mile at Middlebelt

Open Daily 'til 9:00 p.m.

Sunday Noon 'til 5:00

