

# Farmington Observer



## hallways

A page of Farmington-area school news

# Creative education

## Cable program is unique teaching tool

By Casey Hane  
Staff writer

**M**IX A GALLON of creative energy, a pinch of high tech, and—concern for quality education and your cup overflows with Serendipity—a new community cable program for area preschoolers.

A Farmington Hills couple helps youngsters discover their potential in the "Romper Room-type" program, mixing a special type of education with the technical world of cable television.

The show stars a cast of 3- to 6-year-old preschoolers from the Farmington, Livonia and Novi areas. It is creatively pre-planned, but allows spontaneous comment from children on the set.

Hills residents and Serendipity co-directors Donna Miller, a part-time teacher of autistic children at the

Burger Center in Garden City, and Tom Miller, an engineer and also the show's producer, are excited about what their program offers.

"It's so wonderful—the kids just glow," Donna said. "It's a fun thing with an academic quality."

"We knew what we wanted and organized it," Donna said about the program's beginnings last fall.

SHE INITIALLY became interested in creating the program after talking with Jeanne Shroat, of Maclean Hunter Cable of Garden City, which produces Alphabet Soup—a similar children's show in that area.

During four months of planning for 20 shows this season, grant money was obtained through the Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission (SWOCC). Taping began in January for shows airing now through late July.

Both Millers took technical classes

through Metrovision in Farmington Hills to learn their skills. "We designed the set and explored all avenues," Donna added.

Grant money totaling about \$10,000 per year is offered to numerous community groups for locally produced shows, according to Lark Samouelian, commission executive director. The money—usually totaling several hundred dollars—is used for props or other key production elements.

For Serendipity, additional help with the props, instructional supplies, games and music are provided by Jean and Cliff Gulley of the Creative Learning Center Store in Farmington Hills, Donna added.

THE HALF-HOUR shows are taped at Metrovision studios in the Hills and air on Channel 12 in Farmington, Farmington Hills and Novi each Monday at 1 and 7 p.m. and on

Wednesdays at 12:30 and 6:30 p.m. In Livonia, Serendipity airs at 7 p.m. the first and third week of each month on Livonia Metrovision's community access channel.

"Local children can be on and see themselves," Donna added. "We use it as a creative media exposure with a quality content. I really enjoy the creative energy."

Forty new shows are scheduled for taping beginning this fall, and the Millers are working with cable companies in Redford Township, West Bloomfield Township and Birmingham in an effort to expand the program. Special programs and inclusion of cultural events may be used in upcoming tapings, she said.

Special guests this season included Redford Township resident and World Book representative Amy Clarke-Hamlin, local children's clothing designer Bonnie Tapper and Laurie McKinley from the Farmington Gymnastics Center.

Each show involves 5-7 children, and has three, 10-minute segments involving storytelling, music and project participation.

THEY ARE taught by Donna, and other state-certified teachers Jeanne Dean, also of Farmington Hills and Rosemarie Picano, a part-time teacher in the Garden City district.

Because of "overwhelming community response," children's spots on the remaining six show tapings are filled, Donna said. Parents interested in having their children on the show are asked to contact SWOCC for fall show tapings.

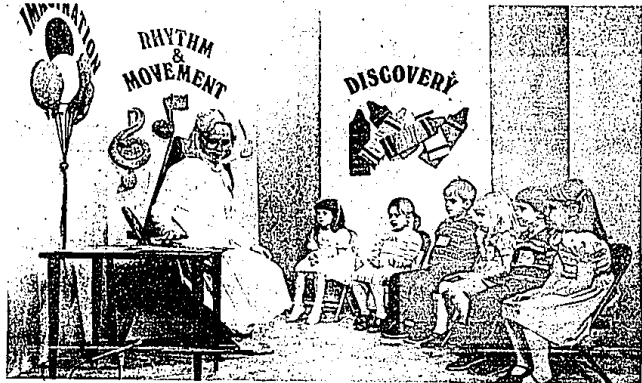
She attributes much of the program's success to community recognition through word of mouth. In addition, "some local preschools and public school media centers are taping the program and using it later with their students," she said.

"All the kids that are on feel very special," she added. "It's a way they can learn and get involved."



photo by RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Stacey Biggs, 6, of Novi listens attentively to teacher Donna Miller during a taping of the Serendipity children's cable show, currently seen on local cable in the Farmington, Livonia and Novi areas.



Donna Miller (left), teacher and co-director of the Serendipity children's community cable show, tapes a segment at Metrovision studios in Farmington Hills with area youngsters. The children learned about shapes. Shown are

(from left): Stacey Biggs, 6, of Novi; and Julia Schlapppacasso, 4, Kurt Schlapppacasso, 6, Cory Grzelek, 4, Brian Kuhn, 4, and Jennifer Grzelek, 5, all of Farmington Hills.

