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Gifted kids' program faces public scrutiny

By LYNN ORR

Farmington School District's intellectually gifted program will be under the gun next year, according to Trustee Dr. Mervyn Ross.

Although the board of education voted 5-1 to implement this summer a \$87,000 K-9 intellectually gifted program, residents and faculty members expressed concern about the program at last week's meeting.

Reacting to the two-hour discussion,

Ross initiated the motion to approve the program, warning administrators that the program would be carefully watched next year by the community.

Trustee William Gravius cast the dissenting vote.

"Although I am very much in favor of this program, I do not want to adopt a program that will eliminate an ongoing program or eliminate a child from the program," Gravius said.

LOOSELY BASED on the current academically able pilot programs in six elementary schools and Warner and East junior highs, the intellectually gifted program is geared for students with an IQ of 132 and above.

"There has been no real standard criteria for identifying gifted students and a great deal of difference in the number of students selected at the schools," said Graham Lewis, Director of Special Education Services who

presented the new program to the board.

"The only category addressed was the intellectually gifted," Lewis noted. "Areas of outstanding ability in the arts, leadership, athletic prowess, etc. would be subject to another review. These could be adjuncts to the program at a later date."

The same criteria, individually-administered tests of students referred by teachers, parents or the students themselves, would be used in all

school buildings, he said.

An educational planning and placement committee (EPPC), established at each school for special education and learning disability students, would take on the task of preparing an individualized plan for each student identified as intellectually gifted. Lewis expects that about two percent or 280 Farmington School District students will qualify for the program.

Trustee Helen Prutow expressed

concern that school psychologists and EPPC committees might be overtasked in assuming responsibilities for the program.

"Psychologists often say they are overworked," Prutow said. "Yes, they can do it; and no, they are not overworked," Lewis responded. "It's up to the committee to make the demands on the individual persons. Right now we don't have any

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Ralph and Fran Evert discuss their plans to move to Gaylord. The town's photographic duo want to pursue fishing rather than that perfect print. (Staff photo by Harry Mauths)

First family of photography

Ralph, Fran pulling up stakes

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Fires, ethnic festivals, auto accidents or a beauty contest are sure to become targets for the camera's recording eye.

A Farmington area event could hardly be called official if Ralph or Fran Evert and their cameras were absent. Perched precariously on a chair or walking around the scene in an effort to capture another slice of life, the Everts worked their way into the communities' hearts as indelibly and quietly as light works to etch an image onto film.

Soon, all of that will change for the

Everts and the two cities they knew and photographed. The couple has decided to leave the area and retire to a cottage near Gaylord.

Ethnic festivals will be enjoyed, beauty queens crowned and life will continue in Farmington without an Evert-originated record of the event. Ralph, who retired from the photographic service last year, is looking forward to enjoying the boat that's stood idle in their backyard for seven years.

Fran's anxious to mend the broken fish she sustained while photographing the ethnic festival at the Community Center. She wants to throw away

her crutches and enjoy snowmobiling and skating in Gaylord.

IN THE MEANTIME they took some time out to reflect on the changes that they've seen as the township grew into a city.

"It was all country and it was beautiful," said Fran. "It says Farmington Township on our insurance policy and now it looks funny. We've watched it grow around here. Churches and higher learning have come into the area. We used to be able to see across Eleven Mile into Springbrook Subdivision.

"Things change. It's progress. What can we do about it?" she asked. "Farmington's growing a little too

fast for me," added Ralph, 63. "I wish it could remain a small town. I like it quiet."

Both remember when a fox could walk down their subdivision road, and when constables were required to pull cows out of the way of I-96 traffic.

"We had to get those cows off the road on Sunday afternoon when people were coming from Kensington," said Ralph, who was a township constable.

"It's a job moving cows. You better believe it. You grab her by the tail and twist it. She'll move, then," he said.

IN THOSE DAYS auto accidents provided some excitement for the police and residents and Ralph photographed them for the police.

