



The pro

Dan LaPlante, who visited Farmington Library earlier this week, shows how the avid yo-yo fan can get to be an expert. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

Ageless toy gives kids a big thrill

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

A life of walking the dog, swinging on the trapeze and rocking the baby can have its ups and downs no matter how varied it sounds.

Just ask Don LaPlante, a representative for Duncan Toys, who spends his time lecturing on the care and spinning of yo-yos.

Six months ago, LaPlante admits, he didn't know the first thing about how to convert yo-yo strings into shapes resembling the Empire State building, shamrocks or British union jacks.

Now, he "plays yo-yo" in front of groups such as the children in the Farmington, Farmington Hill and Southfield libraries.

He is among a corps of 50 yo-yo demonstrators employed by Duncan Toys and one of 10 who show off the toy as a full-time job.

For LaPlante, 22, gaining such a job was a matter of being in the right place at the right time. After a yo-yo demonstration in Chicago, he struck up a conversation with the expert and talked himself into a job.

LaPlante, fresh out of Carol University in Wisconsin with majors in business, psychology and sociology, immediately went into intensive training.

For two weeks he devoted six-hour days to learning the tricks of his new trade. He discovered it was more than child's play. Although he has since decreased his practice to two-hour sessions, he tries to work out on the yo-yo daily.

HE WAS bereft of childhood yo-yo experience when he began training. "I was the klutziest kid on the block," he confessed. "I couldn't do it when I was a kid."

He's almost making up for lost time now as he practices at odd moments. Waiting in lines at supermarkets and banks become practice sessions for the yo-yo master.

But once he gets in front of an audience, it's the yo-yo — and not its operator — that is the star of the show. It makes its debut at the immediate start of LaPlante's lecture, glowing in the dark and swinging in configurations perfected by tedious practice.

The glowing battery-operated number has come a long way from its origins 2,000 years ago as a weapon used by Philippine tribesmen.

The hunters would advance to a cliff-top with considerably larger stone forerunners of modern yo-yos.

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The future pro

Brian Peterson, 7, found that mastering the yo-yo wasn't as easy as it looks. But with just a little more work just maybe he can be as good as Dan LaPlante. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

How youngsters learn safety in mini-town

Imagine buying a business office for just \$125.

Believe it or not, several are available in the newest Farmington Hills "subdivision" called Safety Town, which will premiere June 23 on the grounds of the former Shawnee Elementary School.

Safety Town will be a mini-metropolis designed to introduce 5-year-olds to all types of safety conditions. It will have stop signs, railroad crossing signs, a working light and a policeman directing traffic for the Big Wheels brigade.

The program, cosponsored by the Farmington Hills Recreation Department and Farmington Hills Police, is marketed by the National Safety Town Center, a non-profit organization which operates 500 such towns in the U.S.

The goal is to expose youngsters entering kindergarten in the fall to basic safety rules they should know before they have to cross streets on their own or ride a school bus.

The program needs the financial support of local businesses to get started, but will become self-sufficient once it

is operating, according to Dave Justus, recreation supervisor.

To date, Kmart Corp. (Fourteen Mile Road), McDonald's (Orchard Lake Road), the North Farmington Kiwanis Club and Farmington Kiwanis Club have pitched in with donations, which are tax-deductible.

"WE NEED COMMUNITY support to make this thing work," Justus said.

Safety Town offers a chance for the community to work together for the welfare of all people in accident pre-

vention and encourage school personnel to include safety into its curriculum.

More children die from accidents than the combined effects of cancer, birth defects, pneumonia, homicide, heart disease and stroke. Approximately half of all pedestrian injuries involve children under age 15.

The cost of the 20-hour class — two weeks, two hours a day — is \$16. Each participant gets a Safety Town t-shirt, certificate and graduation cap. A re-

ception is planned for the closing session.

Children will learn safety behavior by playing, singing songs, working on art projects, hearing stories, seeing movies, taking bus field trips to the police and fire departments and playing in Safety Town.

To help get Safety Town started:

- \$50 will buy advertising on one side of a building in Safety Town for one season. There will be an annual charge of \$25 if the donor wishes to continue.
- \$50 will buy one Big Wheel and sign

with the donor's name on it. An annual \$10 charge will be assessed if the donor wishes to continue.

- \$70 will buy 250 certificates with the donor's name. These certificates are given to all participants.

- \$125 will buy a full-size building, 4 feet by 4 feet in Safety Town. The building will be a likeness of your business with the donor's name.

If you wish to donate or need more information, call Dave Justus at 474-6115, ext. 228; or officer Jerry McKenzie at 474-6115, ext. 316.

