

Store looks for science buffs among young

By CRAIG PIECHURA

A TOOL AND DIE shop owner who thinks kids spend too much time staring at television opened up a science store two years ago to get young people thinking, experimenting and exploring.

He also hoped to make a little money.

The store, called Science and Things, 34781 Grand River in Farmington, hasn't shown a profit yet, but has already attracted a bevy of science buffs of all ages.

Store owner Phil Padula, 45, of Southfield, is the father of six children ranging in age from 9 to 19. In watching his offspring grow up, Padula said he realized kids weren't kidding when they said there was nothing to do after school.

"Just today I heard on the radio that the average youngsters watches at least 27 hours of television per week," Padula said.

"That's kind of the reason we started this store. Kids need another outlet. Not everyone is inclined toward sports."

Enter the science store. At present Padula says he's

making enough at Lapeer Design of Reford Township to make up for red ink showing on the science shop ledgers.

Though he's against a glut of TV watching, Padula is hoping interest generated by Carl Sagan's recent "Cosmos" public television series and the upcoming Space Shuttle coverage might kindle scientific curiosity among youth.

THERE'S PLENTY to discover at the store. Under one roof there are prisms to see a spectrum of light, telescopes of all sizes and prices to view the moon's surface or even spot distant constellations.

A popular item for young persons, selling for under \$4, is something called a Fresnel lens that focuses sunlight so intensely one can use the beam to burn designs into wood.

There are solar devices galore in the shop. Products which run on the sun's rays include a solar-powered beanie copter, and an AM radio and a pocket calculator equipped with solar panels.

The store has a wide assortment of fuel rockets and fancy kites. There are detailed models of the Space Shuttle, transparent models of the inner workings of the

human body and maps and globes of the earth, the moon and the celestial sphere.

There are large bins containing industrial-strength magnets, electrical circuits and small electric motors to be used wherever young inventors' imaginations lead them.

Have you ever been to a science center where you can touch a globe called a van de graaff generator that makes your hair stand on end when you touch it? The device works by releasing a harmless 2,000 volts of static electricity, explains store manager Jerry Sartor.

Such sci-fi-like goodies are on the shelves of this store. You can even buy holographic film used to make three-dimensional images.

While items like the van de graaff generator carry a price tag beyond most students' allowance, Padula tries to keep most items within their economic reach.

"THE BIGGEST problem was finding stuff available to stock in the store," Padula said. "We couldn't go to Hudson's or Sears to see what they had because they really don't carry much in the science line. And kids can't spend

a fortune on things that might be stocked by a lab."

So, he and the store manager subscribe to dozens of different catalogs. Items are ordered from catalogs from model rocket companies, toy companies, electronic companies, chemistry companies, astronomy outfits. The flexible Fresnel lens, says Sartor, is a surplus item from an audio-visual company which uses the device in overhead projectors.

The store's motto is "Make Learning Fun." And Padula says the more time he spends at the science store the less pessimistic he becomes about the minds of our youth.

"Don't get me wrong," he said. "There are some bright kids out there. You'd be surprised. Some of these kids come and ask for some pretty sophisticated things. Just by posing the question, you know their minds are working. They might need glassware for a chemistry experiment or condenser tubing. Yeah, some of the kids really surprise you."

Rest easy, though. Science & Things doesn't carry the plans or the plutonium necessary for a fifth grader intent on building an atomic weapon.



Store owner Phil Padula hopes the upcoming space shuttle coverage will kindle some scientific interest among young persons. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

INSIDE ANGLES

TAX REFORM in Michigan will be examined by state Sen. Doug Ross when he addresses the Farmington Area Republican Club at 8 p.m. Tuesday, March 24, at the Botsford Inn.

The meeting is open free to the public. Those interested in obtaining more information about the Farmington Area Republican Club can call Mike Chekal at 626-6785.

AND IF YOU'RE looking for more free information, the Farmington Historical Society is gathering at the downtown library Wednesday at 8 p.m. to hear three speakers.

Lois Bieren's topic is "From Temperance Literary Guild to Farmington Women's Club." Nelda Czuchra will talk on "Deeds — Rights and Restrictions," and Bob Cook's topic is "Farmington Vigilantes 80 years ago."

There's no charge.

CAN HEART ATTACKS be prevented by lowering cholesterol? That's the question asked by a team of University of Minnesota researchers conducting a study of the relationship between heart disease and cholesterol.

A clue to the cause of atherosclerosis may be that cholesterol, a fatty substance, is found in diseased arteries; it is still uncertain whether lowering cholesterol can actually prevent heart attacks.

The university is seeking persons ages 28-64 who have had only one heart attack and that attack was in the past five years. Anyone interested in more information may call the University of Minnesota Hyperlipidemia Study collect at 612-376-4494.

ARE THERE ANY John Birchers out there? An information and action meeting sponsored by the John Birch Society will be held Tuesday, March 24, at 25085 Pimlico Court, Farmington Hills, at 8 p.m.

A film strip, "Behind the Energy Shortage," will be featured.

For more information, call 476-5407.

TUESDAY IS ALSO the night the Farmington Area Jaycees will meet at the American Legion Hall, 31775 Grand River, for a burn awareness program.

The gathering, at 8 p.m., is open to the public in hopes it will generate support for the National Institute for Burn Medicine.

John Boschoven of the institute will show films and speak on the burn program at the institute as well as discuss the burn problem that exists.

Arbor Spring Art Fair arrives. That's coming up Friday and Saturday, March 27 and 28, from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Sunday, March 29, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

The University of Michigan Track and Tennis Building on State Street in Ann Arbor will be host to 280 artists and craftsmen from 24 states.

There's a \$1 admission charge; paintings, photographs, pottery, jewelry and other goods will be for sale.

BECOME AN INSTANT celebrity as a volunteer for the 13th annual Channel 56 TV auction, scheduled April 3-11.

Detroit's biggest live TV extravaganza needs volunteers to help make the fundraiser a success. Celebs are needed to answer phones, handle merchandise and work in other auction support systems. Hours are flexible.

To become a volunteer and ride with the auction cowboy host Dick Puritan (of CKLW radio), call 873-7200.

The auction kicks off at 7 p.m. on opening night and 1 p.m. on subsequent days. Sign-off time is 1 a.m.

AN ANGLES SALUTE to five gymnasts from the Farmington Area who fared well at a recent meet at Farmdale High School.

Three gymnasts won the class one second place trophy: Kristen LaFontaine and Mary Kay Marshall of Farmington Hills and Tracey Bomarito of Trenton.

In class three, Liza McCormick of Farmington Hills placed eighth on the uneven bars. Tammy Short of Farmington Hills placed seventh in floor exercise. In ages 12-14, Liza Brundie, of Farmington Hills, placed eighth in floor exercise.

THERE'S STILL TIME to register for spring classes at Detroit College of Business in Madison Heights and Dearborn.

Registration for new students will be March 30-31. Call 582-6988 (Dearborn) or 542-7225 (Madison Heights) for registration information.

BEFORE A standing-room only crowd, the North Farmington High School staff and parents recently staged a variety show with all proceeds used for North students.

The program included dance numbers, skits, barbershop quartets, vocal and instrumental numbers and a square dance.

Special bouquets to North Farmington teachers Adele Bosler and Mary Ellegood for planning the evening.

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