"Automobile accidents were the most exciting things at the time," he said. The Everts began taking pictures for the area police in 1944. A collision on Eleven Mile and Orchard Lake resulted in a charge of double negligent homicide and the police used Ralph's photo.

Since then they've worked for three owners of the Farmington Enterprise and eight editors at the Observer as well as continuing their work for the police.

Working for different persons in newspaper and other assignments is preferred by the Everts.

"When you work for many people it's better. It's bad business to have all your eggs in one basket," explained Fran.

"Never go out into a boat without a life preserver," added her husband of 37 years.

Some of their assignments have been more pleasant than others. Fran rates taking pictures of Kelly Curly for the police during the murder case several years ago as her most distasteful task.

"But even there, you're doing a service to the community. You're helping the police," she explains.

CHILDREN ARE her favorite subjects.

"They're so natural and unassuming," she said as she sat in her medium-sized kitchen.

Architecture and machinery rank as her husband's favorite subjects.

"I like getting everything lined up and squared off when I'm taking a picture of a machine. And a building doesn't complain about how it looks afterward," he explained.

Complaints from adult subjects about their looks have long been an occupational hazard to Ralph, who started his photographic career by tak-

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Culprit is captured

This indignant peacock starred last week in the Farmington Observer when the stars turned up our readers for some help in identifying him. Five letters and 15 phone calls later, it looked like the cities knew a peacock when they saw one. For a look at our feathered mystery guest at home, turn to Page 3A. (Staff photo by Harry Mauths)

Ralls blasts Bill

Gubernatorial hopeful stumps

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Southfield attorney William Ralls is plotting his campaign to replace William Milliken as governor in 1978 by asserting that idealism and political know-how can be used together to solve the state's problems.

Speaking before the Farmington Democratic Club recently, Ralls charged Milliken with neglecting to take a stance on the energy situation. Problems of aging, changing the method of school financing and ever-increasing utility rate hike demands are yet to be resolved, according to the candidate.

Ralls, 38, the lone Democrat on the Michigan Public Service Commission until his recent resignation, says his experience on the utility panel will help him attack the state's energy problems more vigorously than Milliken.

His 1973 energy package was virtually ignored until the oil embargo and Nixon's dramatization of the fuel shortage, according to Ralls.

"The governor of our state is usually a me-too governor. He listens to what other leaders want to do then decides what he will do in a watered down version," Ralls said.

IN RESPONDING TO the energy crisis of 1973, Milliken evoked "unecessary" emergency martial-law powers, according to Ralls, who would have preferred the energy commission to have broader powers. "We would have been in a better position now if the energy commission had been more than a rubber stamp



WILLIAM RALLS

for Milliken," he said.

As a member of the Public Service Commission since 1971, Ralls lists among his accomplishments a more equitable system of determining utility rates. He criticizes the failure of the state to resist the utilities' repeated requests for rate increases.

"Now energy is rated on a flat per unit basis. We've eliminated the unnecessary incentive to use energy," said Ralls.

"But it's been guerrilla warfare getting these reforms," he said. "There is a Republican unwillingness to tackle the hard problems of the future."

He claims to be responsible for ending the practice of charging young

customers a deposit before allowing them to use the utility.

CONSUMERS ARE PUT into the position of picking up the tab for the utility company's mistakes, according to Ralls.

"Edison shouldn't pass on the cost of the Fermi plant to its consumers," he said, referring to the non-operational nuclear power plant in Monroe. "The company's management should pay for its mistakes, not the consumers."

If the financial burden for mistakes is taken from the consumer and placed on management, the utilities will be forced into better corporate practices, according to Ralls.

On other matters, Ralls advocates a change in the state's method of financing school programs.

"The property tax as a basis for financing education is an antiquated system. It has a continuing role to play, but it can't be the complete method of financing education," he said.

"We have a constitutional and human commitment to provide education to each child in the state. The way we treat the aged and children says something about the state," he said.

Ralls has yet to formulate an alternative to the property tax as a financial basis for the schools or a state-wide program for the elderly.

He commends the countywide program which enables elderly shoppers to receive discounts at the discretion of participating stores.