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Principal eyes state leadership post

By Joanne Mallazewski
staff writer

MILLIE BENNETT counts a lot on camaraderie. Getting a genuinely interested response when she says to a fellow principal, "Hey, I thought of something good to do in the cafeteria," is gratifying to the Longacre Elementary principal.

Professional camaraderie is only one of many benefits Bennett finds in her participation in the Michigan Elementary/Middle School Principals Association (MEMSPA). But it's something she plans to continue nurturing for the 1,450-member association if she's elected as president-elect in October.

"I'm doing it because I believe in the organization," said Bennett, Longacre principal since 1973. "I'm doing it as a pay back. I feel I owe the organization something. My school has benefited. I always bring things back for the kids, parents and teachers."

The professional organization of elementary and middle school principals has been a friend and source of information and new ideas for Bennett since she joined MEMSPA the week she was selected principal of her first school — Woodcreek Elementary — in 1971.

If Bennett beats out her opponent, Reid Ruggles of Caro, her role as leader will actually be a three-year deal. First, she would be president-elect. In 1987, she would step up as president and the following year, she would serve as president.

As president-elect, Bennett will serve as an understudy to the president, learning all she'll need to know when she assumes the role a year later. She'll also attend state and national conventions and serve as chairwoman of the organization's platform committee, which draws up positions on various educational topics.

BENNETT ALSO will be responsible for developing the organization's future plans.

Bennett was nominated for the president-elect's post by the organization's regional Oakland County group. MEMSPA is made up of 14 regions, with Oakland County being the largest in terms of membership.

Principals on both the elementary and middle school levels can join the organization. Delegates from each region are then sent to the statewide organization, where they may vote on issues.

Before accepting her region's nomination, Bennett consulted her staff and parent-teacher association. To her knowledge, the Farmington Public Schools is the only district with two offices in state educational associations.

Farmington High School Principal Jerry Potter is president of the state association of secondary principals.

"I think it says something about the Farmington Public Schools and something about leadership here," Bennett said. "It also says something about the quality and excellence of education here. I think that's really super."

NO STRANGER to leadership, Bennett has served as the organization's vice president and membership chairperson since 1983. She also served as a regional officer and delegate to 11 state conference representative assemblies.



JERRY ZOLYNSKY/staff photographer

At left: Millie Bennett, seeking the Michigan Elementary/Middle School Principals Association presidency, says she's doing so "as a pay back. I feel I owe the organization something. My school has benefited. I always bring things back for the kids, parents and teachers." Bennett has been Longacre Elementary School principal since 1973.

WHAT BENNETT cherishes about the organization is that it's where she can find new ideas, talk with people in the same position as hers, take a stand on educational issues and learn about the changing times, which will inevitably affect her job, students and families.

As a Farmington Public Schools principal, Bennett is the educational leader in the building, who must know about organizational skills, operating a building, supervising a staff, maintaining an educational philosophy and even running a restaurant in the cafeteria.

"Our conferences and workshops are filled with a myriad of these things," Bennett said. "I've grown a great deal. I've benefited from my participation in MEMSPA."

In 1979, Bennett was named outstanding regional principal. Bennett's involvement has also crossed state lines with her service as a delegate to seven major assembly meetings of the national parent organization.

Whether or not she's elected, Bennett's enthusiasm for the state organization is likely to continue. But she'll make no bones about it. She's the best for the job. "I'm the best qualified. I have 15 years of direct involvement as an officer. I have two years as vice president."

And better yet, she seems to be having fun campaigning for the election, which will take place following the representative assembly in Grand Rapids.

"THE BEST thing is that the organization is not going to lose no matter who's elected," Bennett added.

And she already knows what her priorities will be if she's elected president-elect. "My priorities . . . are to continue to promote quality education for all the boys and girls of Michigan."

Besides that, Bennett wants the organization to continue its high visibility and voice as educational representatives, particularly before the state Department of Education.

And finally Bennett wants to maintain the organization's service to its members, especially in providing them with programs, workshops and any-

thing else that will keep them in touch with changing trends in education and society.

"We're doing an in-service training for administration on a state level," said Bennett about a planned MEMSPA program.

WHILE BENNETT underlines the camaraderie provided through MEMSPA, it's the continuing involvement in educational issues that draws her to the organization.

MEMSPA provides platform statements — most of which are taken to the state Legislature and state Department of Education — on any number of educational issues.

Members soon will decide what their position is on: increasing the kindergarten entry age; teaching of both the standard and metric measurement systems; encouraging school districts to adopt a multicultural curriculum; and encouraging the state to continue meeting the needs of gifted and talented students as well as funding these programs.

