

# Farmington Observer

Volume 91 Number 22

Monday, December 31, 1979

Farmington, Michigan

24 Pages

Twenty-five cents

## Homespun computer science class draws gifted students

By MARY GNIEWEK

A group of 10- to 13-year-olds gather every Saturday morning at Allen Peterman's house in Farmington Hills to learn introductory computer programming.

They don't receive school credit for it. They don't even get to play many computer games because the majority

of each lesson is devoted to academic endeavors.

But the youngsters keep coming anyway.

A supervisor of computer programmers at Ford Motor Co., he purchased his own \$1,000 computer and started the Saturday morning class last October.

"I thought it'd provide an outlet for

the children, a tool for mental gymnastics," he said.

Allen and Margaret Peterman's two sons, Mark, 13, and Douglas, 10, are both in the intellectually gifted program in the Farmington public schools. "When Doug was in third grade, he missed 50 days of school because of allergies and because he just didn't like school," Mrs. Peterman recalls.

"Today, you can't keep him away from school."

The Petermans were at the nucleus of a group which formed the Farmington Association for Educational Enrichment — parents devoted to helping stimulate the minds of their intellectually gifted children.

"THE HIGHEST rate of suicide, drug use and dropping out occurs with gifted children," Peterman said. "The biggest problem with gifted children is keeping them in school."

Peterman advertised his free computer class in the first FAEE newsletter, and calls came rolling in. "First we had three, then five, then we had to cut it off at 15," he said.

"The kids enjoy it. They want to keep coming back," added Mrs. Peterman, who's never seen a group of fifth to seventh graders remain so attentive for two hours.

"They sit there and absorb it all."

LAURA BANCHERO, a sixth grader at Alameda school, is the only girl in the class.

"I've learned binary numbers, how to delete things, and how to run the computer," she said.

Peterman said the kids catch on quicker than most of the adults he trains at Ford.

"I like to know whatever I can about computers," said Phil Goetz, a seventh grade student at O.E. Dunkel Jr. High. "I think it will be useful for employment in the future."

Computers recently began to filter into the Farmington school district. The Farmington Board of Education approved the purchase of six comput-



Richard Los, 10, of Alameda school, and Kevin Wright, 11, who attends Our Lady of Sorrows, play

a computer game at the Peterman house in Farmington Hills. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

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### Helping hands

Chuck Schulkins, left, packaging and distribution chairman, and Mickey Sampson of the Farmington-Farmington Hills Goodfellows put the final touch on food baskets before distributing them to nearly 200 needy families in the area. More than \$8,000 was collected this year to make the Goodfellows effort a success. Families received food, clothing and checks redeemable at Kmart or A&P. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

## New Year's Eve workers: It's just another night

By DANA FELMLY

Not everyone is out celebrating on New Year's Eve.

There are some professions which operate then so partners can party in more style — or keep from overdoing their style.

Most New Year's Eve workers interviewed agreed that the night is busier than normal, but otherwise not much different than other evenings.

"The only difference is that everyone is out partying and we're working," said a Farmington police dispatcher.

"There's not much of a difference in a town this size," added another who displayed a police log from New Year's morning.

THE LOG indicated a slow night for Farmington police who took care of the incessant ringing of a warehouse alarm, broke up a fight and calmed a barking dog.

Farmington Hills police Lt. Gordon Ross said he has seen some "pretty bad accidents and pretty wild parties" on his New Year's Eve patrols. But he said

he doesn't mind working that night.

"After you do it for so many years, it's just another day," Ross said. He has been patrolling for 16 years.

"I don't want to go out and party," he added.

Christmas is another matter, he said, because it is a family holiday. Officers with a preference for one holiday or the other will try to switch patrols to get their day off.

HOLIDAY INN of Farmington Hills is not an unusual night for the hotel, according to Bob Smolak, a desk clerk.

"Sometimes it's busy, sometimes it's not," he said.

"Even if it's a full house, the night could be slow. It depends on the number of people that come in at one time."

This is Smolak's third year to man the desk on New Year's Eve. Although he gets off at 11 p.m., he doesn't rush out to some last-minute party. He said he enjoys being at home instead.

ROTSFORD Hospital could be depressing on New Year's Eve, according to nurse Mary Calleja.

