



Hanging out in Shiawassee Park, searching for friends and activity is one way Farmington area teens have of curing those summertime blues. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)



Teens combat summer blues, search for something to do

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

In the afternoons, vacationing high school students and some of their junior high friends fill the time by getting in a game of pinball at one of the arcades in the Farmington area. By evening, they will have moved to the parking lot of a 7-11 store to meet their friends and find out what's available for them to do that night.

Most of them came to the conclusion long ago that there are precious few places for them to go in either city.

Pinball, bicycling and swimming serve to fill the time. Eventually, after several weeks, those pastimes lose their freshness and by mid-August most of the vacationing high school students are ready to call it a summer and return to their books.

Their older brothers and sisters have outgrown that solution and end up conducting a year-long search for places that welcome the young.

"THERE'S NOTHING TO DO in Farmington," said one 17-year-old. His complaint was reiterated by a group of 18-19 year-olds at Shiawassee Park, Farmington.

Their complaints elicit only slight sympathy from some members of the Farmington Police Department.

"When I was a kid, we had nothing to do, too," said Farmington Police Lt. John Santamuro. "The question is should the municipality provide things for them to do. The Farmington Area Recreation Commission makes an honest effort to provide things for them. I think they've taken steps to rectify the situation," he said.

While the FARC offers activities to the area most of the younger residents were unaware of them.

Adults who agree with the young residents about the lack of recreational opportunities in the area are at the same time reluctant to see their tax dollars go into building recreational facilities.

"There's not much for them to do," agreed Glen Kealy, owner of a Farmington Hills pinball arcade. "The city doesn't have anything for them."

"There's swimming, but that gets old. Anything else and they have to have cars to get to it," said Kealy, 25.

While those who are old enough to drive usually have transportation, their younger counterparts are left to hoof it, bike or beg for ride, according to Kealy.

KEALY HESITATES to advocate city sponsored recreational facilities.

"If my taxes are paying for it, I'm not worried about it (the lack of recreation). When we were kids we found something to do and kept busy all day," he said.

Some manage to keep themselves

busy and have suggestions as to how the city can help.

Pinball, visiting fast food restaurants, the Pontiac Wave Pool, bicycling, swimming, tennis, baseball and basketball are some of the solutions to the summer doldrums that Carrie Conn, 13, of West Bloomfield and Jan Travioli, 13, of Farmington Hills, are using.

"Don't forget rollerskating. It's great," said Jan.

Other summer pleasures included going to the movies and drinking "Slurpees," frozen pop, at the local 7-11.

Both girls greeted the idea of a recreation center with enthusiasm. Ping pong, swimming and pinball ought to be offered by the city, they said.

One problem they've met is transportation. Usually they bike to where they want to go.

"I use my bike all the time. I couldn't last without it. My friends don't have cars," Carrie said.

GOLFING, BOWLING and watching things grow are some of Lance Merrell's favorite summer pastimes.

Farmington Hills ought to establish more bike paths and build a skateboard park, according to Merrell.

A city owned golf course would take the financial sting out of perfecting that backyard, Merrell added.

Parties were left out of the list. "There are hardly any parties. They start when school starts," he said.

His pinball partner, Kevin Hastings, 17, deplored the situation for his age group's recreational opportunities.

"Things are pretty lousy for people under the age of majority," he said. "There's nothing to do. There's no place around here like a park for the kids to gather."

Farmington has such a park but the group that meets there is comprised of older teens between 18-19, who meet their friends there after work.

Unlike their younger counterparts, they're less receptive to the idea of a recreation center and organized activities.

"Oh, that won't work," one young woman said. "And if they put a pool table in there, there'd be fights."

"Dancing, pinball, that's for the younger generation two years behind us," added another young woman.

BASEBALL WAS A POPULAR SOLUTION TO THE summer boredom but the group found themselves competing for Shiawassee Park's diamonds with organized players.

"Even if we wanted to come down here on Sunday for some softball, we couldn't. If the clubs come here, they kick us off," said Dave Wellbaum, 18, of Farmington.

Drinking beer in the park, playing frisbee, listening to rock blaring from a car stereo and going to a movie rate as the usual ways to spend a warm summer evening after work.

"They ought to legalize beer in the park. Not liquor or anything. This is a place for people to come down and meet other people. People who work all day wouldn't mind having a beer here," he said.

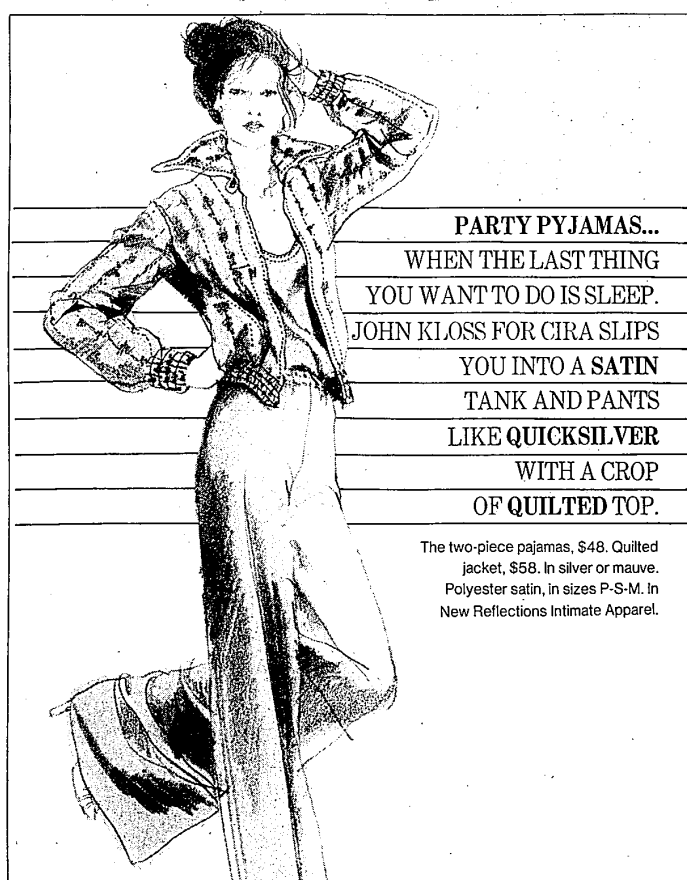
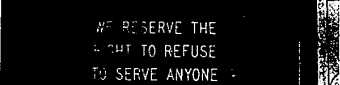
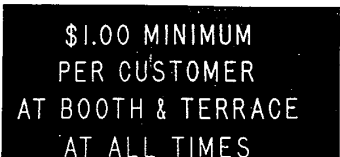
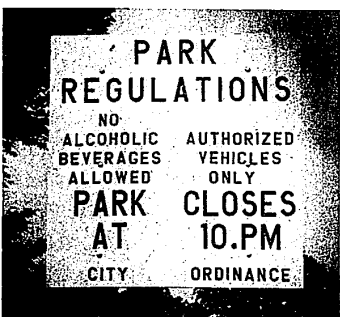
"It's cheaper than going to a bar every night," said a 16-year-old. "But the police come at kick you out every night at 10 o'clock."

Some of the regulars see inequities in the way the park's ban on alcohol is enforced.

"My parents come down here for a picnic and they drink beer in the park," said Cindy Cazorla, 19, of Farmington.



School closings decreases the number of places students can go. While classrooms and gyms stand empty, (above left and bottom), pinball arcades are ready to receive summer visitors (top right).



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Signs greet youngsters wherever they gather. At the pinball arcade (top left), automatic tabulators let them know their score. At restaurants and parks (top and bottom right), signs again let youngsters know the score.