



Learning the reasons they should say no to alcohol and drugs are third grade students at Flanders Elementary School. Members of the pilot program now in

its second year are: (from left) Brent Johnson, Carri Owen, Deanna Kitzman, third grade teacher Eleanor Twardy, Phillip Giovannini, Stephen Scanlon.

RANDY BOST/Staff photographer

School's pilot program blasts drug myths

By Louise Okrutsky
staff writer

THIRD GRADERS at Flanders Elementary School have some new classmates this year. Cute animal puppets named Buttons, Bows, Myth Mary and Donovan Dignity tell their new friends about drugs and alcohol as part of a pilot program to counteract in the classroom attitudes children could pick up on the street.

The seven-week program, Beginning Alcohol and Addiction Basic Education Studies (BABES), was developed in 1979 under the auspices of the National Council on Alcoholism to educate children as young as preschool age about all manner of drug abuse.

Local organizers want the pilot program, now in its second year, to eventually include third-grade classes throughout the Farmington Public School system and Our Lady of Sorrows Elementary School.

Flanders was chosen as the pilot site as a matter of convenience because it has only one third-grade class.

"I felt it was something that would be helpful to the youngsters," said Flanders principal Frank De-

levsky. "As you read the papers and watch television, you know it's a very serious problem in our country. All children should have some background to help them later in life so they'll know how to say no to peer pressure."

More than 30,000 children across the state have participated in the program. Not only has it been offered throughout the nation, it's been seen in about six other countries as well.

Each session is devoted to more than instructing youngsters to say no to all drugs. Discussions center around such questions as "What does an alcoholic look like?" "It's bumping into things. He's drowsy," answers a child.

"But when he isn't drinking," continues program coordinator Jane Reiser Williams, "he looks like . . ."

"Just a normal person," chimed in a small voice.

Williams is education director of the Farmington Area Advisory Council which, along with the school system, sponsors the program. It's also supported by Farmington Families in Action.

Sitting on the carpeted steps in Flanders' media center, she looks at the group of students at the foot of the steps, obviously pleased the

point's been put across. She wants students to emerge from the program with the attitude that the alcoholic is an ill person who can come from all levels of the social and economic strata.

"Statistics show that one child in five lives with an alcoholic in the home. Some of them have chemically dependent older brothers or sisters. A lot of them say their brother or sister or even the baby sitter gave them their first sip of beer or their first marijuana cigarette. Our goal is prevention and identification."

TO THAT END, children use a series of handouts depicting the program's puppet characters, which they can color in later on. There are homework assignments such as listing the people to whom a child can turn if they're faced with a family member with a drug problem or any other difficulty.

"If you think there's an alcoholic in your family you can talk to a mother or a father. If you can't talk to them, then a rabbi or a minister or someone in your school," Reiser Williams instructs.

"You can talk to a doctor," a boy volunteers.

"You can," Reiser Williams said slowly, "but you need an appoint-

ment to see a doctor. You need someone to drive you there. You want someone who's nearer than that. Someone you know and can talk to easily."

More than teaching them how to react to an alcoholic, the program aims at promoting the ability to cope with daily problems and to realize that asking for help isn't weakness. "Retreat isn't defeat," the group recites. "Failure isn't final."

The class listens to the story of Bows, a kitten who's having a tough time with math, and her brother, Buttons, who understands the lesson. Bows is afraid to ask for help. Myth Mary, a squirrel who espouses every popular misconception tells her that "strong people don't ask for help." But Donovan Dignity, an old owl tells Mary "it's dumb not to ask." Recovering Reggie chimes in that he did ask for help when he needed it in fighting his drinking problem.

Afterward the children retell the story using hand puppets. "The first year, we started out with the puppets but they captured too much attention," Reiser Williams said. This year, she brings out the puppets later in the program to keep students' attention on the lesson.

The program is having a more

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Flanders Elementary School

difficult time reaching adults than children. Although Reiser Williams said there are definite plans to expand into other schools, Farmington's BABES program has a grand total of three volunteers. "We would like 12 people," Reiser Williams said. "They must have a commitment and a good attitude toward the program."

Volunteers mustn't subscribe to myths surrounding alcoholism and should be reluctant to condemn alcoholics outright.

Since training volunteers is an expensive proposition, each person is required to devote at least one year

to the program. Farmington Area Advisory Council foots the approximately \$200 per volunteer training fee while the Farmington Public Schools purchases the program kit at about \$240. Two trainers share one kit.

Volunteers must be adults and parents are especially preferred, according to Reiser Williams. "Parents understand children better than non-parents. They have a greater investment in children," she said. Parents won't be placed in the same schools as their children.

