

# Forensics teaches students life skills

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coaching, and trying to generate a new interest in forensics at the school.

"It's a labor of love for me," he said. "I'm trying to bring it back from the grave, so to speak."

The team forensics concept never died at either Farmington or Harrison. Under the direction of teacher Laura Sparrow, in her eighth season, Harrison has consistently offered classes and has upwards of 30 students who compete each spring.

"Forensics guarantees the building's program is well-rounded," she

added. "These are different talents that also deserve to shine."

Farmington High School's club has flourished under the leadership of teacher and 15-year forensics veteran Gina VanHorn.

**STUDENTS ACROSS** the country compete in 14 different speaking categories, from storytelling and sales presentations, to humorous, dramatic or persuasive speaking, plus others.

Participation in a student forensics group entails arising at 5 a.m. each Saturday from March through

May, and travelling across the state for 12 hours plus days, the coaches said. Invitational competitions throughout the season involve districts and regions.

"Emotionally, it's a real blood-bath," Sparrow said. "The students are remarkably poised. They learn to cope on very short notice. Grace under pressure is something they teach each other."

"They learn to communicate," Van Horn added, "and how to deal with winning and losing."

AS WELL as being fun, forensics

is career-oriented, according to the coaches. Entry into any communications field, including radio and television, law and teaching, is especially enhanced, Sparrow said.

Getting the general student body to understand the forensics concept is a challenge for the three coaches. Many students and the public view forensics as a science, because all they've heard about is forensic medicine, they said. Drilling up support is time consuming, as well.

"To a great extent, word gets around," Sparrow said, "although

success attracts kids. I recruit — when I hear a great voice, I do a little arm-twisting."

After competitions are over, and sometimes during the forensics season, the teams take time to perform for community groups, including middle and elementary schools from which comes future talent, senior citizen groups, and civic organizations which lend moral, and sometimes financial, support.

"A lot of people do it for fun, but I do it for the competition," said Farmington High School junior Julianne Smith, who will attend state finals this Saturday.

She became interested in forensics when a high school team came to her middle school to perform. Smith got a friend to join the forensics club in high school, and has worked to perfect her performance — in salesmanship — for the state competition two years running.

Other local talent going to Ann Arbor this Saturday includes: Farmington High School senior Lisa Samra; Harrison Junior Marc Tenenbaum, who will also compete nationally this May in Tulsa, Okla.; Harrison freshman Jamie Ryke; the North Farmington duo of senior Jackie Aho and junior Bill Neuschaefer; and North Farmington sophomore Christy Hicks. North Farmington junior Jennifer Smith is an alternate.

"You really have to decide on a philosophy," Van Horn said about forensics coaching. "Winning used to be secondary, but not anymore. The more you expect, the more you get."

## Watch program is growing

Recent figures released to Farmington Neighborhood Watch block captains "illustrates the tremendous success we have experienced" since the program began in 1983, according to program coordinator Commander Chuck Lee of the Farmington Department of Public Safety.

The department is making an effort to certify block safety programs, and interest near neighbor-

hoods in the program, he said. Information will be provided upon request, and dates set for two necessary meetings, which 50 percent of residents must attend.

Since the program's inception in December 1983, 40 residential blocks and one condominium complex — about 40 percent of the city's blocks — have been certified.

"As a result of the department's

contact with over 3,000 residents in the program, we have received hundreds of additional calls from residents concerning suspicious circumstances, vehicles and persons," a letter to the Neighborhood Watch captains said.

SIX PEOPLE were arrested as a direct result of Neighborhood Watch calls, Lee added.

Compared with 1983 figures, the program has worked to decrease daytime residential burglaries 43 percent, nighttime residential burglaries 19 percent and commercial business burglaries 23 percent, according to Lee's figures.

"We knew from the experience of other cities . . . that the city of Farmington would also see a decrease in neighborhood crimes once the program got off the ground," Lee said.

"Frankly, I did not anticipate this type of progress . . . nor did I expect to see our crime stats decrease this much in just two years."

Lee encourages any residents, or neighborhood groups, interested in participating in the Neighborhood Watch program to call him at 473-7262.

## Sesquicentennial plans set

Michigan will observe its sesquicentennial during 1987, beginning Jan. 26, the official date of its 150th anniversary.

Most communities throughout the state are making plans to join in celebrating this milestone.

The formation of a local sesquicentennial agency to represent the Farmington area is under way.

Kay Briggs of Farmington Hills and Margaret Walker of Farmington have been named to the executive board of the Oakland County Sesquicentennial Agency, a countywide coordinating council.

Along with JoAnn Soronen, director of the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce, they will comprise the Farmington Area Sesquicentennial Committee, organized to promote and coordinate special activities within the Farmington area.

"We hope that you will be able to serve as the official representative

of your organization, or that you will designate some other member to serve in this position of liaison. Official representatives will advise the local committee regarding any special plans (exhibits, programs, projects) being arranged by your membership. The local committee will assist in promoting your activities through the publication and circulation of a Farmington Area Sesqui-

centennial Calendar. Official representatives will also receive notices of any general meetings which may be planned," Soronen said.

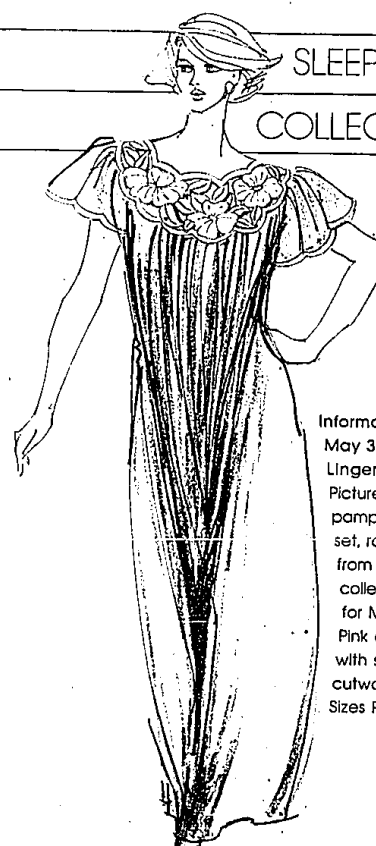
For further information or assistance, or to report on preliminary plans, contact any member of the local committee: Kay Briggs (474-4608), JoAnn Soronen (474-3440), Margaret Walker (476-6349).

## Kiwanis plans auction

Farmington Hills Kiwanis members counted a bathtub and sink as the most unusual items that will go up for bid during their auction May 10.

But the plumbing fixtures take a second seat to a tummy tuck, valued at \$2,500 that has been donated to benefit the Farmington Training

Center. Special Education teachers Ed Wolf, Carol Wyman, Ben Chin and Mary Sletten are gathering the items, plain and fancy, for bidding that begins at 7:30 p.m. Saturday in the center, 33009 Thomas in downtown Farmington.



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