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Truants

Educators reach out to troubled students

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Administrators and principals in Farmington high schools are sharing a problem with their counterparts in cities throughout the country — students who skip class.

During the school year, three to five per cent of the students are absent from classes at one time or another.

Conferences with parents and counselors are used to convince the consistently absent students to re-evaluate their attendance. If the pattern reaches an extreme, the school system can take court action to enforce attendance and parent attention.

That solution rates as the least popular among Farmington administrators and principals but they contend that it does have its uses. Their attitude contradicts a recent Wayne County Circuit Court ruling that the court has no jurisdiction over cases involving compulsory school attendance.

Oakland County school administrators, such as Farmington schools Asst. Supt. Lynn Nutter still can resort to court intervention in extreme cases.

"IT'S MORE of an assistance to the school as I saw it," said Nutter, harking back to his days in the Wayne County system.

A court order taking drastic action—such as sending a student for a day to Children's Village, a county juvenile detention center—can help to shake up both parents and students and awaken them to the problem, according to Nutter.

However, Nutter and other Farmington area educators are more willing to resort to other methods of coping with reluctant students.

"It's the last resort to ask them to leave school," said Nutter.

If the student has a poor attendance record, he or she might be asked to stay away from school for two or three days before a conference with the student, parents and counselors.

Suspension from school is "not a great technique," according to Supt. Lewis Schulman.

"We've never expelled a kid from school for it," he said.

He and other administrators try to take a less forceful tact against chronic truants. "Anyone can be a truant," explained Farmington High School Principal Jerry Potter. "It crosses social and class barriers. There are a whole lot of factors involved."

THERE ARE SOME common factors which vary in their degree of seriousness, added Harrison High School Asst. Principal Jack Buller. "There's usually a lack of success all through school. It's not a lack of intelligence," said Buller.

The problem cuts across economic barriers and centers upon how comfortable the student feels in the class.

"It doesn't matter which side of town they're from. Who wants to go to something where it will be a negative thing?" Buller said of students who are unsuccessful.

Students sometimes will skip classes because they find a particular teacher difficult or their friends manage to gather together at a certain hour of the day, according to Buller.

For others, who are more dis-

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Sledding: Timeless fun

While cross-country skiing is fast becoming the "in" outdoor recreational sport, the old-fashioned world of hayrides and sleighrides has lost little of its luster—at least at Hayride Lodge, east of Rochester. The family-run lodge stables eight team horses, including Bonnie and

Clyde (above), and 15 other four-legged hoofers. A ribbon-winning Welsh pony named Diablo is one of the lodge's most popular attractions among youngsters. (Staff photo by Doug Bauman).

Dolan seeks legislative unity

By STEVE BARNABY
Farmington editor

Unifying a diverse city council, working with the community's business interests and pushing for the construction of senior citizen housing are some of the goals cited by newly elected Farmington Hills Mayor Jan Dolan.

Mrs. Dolan, who has served on the council since 1975, is the second woman to serve as the city's mayor. She takes the reins from Joan Dudley, who retired last month.

Second in command is Councilmember Joanne Smith. The two will serve as legislative leaders for the council which, for the first time in its history, is dominated by women, 4-3.

Optimism is the word which best exemplifies her attitude at the beginning of her one year term, said Mrs. Dolan, who is a real estate dealer.

"I realize that we have a diverse group of individuals on this city council. But, I believe the diversity exists

over just one issue," she said, referring to the division on the council over special zoning for senior citizen housing.

"But, I am hopeful that we will work together well on the majority of the other issues," she said.

TO PROMOTE a good working relationship, Mrs. Dolan hopes to establish informal public study sessions where council members can discuss issues. Because of the council's heavy work schedule, with some meetings lasting until 1-2 a.m., philosophical issues discussions tend to get swept under the rug, she said.

Comingling relationships with the business community also is high on the new mayor's agenda. With this in mind, the council will meet with the Farmington Chamber of Commerce on Jan. 30.

"Business is a big part of our community. We need business so homeowners won't be stuck with paying such high taxes."

During the past, said Mrs. Dolan, the relationship between some of the city's businesses and the various departments at city hall has been less than desirable.

PRIVATE industry and its participation holds big sway in the Mayor's view of a city fulfilling its obligation to residents. She would like to see business become active in the senior citizen housing in Farmington Hills.

"I would rather see private developers handle senior citizen housing. They are efficient in dealing with such matters," she said.

Presently, the senior citizen zoning issue is up in the air because a petition has been presented to the city calling for an election in November on the issue. The petitions legality is being examined by the state's attorneys general office in Lansing.

"But we must move ahead on this issue. Senior citizens can't afford to wait. They need the housing," she said.



JAN DOLAN

Mrs. Dolan, who also is a board member of Botsford-Zeiger Hospital, has been active on the beautification commission and is a member of the National Farm and Garden Club.

Sister cities sign parks agreement

City of Farmington residents will still have the opportunity of sharing recreational facilities and programs with neighboring Farmington Hills, but it's going to cost them nearly \$20,000 in 1978.