Persons who want to volunteer should call Reiser Williams at 477-6767 or Betty Nicolai at 651-6565.

police/fire calls

Listed below are some of the Farmington-area police and fire calls received during the past week:

● SUSPECT NABBED

A Detroit man allegedly robbed a gas station attendant at gunpoint inside a bank night depository early Thursday. Arraigned Thursday before District Judge Margaret Schaeffer of Farmington, Carlos V. Lane, 21, of Oak Park stood mute to one count of assault with intent to rob while armed. Conviction of the felony could bring a maximum penalty of life in prison. Cash bond was set at \$10,000 pending a preliminary examination in 47th District Court.

According to Farmington Hills Police, the 25-year-old gas attendant was delivering station receipts at the night depository at Manufacturers National Bank, 29305 Orchard Lake, when a man suddenly appeared from behind bushes.

At gunpoint, the man ordered the attendant to drop the money bag. As she ran, screaming, to a nearby store, he didn't notice she had dropped the money bag near her car. The money was recovered.

Meanwhile, the gunman fled on foot to the west. A set of hand-cuffs was found in the bushes where the gunman had emerged.

After hearing a description of the gunman, Officer Charles Rozum stopped Lane, who was walking along nearby Lerick. A short-barreled rifle was found in a bush at a house on that street. An empty hand-cuff box was found in the glove compartment of Lane's car, parked in a shopping center lot across from the bank. Lane is a former employee of the gas station where the robbery victim works, according to police.

● COMPOSITE DRAWN

A composite drawing has been made of the man who acted as if he had a gun while robbing the Wendy's Old-Fashioned Hamburgers restaurant at 27620 Eight Mile of \$104 Nov. 4.

According to a Farmington Hills police report, a man who appeared tense approached the counter. When an employee asked if his order was "for here or to go," he answered, "to go, get a bag and put the money in it." No gun was seen, but the man kept his hands in his jacket pockets, waving them as if he had a gun. The employee complied with his request, the gunman fled on foot.

The gunman was described as white, 5-5 and 130 pounds, with hazel eyes, dirty blonde, shoulder-length hair, a slim build and medium skin tone. He was wearing a tan suede or rough leather waist-length jacket.

● WINDOWS SHOT OUT

Windows at a bank branch and a Montessori center were shot out in possibly related acts of vandalism Monday night, according to a Farmington Hills police report.

A double-pane window at Standard Federal Bank, 32920 13 Mile, was the target of BB gun and air gun. Twenty nightlights around the bank also were shot out. Damage was estimated at \$450. A glass door at Maria Montessori Center, 32500 13 Mile, was the target of BB gun. Damage was estimated at \$500.

In each case, BBs were found lodged in the glass.



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● TEENS TICKETED

Four teenagers were ticketed for allegedly sniffing nitrous oxide, often inhaled to get a high, according to a Farmington Hills police report.

The teens — ages 16 and 17 — were in the parking lot of Putt 'n' Games, 30749 Grand River, when ticketed Tuesday night. Police seized six spent nitrous oxide capsules, one box of 15 full nitrous oxide capsules and one balloon believed used to sniff nitrous oxide.

● CAR BOMB

A 35-year-old Union Lake man was hospitalized Nov. 12 when an explosion occurred in his car as he drove south on Haggerty, near 13 Mile, according to Novi Police.

An explosive device detonated from the passenger side of the vehicle. The injured man walked to Providence Hospital's Novi Center, where he was admitted. Later, he was transferred to Providence Hospital in Southfield for further treatment. Farmington Hills Police assisted at the scene.

● SCHOOL ARSON

Three cases of arson to lockers at Farmington High School were reported Nov. 11-13, according to a Farmington Department of Public Safety report.

The fires involved two lockers and were all extinguished by school maintenance personnel, school officials told officers.

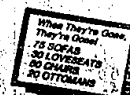
● ALLEGED D&E

A 21-year-old Farmington Hills man allegedly stole electronic equipment from the residence of another resident at Mulwood Apartments early Thursday.

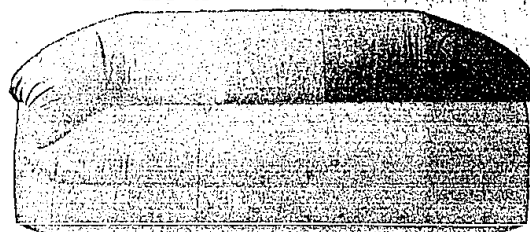
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Repeat of a Sellout!

\$799

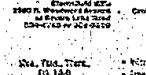
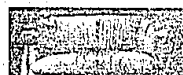


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