She said the nurses will all go around to rooms, wishing everyone a happy new year. Many patients can be seen watching late night television, she said.

"Usually they would like to be out with their friends," Ms. Calleja said. "Sometimes we (the nurses) are down, then I realize we can go home and they can't."

"It makes you feel like you have got to pull through."

Ms. Calleja said she would consider working another New Year's Eve if she could have Christmas off instead.

A WAITRESS at the Flame restaurant in Farmington Hills, Linda White was asked to substitute last New Year's Eve and wound up with a packed restaurant from 10 p.m. to 3 a.m. and only two other waitresses on duty.

Customers were "very drunk, but pleasant," she said.

Asked if she would consider substituting on New Year's Eve again, she said there was no chance. "I'd rather be out partying," she said.

## Fire destroys Farmington Hills landmark

By MARY GNIEWEK

An historic one-room schoolhouse in Farmington Hills was gutted by fire early Wednesday morning.

Firefighters believe arson may have been the cause of the blaze.

No one was injured in the fire at the abandoned Nichols schoolhouse, north of 13 Mile Road on Farmington Road.

It was fully in flames when Farmington Hills firefighters arrived on the scene at 12:25 a.m.

"When our department was notified, it was fully involved. Flames were coming out of the roof," said Tom Johnson, deputy fire chief.

"We had it under control in an hour, but we were out there mopping up until 4 a.m."

"We suspect arson at this time, but it's still under investigation by the Farmington Hills police department."

Three engines, two mini-pumpers and one rescue squad were at the scene.

Farmington Hills City Clerk Floyd Cairns, who attended Nichols school, said the city's historical commission was in the process of trying to purchase the building. The commission

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— Tom Johnson, Farmington Hills Deputy Fire Chief

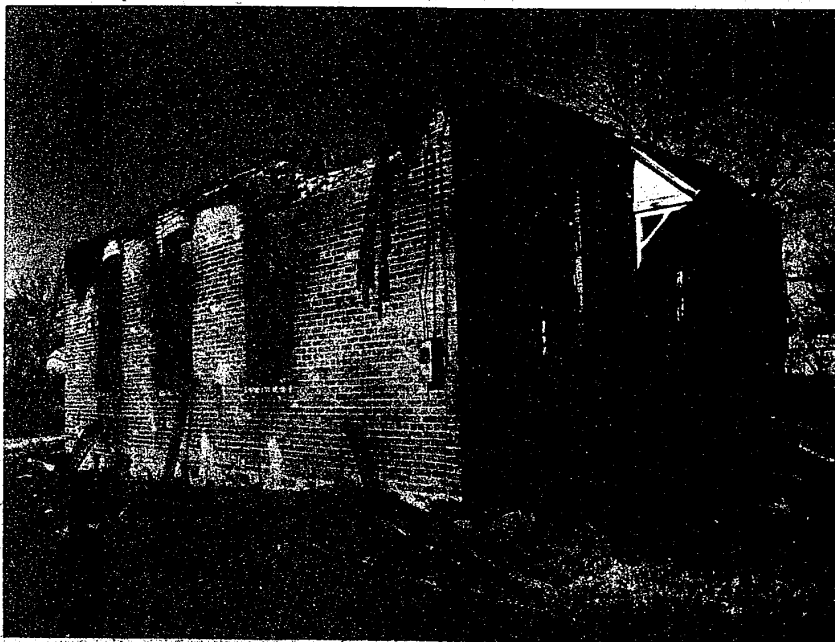
wanted to refurbish it and perhaps transform it into a museum.

"MY MOTHER went to school there, too," Cairns said. "The building is over 80 years old."

"It was a room schoolhouse, first to eighth grade — no kindergarten. It had wooden floors and a furnace in the corner of the room."

The school closed in the early 1930s and was used by the school district for a time as a storage house.

In 1970, it was sold to Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Sherry of Farmington. It was sold again earlier this year to a Livonia businessman.



This abandoned one-room schoolhouse in Farmington Hills was gutted by fire Dec. 26. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

inside

### DEPRESSING HOLIDAYS

Holidays can be a time of stress and sorrow as well as joy. High expectations of what this special time of year will bring, coupled with a longing for parted friends and loved ones, adds to the sorrow a holiday can bring. For a further look at holiday depression, turn to page 1B.

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