That's the word from city hall this week after the city council decided to contract with the Hills for recreational services. City governmental officials had considered going elsewhere to provide residents with recreational needs after Farmington Hills pulled out of the Farmington Area Recreation Commission (FARC) last year and formed its own parks and recreation division.

Under FARC, Farmington had representatives on the board who determined recreational plans for the area. Now it must purchase those services with very little, if any, say in the matter.

"We believe the current arrangement of purchasing recreational services from Farmington Hills is working well," said Farmington City Mgr. Robert Deadman. "Their (the Hills) recreation department is providing a large variety of program offerings as well as coordination for many of the local children's and adult athletic associations."

Total expenses for the program in the two-city area are \$32,000. After investigating the feasibility of providing its own recreational services, Farmington decided it would be less expensive to Farmington Hills.

The \$20,000 expenditure represents about 17 per cent of the difference between program revenues and the

cost of providing services for city residents.

All capital outlay items and park maintenance items were deleted from the budget before calculating each city's share of the cost of an assessed valuation formula, said Deadman.

Officials on both sides of the cities' borders agree the contractual arrangement is convenient because residents have become accustomed to using the Farmington school facilities and the City Park on Shawwassee and Power for recreation.

Highway is discussed

Tired of the traffic jam at the Grand River, Ten Mile and Halstead intersection?

Persons disgruntled with that renowned situation can make their way to Farmington Hills City Hall on Jan. 10, 4-8 p.m., and tell a special task force composed of officials from Oakland County, the Michigan State Highway Department and Farmington Hills.

The task force has been studying the problem and has designed three alternative plans to relieve the congestion caused from the narrow lanes, increased traffic load and commuters getting on and off the expressway.

Hills agenda set for meet tonight

Following is the Farmington Hills city council agenda for tonight's meeting to be at 8 p.m. in city hall, 31555 Eleven Mile, corner of Orchard Lake.

Items under new business to be discussed are:

- Appointments to boards and commissions.
- Consideration of request from Norman Adelsberg and Mike Watzman for a new dance permit to be held in conjunction with 1977 Class C licensed business, located at 2905 Nine Mile.

- Consideration of Ward Atkinson and William Baloh to appear before the city council in reference to the new full year Class B hotel license with dance permit and two bars to be located at 38400 Grand River.

- Consideration of preliminary plat approval for Hunters Pointe Subdivision, Section 5-271 lots-PUD. Request by Roy Russell.
- Consideration of extending land fill

permit in Farmington Freeway Industrial Park number 2, lots 36 and 38.

- Consideration of selecting an architect for Fire Station number 4.
- Consideration of adopting resolution to extend the deadline for business licenses until Jan. 31, 1978.

- Consideration of establishing a special assessment district for Linden Street, from Middle Belt west for sanitary sewer.

- Consideration of granting easement to Detroit Edison at Middle Belt and I-696.

- Consideration of sanitary sewer easement (Ten Mile Rouge Sanitary Drain) to the Oakland County Drain Commissioner.

Also appearing on tonight's agenda are a number of city ordinance enactments concerning zoning changes.

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4-H IS REBORN

Once upon a time, 4-H was for country cousins who were interested in raising their own calf or making meals from scratch. But times and the 4-H have changed. For a look at the new 4-H, turn to page 7A.



Truancy remains a problem for parents and school administrators. One of the reasons a student decides to quit attending class is to avoid an unpleasant situation with a teacher. (Staff photo by Gary Friedman)

Final training session set for Helping Hands

Farmington's "Helping Hands" program has swelled to the tune of nearly 300 parent volunteers in recent months, thanks to successful training sessions sponsored by the Farmington Parent-Teacher Association council.

About 276 persons thus far have attended the sessions, in which Farmington area police officers go over the ground rules on how to best help youngsters in need of aid.

The final training session is scheduled for 7-30 p.m., Wednesday at Our Lady of Sorrows gymnasium, located on Shawwassee and Power.

Lt. John Santomero of the City of Farmington Public Safety department, and officers Linda Harris and Richard Murphy of the Farmington Hills police juvenile division, will conduct the training session.

The officers will concentrate on how to assist a child in trouble, notifying the police, and paying attention to what the child says.

"THIS IS a wrap-up for those who were unable to attend on one of the previous meetings," says PTA council

member Peggy Volk. Residents of Farmington and Farmington Hills are welcome to attend, she adds.

Helping Hands volunteers are expected to be home during the hours children are traveling to and from school. A Helping Hand poster is placed in the volunteer's window, so children know the home is a safe place to seek help.

The volunteer's priority job is to notify the police, who will in turn notify parents.

While both Farmington and Farmington Hills police have recorded few accidents of accosting and molesting, the officers believe strongly in the importance of preparing children for such occurrences.

A parallel to the program being conducted in Farmington area schools is film screenings warning of the danger in going with strangers. Elementary children also have been instructed to look for Helping Hands posters, so they know where to go if they can't get home and they're in some kind of trouble.