THE INSIDE * ANGLE

APPLICATIONS are being accepted by the American Lung Association of Southeastern Michigan (ALASEM) for its free summer camp for asthmatic children. Camp Sun Deer is a week-long camping program for children with significant asthma who might not otherwise have the opportunity to enjoy regular camping. The camp session is June 29 through July 5 at Camp Sun Deer, 10 miles north of Battle Creek on Clear Lake in Dowling, Mich. Enrollment is limited to 50 children ages 9 to 12 who live in Michigan.

Activities include: swimming, canoeing, boating, archery, arts and crafts, nature trail hikes and campfires. Campers will participate in volleyball, softball and other organized games. Camp activities are designed with the asthmatic child in mind and additional medical support necessary to treat asthma episodes will be available. For further information call Carol Vick at the American Lung Association of Southeastern Michigan at 961-1697.

OAKLAND COMMUNITY College, Orchard Ridge campus, will showcase amateur talent at 7 p.m., April 18. The public is invited to this OCC extravaganza. For further information call 476-9400, ext. 500.

FARMINGTON Area Advisory Council brochures have a new look to them thanks to Harrison High student Clare Tribu who designed a new logo for FAAC.

The organization works with young adults who have drug related problems.

THE HIGHEST policy-making body of the United Presbyterian Church meets from May 27 to June 4 in Cobo Hall, Detroit. Former United Nations ambassador Andrew Young is among the scheduled speakers. There will be a joint service with the Presbyterian Church of Canada. Such issues as the mandatory election of women to local church offices, the continuation of boycotts against Nestle's and J.P. Stevens and the peacemaking commitment of the church will be examined.

THE FOLKS at the Better Business Bureau of Metropolitan Detroit warn that work-at-home schemes requiring persons to buy stamps, mailing lists and advertising space are a great way to spend money instead of earning it. The work-at-home ads allow readers to think they, too, will rake in the bucks. The BBB advises persons to check with its office or the advertiser before sending money away.

TO BUCKLE UP OR not to buckle up? That is the question posed by the Automobile Club of Michigan. The club sent out questionnaires to its members asking them about seat belts and air bags as passive restraints in cars. Among those who

responded, 63 per cent opposed having a law requiring front seat passengers to wear seat belts. But 86 per cent said they'd rather buckle up than choose an air bag.

That's in keeping with the club's official position on the matter. The club axes the bags as unsafe but is more benign on the matter of seat belts. The U.S. Department of Transportation in 1977, as you may remember, ordered mandatory air bags in full-sized cars by the 1982 model year.

Among other findings from the questionnaire, 59 per cent of the persons who answered said they always obeyed the 55 mph per hour speed limit. Another 41 per cent said they obeyed it sometimes. (IA is at a loss to find all those persons faithfully chugging along at 55. Angles is usually the one being passed by as it rolls along at 55 while others are obviously in much more of a hurry. Angles wants some company in the slow lane.) And 75 per cent of the auto club's members who answered the questions said they favored motorcycle helmets. (Were the other 25 per cent ABATE members dedicated to eradicating the helmet law?)

SEEING DOUBLE? Seeing Double? The Farmington Area Mothers of Twins invite you to attend their meeting at 8 p.m., April 17 in the home of a member. The meetings usually last from two to 2 1/2 hours. Refreshments are served and speakers discuss topics ranging from children's education to assertiveness training for women. For further information call membership chairwoman Lila Henry at 478-6751.

OAKLAND Livingston Human Service Agency (OLHSA) officials are looking for about 1,000 families in the two counties who are eligible for energy fuel assistance. Even if the weather is warmer, the agency can still help with fuel bills. They can establish lines of credit with Consumers Power, Detroit Edison and fuel oil dealers so energy bills can be paid during the summer and into the fall. Under the program a family of two may not earn more than \$5,625 and a family of four can have no more than \$8,375. Acceptable proof of income includes: employment or unemployment check stubs, Social Security or SSI letter of award, Department of Social Services certification of assistance or proof of public assistance recipient status. SSI recipients are eligible if they are heads of households. Renters and students are included in this year's program along with homeowners. Depending on the type of fuel used, payments range from \$280 to \$320. The toll-free number to call for this program is 1-800-432-9250. Families who are paid up with their fuel crediters can apply for the family program and use the money as a line of credit with their fuel vendors.

When you're on the run, you'll be glad you're wearing Levi's Action Suit.

You're always on the move. Changing directions at a moment's notice. That's why you need Levi's Action Suit from Levi's. Sportswear. The Action Suit is made of a stretch polyester fabric that moves with you. There are stretch panels, too, built right into the vest and coat. Choose from navy, tan, heather grey or heather camel. And because they're separates you buy exactly the size you need in each. Sportcoat, \$70. Slacks, \$24. Vest, \$21. In the Casual Shop.

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