

# Say look us over!

By Teri Banas  
staff writer

The idea of a community college might not be the same after next week. That's when a fresh crop of summer school students will begin arriving on the Orchard Ridge campus of Oakland Community College in Farmington Hills.

But wait. These students will be younger than your typical freshman at the community college — some as young as 6 years old. What are they doing on campus?

"Maybe they will and maybe they won't be our future students," said college administrator Sylvia Burtrum. "But in the meantime, we're contributing something to the community."

THAT "contribution" is a full-time summer school camp that's open to children and teens throughout the college's district and beyond. It's self-supporting, based on break-even tuition costs, and includes 73-program offerings in the fine arts and sciences that

typically won't be found in the everyday public school system.

The program is marketed to gifted and talented students in area kindergarten to 12th grade public schools, and while most of the students are labeled gifted, there's no entrance testing, so any student 6-18 years of age may attend.

Some might wonder why a college would offer non-college level programs.

"Our philosophy is that we're a community college, and this is our outreach into the community," said Burtrum, the program's coordinator and college admissions director. "We'll do anything to enhance the educational welfare of the community. Last December, for example, we had a program for the unemployed and 1,100 attended. They weren't students (enrolled in the college)."

"Why not?" she said. "We have an on-going facility; we can do it, so we're doing it."

THIS IS the first time the program has been scheduled in the summer and it's an expanded version of the regular school year's Saturday enrichment program. The program debuted seven years ago and has mushroomed in size and course offerings since then. In the beginning, 400 students attended, taking courses in computers, foreign language and science. Today, a regular school year sees between 1,500-1,700 students enrolled. And the summer's expanded program will run five days a week.

Perhaps one reason for the program's success is found in Burtrum's definition of what they're trying to achieve. She says they attempt to offer courses that youngsters can't find in the public schools. When computer courses were first offered seven years ago, for example, they hadn't been available in the public schools yet.

Today, the course offerings include such subjects as foreign travel, ballet, miming, clowning, jewelry making, cartoon drawing, pottery, foreign language, computer science and math. Other attention-getting courses teach students about building robots, aerodynamics, dinosaurs, nuclear age, and there also are "self-improvement"

courses such as baby-sitting training and assertiveness training.

"We see these as enrichment courses. We try to give them what the public schools can't," Burtrum said.

The courses are taught by college professors on staff and by working professionals.

One of the summer teachers is Don Mendelson, a professional artist from Oak Park who teaches college-age students the rest of the year. Mendelson last taught art to children in the 1960s and says he's excited to teach youngsters again. How does he alter his teaching style for them?

"All you have to do is expose them to the materials, talk to them about ideas and they come up with the most unique works of art," he said. "By nature children are creative people. It's only as you get older that you have to be re-trained in college."

Other summer instructors include Lisa Nowak, founder and artist director of the Harbinger Dance Company, and Peter Carbone, a black belt in Judo-Kyu Karate.

"We have such good people," said Burtrum.

BESIDES the structured classes, the camp offers fun, summertime activities that kids would find in a regular summer camp. Burtrum says they're planning a pizza day, cupcake day, nature walks and even a day for wearing your clothes backward.

To further simulate a summer, day-camp setting, they'll hold opening ceremonies and attendance call each morning at the flag pole. The teachers will escort the students between classes to ensure everyone gets where they're going without becoming lost on the college campus.

Burtrum, by the way, is credited with developing the concept for the enrichment classes and expanding the program to where it is today.

Referred to as "drama" by at least one of her staff, she's put the summer program together with more than a few near sleepless nights.

"She's the matriarch that puts everything together," said Mendelson. "If it wasn't for her, it wouldn't have gotten off the ground."

A HINT of Burtrum's motivation

## OCC appeals to K-12 students at first summer camp for gifted



Jamie Mason, manager of the Oakland Community College's Orchard Ridge Theatre, will teach theater at summer school. Here he explains back-stage lighting to two students.



Sylvia Burtrum

## Commission opposes Cobo tax plan

By Tim Richard  
staff writer

To 17 Republicans, it didn't matter that County Executive Daniel T. Murphy was supporting it.

To four of nine Democrats, it was inconsequential that Detroit Mayor Coleman Young wanted it desperately.

The Oakland County Board of Commissioners said "no" to a state tax package that would underwrite the \$200 million expansion of Detroit's Cobo Hall to improve its national status as a convention center. Thursday's vote was 21-5 on the purely advisory resolution, which was sent to the state Legislature.

"The imposition of these proposed taxes places an unfair and unjustified burden on suburban businesses," said the resolution, introduced by Commissioner John McDonald, R-Farmington.

THE TAX package would 1) raise hotel-motel taxes by 1.5 percent, depending on the number of units, in the tri-county metropolitan area and 2) raise liquor taxes to 15 percent statewide.

"I support economic expansion," said Commissioner Dennis Aaron, D-Oak Park. "but I don't see how raising taxes on tourists is going to help tourism."

"I'm downtown every day," said Aaron, an attorney. "Cobo Hall is not full now. If you want tourism, cut the taxes."

McDonald quoted Botsford Inn owner John Anhalt as saying most hotel and restaurant owners in the suburbs are vehemently opposed to the tax package.

Under questioning by commissioner, William Spilloni, a deputy county executive to Murphy, said the executive supports the package.

"IT WOULD be nice to think these things are built by magic," countered

Larry Pernick, D-Southfield, one of five Democrats to oppose the resolution.

"We in Oakland County are supposed to be leaders, and leaders take risks. We're elected to serve over all," said Pernick, arguing the county had no qualms about spending government money on roads for General Motors Corp.'s Lake Orion plant.

"We need to help neighboring communities," added Walter Moore, D-Pontiac. "This flies in the face of a cooperative spirit." To those opposed to tax increases, Moore cited commissioners' support of the 1984 property tax for county parks.

But John Olsen, R-Huntington Woods, saw significant differences between the parks tax and the Cobo Hall package. "First, the millage was for parks in Oakland County, which are our responsibility. Second, ours was by a vote of the people. I would favor a vote of the people (on the Cobo Hall package)," Olsen said.

"I'm all in favor of regionalism," said John Calandro, R-Novl. "but the mayor of Detroit is not talking regionalism with the zoo or the Detroit Institute of Arts. I don't see where regionalism comes into Cobo Hall."

COMMISSIONERS had less problem agreeing on another legislative bill, this one aimed at setting up a new system of Domestic Relations Courts. They were opposed 24-0.

So were the judges of Oakland Circuit Court.

The commissioners' resolution charged the Domestic Relations Court bill would require a whole new set of books, equipment and offices but failed to set up a method for funding the new court.

IN OTHER business, the Oakland County Board of Commissioners:

• Authorized the firm of Neumann Greater Associates/IDR to prepare bidding documents for converting the crowded County Jail's dry cleaning plant and laundry to prisoner housing. When converted for an estimated \$750,000, the buildings would house 90 prisoners.

• Approved a contract with the Offender Aid and Restoration (OAR) program, Pontiac, to house 10 adult male jail inmates at \$35 a day. OAR provides counseling, employment assistance and rehabilitation programs as recommended by courts and probation departments. Purpose, again, is to reduce the jail population.

• Accepted a \$25,000 grant from the Michigan Acoustics Commission for development of an administration-terminal building at Oakland/Troy Airport.

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