

For OTI students

Parents fear educational quality decrease

By LOUISE OKERTERY

Farmington parents of Oakland County Training Institute (OTI) students fear their children won't receive the same programs as they do now when a branch of the school moves into the Farmington Junior High School facility.

The Farmington School Board unanimously approved a 15-year contract Friday night, to rent the former school's space to the special education institution.

OTI is a facility for trainable mentally handicapped persons 14 to 25-years-old who live in Oakland County.

The contract doesn't give OTI exclusive use of the junior high, says William Prisk, district business manager.

"We're obligated to rent space, but not in that particular school," he says. "We have moved other programs to other schools when we needed the space."

The district will retain use of the gym and the second floor at the old facility which was closed permanently last month by the school board.

THE OAKLAND County Schools admin-

istration agreed in April to negotiate contracts with the four districts which were served by OTI to operate branches of the center in their districts. These communities were Farmington, Pontiac, Waterford and Lapeere.

Decentralization was designed to provide additional space and easier accessibility to students, say Oakland district officials.

But local parents have expressed concern that the centers won't have a program equal to the one students received before decentralization.

"Philosophically, the center won't be changed," explains Trustee Gary Lichtman, who also was an Oakland County Schools Board member involved in the countywide decision.

It will use materials from OTI and will be staffed by one superintendent, eight teachers, eight teachers aides, one occupational therapist and one physical therapist, according to Lichtman.

About 20 members of the OTI Parents Club from Farmington have protested the children travelling too far to get to the center, club president Desmond Whisman says.

"We agree with their position. Our kids do travel too far. My son travels 13 hours. We need a school in the area. Historically, we have fought for programs in the area," he continues.

"OUR PROBLEM as parents is one of advocacy. We want our children to be receiving the same programs as they do now," Whisman says.

It is obvious that the centers aren't going to be equal," says Aldo Vagstad,

president of the Farmington area Democratic Club. "This isn't decentralization under OTI. This is dismantling a county program."

"The voters were sold on the idea that special education is best administered on a county basis. The Oakland School's administration is trying to divert itself of the program."

Barbara Dineen, a dissident parent from Farmington, supports decentralization. "Decentralization is a must. My son

rides the bus three hours per day. I was notified of my son's placement at a center, but found out a week later, that he had been transferred," she explains.

"I would ensure that my child will get the same program in Farmington. Will they have bowling, swimming and gym programs?"

Mrs. Mary Macowski of Farmington asked. "I'm concerned over the use of the gym. While the gym wasn't rented to OTI, dis-

trict Superintendent Lewis Schulman assured the parents present that there will be two large rooms that will be used as a gym."

"The gym is too large for the student," special education director Lewis Graham explained. "The two large music rooms are ideal for our program."

Since Farmington Junior High School doesn't have a pool, arrangements are being made for the students to swim at another facility, Prisk said.

Ride 'em cowboys come to Festival

The fourth annual Founders Festival rodeo will kick off July 28 at 8 p.m. It will be held on the southwest corner of Twelve Mile and Farmington.

Sponsored by the International Rodeo Association (IRA), this championship event will include bareback bronc riding, Brahma bull riding, calf roping, cowgirls barrel racing, saddle bronc riding, and steer wrestling. There will also be a specialty act, Wheelie's at the Rodeo.

This act stars Bobby Ruiz and his 1928 model T bucking Ford with grandpa grandma and Little Willie. The act has twice been selected as the feature at the rodeo of champions the international finals rodeo.

The rodeo is the major fundraiser for the Farmington Area Jaycees and in past year proceeds have gone to almost 20 separate local projects or organizations. One of course is the Founders Festival itself but there are others—the YMCA camp-croquet fund, the Farmington Area Advisory Council, Farmington Community Center, Farmington Community showmobile, Farmington Boy Scout band, Boys Republic, Boys State, Walden Park and an assortment of community projects.

These include everything from the community prayer breakfast and Easter egg hunt and to hosting the Oakland County MS wheelchair pageant to Braille translators and Braille equipment for the library.

This year two new beneficiaries have been added to the long list—8 cancer van

for Oakland County and a Rouge River clean-up.

The rodeo starts at 8 p.m. on Friday, July 28 and will continue on Saturday at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m.

Tickets at the gate are \$3.50 for adults and \$2.25 for children. Advance tickets at \$2.75 and \$1.75 are available by mail or at four local outlets. Send check or money order and a stamped self-addressed envelope by July 17 to Farmington Area Jaycees, P.O. Box 23, Farmington 48034.

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