

Southfield prof. operates new DNA machine

The newest equipment addition to the chemistry department at Wayne State University looks like little more than a personal computer with a large medicine cabinet at its side.

"Yet this two-week-old computer-machine combination is perking up the ears of campus scientists. While most other chemistry equipment is performing the normal analysis work, this new machine is busy making the genetic material — DNA.

"This represents a new direction for us," said Dr. Robin Hood, of Southfield,

director of the WSU Central Instrumentation Facility. "This is perhaps the beginning of the center for molecular synthesis."

THE DEPARTMENT bought the \$35,000 DNA synthesizer with money from the provost instrumentation fund, the Michigan Cancer Foundation and the National Institute of Health, Hood said. He took a course in California to learn how to operate it and, since its installation, has been pumping out DNA chains to order.

"It's very easy to operate," he explained. With a touch of a light stick on the computer screen, he enters the order in which he wants the four bases — the building blocks of DNA — to appear on the DNA chains.

During the ensuing chemical reactions, the machine generates several milligrams of DNA, or one quintillion individual DNA strands.

Once the base sequence is entered, the DNA synthesizer immobilizes the first base on a glass bead, performs the

necessary chemistry to add on the second base, and so on.

"MANUAL KITS have been available for a couple of years, but you couldn't add more than three or four bases a day," Hood said. "This machine adds one about every 10 minutes, so overnight it can make a chain of 50 to 60 bases."

"I just find it absolutely amazing that you can make it and it's so easy. It's taken the chemistry and automated it."

The newly created DNA strands can be used in cancer, genetics and enzyme research, and in many other areas, said WSU assistant chemistry professor Louis Romano, of Detroit.

"Some are using it to prepare primers for DNA sequencing experiments or to make linkers to clone genes into bacteria," he said. "Other potential applications are the preparation of specifically modified proteins and probes for southern hybridization experiments."

Variance approved

Sara Bockman's store sign will rise above the rest.

Farmington City Council voted Monday to allow a variance to a sign ordinance that does not normally allow signs on any city roofs.

Bockman plans to re-use an existing sign at 33245 Grand River for her new business, The Rocking Horse-Designs in Cross Stitch.

Hospital given check

The Botsford General Hospital Guild has donated \$25,000 to the Farmington Hills hospital.

Guild president Nancy Adams and treasurer Joanne Matthews presented a check to hospital president Gerson Cooper at a luncheon.

This check, when added to a donation of \$50,000 made last year, represents the three-quarter mark of a \$100,000 pledge made by the Guild for an interfaith chapel to be named the "Allen Ziegler Memorial Chapel."

The chapel will be built in the hospital as part of the Phase II campus development program now under way. The late Dr. Ziegler was the founder of Botsford General Hospital, which was opened to patients in 1955.

The 58-member Guild, whose principal activity is the operation of the gift shop in the hospital, has been in operation since 1970. It has donated \$200,000 to the hospital.

Current plans are to pay off the remaining \$25,000 of the pledge in 1986.

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