

Makinen recalls contributions as veteran board member

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

In her 12 years on the Farmington School Board Emma Makinen has witnessed an evolution of sorts. The school board Makinen was elected to in 1973 was muddled in controversy and philosophical differences between trustees. The school board Makinen has decided to retire from come June when her term expires, is by all appearances smooth-running and cohesive. Makinen calls the change a "gradual evolution."

"There was a great deal of controversy at the time," Makinen said. "On

the things that affected children, they were together. Everybody's motives were good. It's just that there was a real philosophical split."

A member and former president of the Farmington Parent-Teacher Association, Makinen was in the right place at the right time to see what was happening on the school board and in the district.

"We knew what the problems were and also what good things were going on in the district," Makinen said, about contact she had with parents, administrators and teachers.

"People were looking for someone who could help add some calmness and reason," she said.

NOW THAT "everyone works together," Makinen said, "I can't think of a better time to leave."

"The whole school district is just in tremendous shape. The staff is great. Everybody seems to be pulling together. That's the kind of atmosphere that is best for kids. And I think we have community support for our school system. I think people are pleased with what's going on."

Makinen generously attributes the changes in the school board and district over the years of her tenure to one man — Superintendent Lewis Schulman.

"The major contribution to the board and its activities has been the hiring of a superintendent who works well with

people," she said. "He is the kind of man who can look to the future. He can see the big picture."

Credit is also due school board members.

"All the board people are interested in kids. They are perceptive. The board itself has a good philosophy in conjunction with the superintendent that people are important; that everything should be open and there's nothing that should be held back."

Parents who have come to the school board with problems, she said, have been listened to and the problems worked out, Makinen said, offering an example of the board's attitudes.

When it comes to the attitudes and

characteristics a person should have to function well as a school trustee, Makinen has a lot of suggestions.

"You have to be willing to listen to other people. You have to respect what they say. You have to be able to weigh issues and evaluate."

But ask Makinen about the new programs or ideas the board, with the ad-

Please turn to Page 10



Emma Makinen

Wallace kept tabs on numbers

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Finance is Dick Wallace's interest and expertise. It's something he finds hard to avoid.

"I've attempted to be a generalist. But I can't avoid the specialization," said Wallace, an eight-year Farmington School Board, who recently announced he will not seek re-election when his second term expires in June.

Many school trustees come armed with knowledge and interest in curriculum, special programs or experience in a parent-teacher organization. Wallace came to the Farmington School Board armed with his financial background.

And it has served him well.

Fellow trustees and district administrators willingly refer to Wallace as a financial whiz who is more than comfortable with pages of computerized budget figures. Even before his tenure on the board, Wallace was involved

with promoting passage of a millage question.

"Because of my background, I was not coming in at zero," said Wallace, who before his first election was also active in the North Farmington High School Music Boosters.

Throughout his years on the board, Wallace has worked with the attitude that the district should provide "the best educational program that the community is willing to pay for."

WHEN ASKED how he feels about certain programs or the board's direction in establishing curriculum, Wallace responds to the financial side of the picture.

He will talk about the state and federal financial expansion of special education programs, the financial support for the academically talented program and the fact that state funding can be used for only certain programs.

What the true difficulty is, Wallace said, is "reading what the community wants and is willing to pay for."

Although talking about specific educational programs is something Wallace isn't prone to do, he will say that he is happy about some educational changes in the district.

First of all, educators generally have grown to accept tests, such as the Michigan Educational Assessment Tests (MEAP), as diagnostic tools rather than competitive devices.

Besides their use as diagnostic tools, Wallace said, tests provide district officials with a means of determining what curriculum changes are needed, if any.

A second positive change, according to Wallace, is that education "is swinging toward acknowledging the benefit" of providing a basic education for students whether college bound or not.

During his eight years on the board,

Wallace said, the district has expanded its special education program and improved the condition of its buildings and other "physical facilities."

ALTHOUGH KNOWN for his financial expertise, Wallace says there is no one item he will claim as his individual contribution to the board.

"I'm not sure I have an identifiable contribution. That's for someone else to determine."

Wallace is also equally reluctant to discuss the characteristics or interests of trustees who perform well on a school board.

Please turn to Page 9



Richard Wallace



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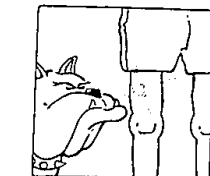
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