## 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 Pages." 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.

### SCORES UP

Each year, Thomas P. Behan Junior High School students, affiliated with Our Lady of Sorrows in Farmington, qualify and enter the Midwest Talent Search. Students in sixth, seventh and eighth grades are eligible if they have scored at the 95th percentile or better on either the total math or verbal portions of a national standardized in-grade achievement test administered in the local school district.

The search identifies students who have high mathematical and/or verbal abilities and offers them additional opportunities.

The Identification Instrument is the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) normally administered to high school juniors and seniors. The following students from Behan took the SAT this year and did as well and better than many area high school seniors: Kelly Carroll, Mark Carlin, Jacqueline Curtis, Catherine Daneshvar, Corbin Elliott, Brendan Haldane, Jennifer Heard, Brent Jenkins, Nicole Knapp, Kristy Koslowski, Julie Kroat, Michelle Lyons, Paul Murphy, Judith Rosowski and Heather Sullivan.

### ACTING SECRETARY

Farmington Board of Education trustee Jack Cotton will act as board secretary during the upcoming June school elections. It was announced March 18.

Current secretary Janice Holnick's term on the board will expire with the June elections, and she is running as an incumbent candidate. Cotton was appointed due to the possible conflict of interests for Holnick.

School elections this year are scheduled for Monday, June 9. Two seats are to be filled.

### NEW SCRUBBERS

Fifteen Clarke automatic floor scrubbing machines were purchased at a cost of \$52,970 by Farmington Public Schools March 18.

Sheldon Supply Co. of Detroit was awarded the bid at a unit cost of \$4,190. Funds were authorized from the district's Capital Needs account.

### PERSONNEL MOVES

One appointment, one retirement and four resignations were approved and accepted March 18 by the Farmington Board of Education.

Sun Park was hired Feb. 25 as a bilingual aide at East Middle School. Donna Fleishman, second grade teacher at Larkshire Elementary, will retire at the end of this school year. She has worked in the district since April 1984.

On leave are teachers Carole Massey and Gaylana Rowe-Brown. Special education aide Ruth McCoy resigned effective March 14. Harrison High School marketing teacher Thomas Vanderwill resigned effective June 13.

### ATTENDS FORUM

Kristin Kraatz of Farmington Hills took part in the 1985 National Young Leaders Conference, held in Washington the week of Feb. 23.

Honored by Birmingham Marian High School for outstanding leadership and academic performance, the Congressional Scholar participated in the weekend activities with 150 scholars from the Midwest.

During the week, a number of nationally known figures in government, media and academia addressed the scholars. Highlighting the week's activities were a Congressional breakfast reception on Capitol Hill, a media panel at the National Press Club and a tour of the White House. A visit to the Smithsonian Institutions and a performance at the Kennedy Center for Performing Arts concluded the week's events.

### ACADEMIC SCHOLAR

Gordon Richel of Farmington

Hills was awarded a 1986 precollege scholarship in architecture from Lawrence Institute of Technology, Southfield.

Richel, a senior at North Farmington High School, received the award on the basis of high academic achievement.

### MUSIC RATES

North Farmington High School students received nine first division and five second division ratings recently at the Michigan School Band Festival in Howell.

Those receiving first division awards include Laurie McKinnon, Terri Kaitz, Howard Collins, Lisa Hart, Gary Brode, Adrienne Dummer, Marianne Leitch, Julie Kinney and Kim Trabbie.

Second division ratings were awarded to Autumn Dunbar, Marianne Leitch, Heather McKinnon, plus Jennifer Litvin Jane Smith, and Allen Agrawal and Kim Larion for duets.

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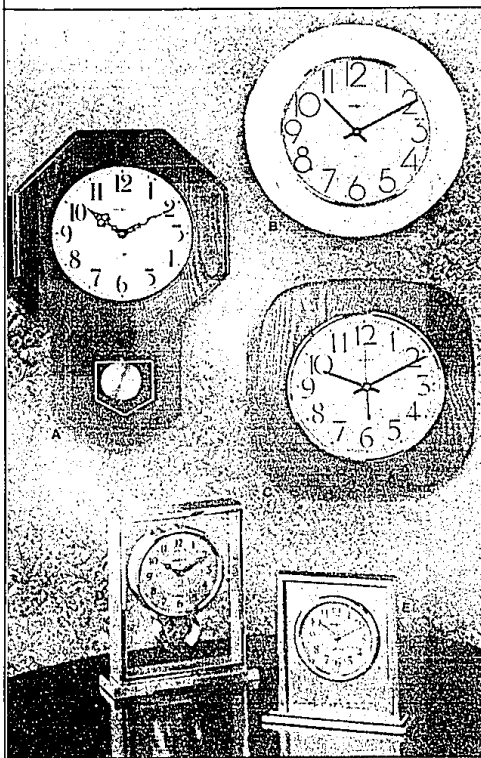
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