Once delegates decide MEMSPA's position on issues such as these, William Mays, the organization's executive director, will lobby these points in the state Legislature.

"The association speaks out on issues," Bennett said. "It's a highly respected organization."

inkwell

Inkwell provides news and information about Farmington-area primary and secondary schools. The column appears monthly throughout the school year as part of the Observer's "School Page." Send news items to: The School Page, Farmington Observer, 33203 Grand River, Farmington 48024. Include a telephone number where a contact person can be reached during the day.

SUMMER FUN

A success? Judge for yourself.

The Farmington Youth Assistance Summer Activities Center served 40 teen-agers per night throughout the eight-week program.

Teens 15-18 had a choice of video games, billiards, air hockey, table tennis and football at the center, 39415 Shawansee, Farmington Hills.

The center also organized outdoor activities, such as softball, flag football and volleyball. Special events included pizza parties, bowling, miniature golf, horseshoe riding and canoeing.

Teens also made short trips to such places as Waterford Oaks County Park wave pool, Boblo Island in the Detroit River and Tiger Stadium in Detroit.

A cocktail and beach-party dance concluded the summertime fare.

Center programs, now in their seventh year, are organized by Farmington Youth Assistance.

Other center supporters include United Community Services, Farmington Lions Club and Farmington Public Schools bus drivers.

SCHOOL GIFTS

Farmington Public Schools often receive gifts from area businesses. And the start of this school year was no exception.

They-based Lysinger Photo has donated a 1980 341 Instant Photographer to the Farmington High School graphics lab. The original cost of this machine was about \$13,000.

Holiday Chevrolet of Farmington Hills has donated a new 1985 Chevrolet Caprice Station Wagon to the North Farmington High School auto shop for instructional purposes.

SPRUNCED UP

Farmington Public Schools ushered in the 1985-86 school year with few maintenance problems.

One exception was the Harrison High School air conditioning system, which required emergency repairs, according to a board of education report.

The report also notes that:

- Paying at East Middle School has been completed.
- Storm drains have been installed at Harrison High School, with filling and grading to follow.
- Almost all concrete work at various middle and elementary schools has been completed.
- Central office remodeling has been completed, resulting in more usable space.
- Extensive bleacher replacement and repairs have been completed at Farmington High and East Middle schools.
- More computer rooms have been added at all three senior highs.

SCHOOL PURCHASES

The Farmington Board of Education recently au-

thorized several purchases.

The board authorized buying:

- An automatic transmission pickup truck from Town & Country Dodge, Farmington Hills, for \$12,565 — including trade-in.
- A similar pickup from Tom Holzer Ford, Farmington Hills, for \$12,935 — including trade-in.
- Two standard transmission pickups from Tom Holzer Ford, for \$14,878.
- A complete radio network from Motorola Co., Southfield, for \$55,697.

TEACHER COMPETENCE

Rigorous standards for admission to the teaching profession "to ensure that only the most qualified candidates become teachers" are outlined in a new publication from the National Education Association (NEA).

The new publication from the 1.7-million member NEA, the nation's largest educational organization, emphasizes that all teachers should be evaluated frequently and provided with in-service education opportunities.

"Our goal is simple: an excellent teacher in every classroom," said Mary Hatwood Futrell, NEA president. "Incompetence must never be tolerated. Our nation must insist on the highest standards for teacher preparation and practice."

NEA's new publication, titled "An Excellent Teacher in Every Classroom," identifies four steps to encourage outstanding teaching:

- Teacher education programs should maintain rigorous admission and graduation requirements. Prospective teachers should complete a strong liberal arts curriculum and master an academic major before entering a teacher preparation program.
- Teacher candidates should successfully master the professional knowledge and skills taught in teacher education and apply what they learn in progressively more demanding student teaching experiences.
- Newly credentialed teachers should successfully complete a teaching internship with the support of experienced teachers.
- All professional teachers should be evaluated regularly and provided with in-service education opportunities.

"It needs to be pointed out that students seeking to become teachers, as well as those in teacher education programs, should be examined and tested frequently so that only the most qualified candidates become teachers," Futrell said.

SCHOLARSHIP SEARCH

GERMET Scholarship Services is a scholarship locating and counseling service. Virtually all students, regardless of scholarship achievement or financial need, can qualify for financial aid through this computerized search service.

For a subscription fee, GERMET's computer will match a student's qualifications against the thousands of scholarships sources in its data bank, guaranteeing that between five and 25 sources of money will be found. Students receive a listing of the names and addresses of sources to contact and the amounts of financial aid awarded.

Scholarship counseling also is available. Germet is at 19951 Melvin, Livonia. Call 423-5087.

