

# Seminar brings police, educators together

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accountable; as a society to come back to responsibility," said Chuck Ludwig, chief of the probate court intake department and one of the speakers at the seminar.

"We're moving more and more toward victim involvement and getting them (the victims) involved with the court process and keeping them informed."

"I think you need to involve the family," Ludwig added. "We have to focus differently and involve people differently. Let's retrench — we have to look at helping more (children) than we're helping."

**RAYMOND SHARP**, another speaker and supervisor of offender programs for the probate court, added: "There is a movement toward criminalization of the juvenile system. We're in the era of the victim."

Whether criminalization or other suggestions become solutions, those

attending the seminar agreed something must be done about juvenile truancy and crime in Oakland County.

Complaints at the probate court totaled 5,400 in 1985; Ludwig predicts at least 5,600 will be handled in 1986. Of the 1985 numbers, 400 were complaints about out-of-county juveniles and most were from Wayne County, he said.

For lesser juvenile charges, such as alcohol offenses, the court holds conferences with youths and their parents before deciding whether to proceed with court action, Ludwig said. The conferences are designed to place the responsibility on the child and save the cost of processing them through the system.

**FARMINGTON HARRISON** assistant principal John Summerlock, who attended the seminar, questioned court personnel about school responsibilities when the truant stu-

dent isn't around to be helped. "Where does our responsibility end?" he asked. "Legally, we have an obligation to inform the court and parents."

Summerlock said the students seem to move through the system in a circle, going from school to court and back again.

Ludwig and his peers suggested school officials take a "get tough" stance and permanently expel students with repeated absences, placing the educational responsibility on parents.

According to probate court prosecutor Jean Dehonyos, state law places the burden on parents to see that their children attend school. Those who violate this misdemeanor can be fined up to \$50 and spend 90 days in jail. Dehonyos said she knows of no cases in Oakland County to date in which this law was enforced.

TRUANCY IS not a separate prob-

lem, one social worker said. Other factors, such as drug use and family situations, must be considered.

"Seventy-five percent of the kids that are truant are doing drugs," he said. "They are doing terrible things to themselves. We have a deep concern about their well-being, and they're damaging themselves every day."

"After 16, we don't even deal with them; they go into Never-Never Land where people don't care about them."

Michigan law requires a student to attend school until the age of 16, when attendance becomes optional. Help should start long before a child reaches that age, the seminar leaders said.

Many problems begin in elementary school, when a pattern of spotty attendance begins, they said. Seminar participants agreed that intervening at an early age is a key to preventing future problems. Several speakers cited cases in which the

history of problem attendance began in first grade. Take Anthony, an Oakland County ninth grader who had been absent between 30 and 70 times each year since the first grade.

"HOW THE devil did he get to the ninth grade?" Joe O'Connor, intake referee for the juvenile court, asked. "It's time we looked at charging parents with neglect for not sending their kids to school."

"We're way to late," an administrator agreed.

"We've talked about holding the student accountable," O'Connor added. "Let's start at the bottom level and start holding parents accountable. There are penalties enforceable by the courts. We should prosecute the parent who just doesn't send the child to school."

Although O'Connor said he would not accept a truancy complaint on a 7-year-old, "I will take one on neglect. The most appropriate way to go is to charge the parent with neglect. Maybe we ought to look at that for 14- and 15-year-olds too."

**ONE ELEMENTARY** principal said he had worked through the probate court because of attendance problems in his school.

"Three or four cases did it," he said. "You'd be surprised how much the chronic (cases) improve. It doesn't take long for word to get around."

Supervisor for the court's repeat offender and status offender programs, Raymond Sharp, spoke of the seminar attendees as a team. "Our relationship is changing," he said.

# Student searches are debated

By Casey Hans  
staff writer

There is legal support for using metal detectors and police dogs in some student searches, an assistant prosecutor from Oakland County said last week.

If administrators have "reasonable suspicion" of contraband or weapons, students' property, purses and lockers can be searched and the items seized, said Jean Dehonyos, an assistant prosecutor in the Oakland County Probate Court, which hears juvenile cases.

She suggests officials only use metal detectors in individual cases, and only if there is reasonable suspicion, because of pending litigation in Wayne County. "Indiscriminate use is not recommended," she said.

Police dogs cannot be used to sweep search a group of students or a parking lot filled with cars, but can be used for a "sniff" — walking the halls of a school and sniffing for contraband in lockers, Dehonyos said.

Actual locker searches are allowed if there is a "clear and immediate danger," she said.

"IF IT'S indiscriminate use, that's a sweep search; that's a problem," she said. "Michigan is more restrictive in our approach (to searches) than other states."

In addition, dogs should not be used if officials are acting under police instructions as they are more restricted in their search procedures. Police officials must determine probable cause when they search, she added.

In support of school searches, Dehonyos cited a U.S. Supreme Court decision that said "state officials were not to be held to probable cause review." If they have a reasonable suspicion, a search can be done.

The case involved a high school teacher who discovered a female student in the lavatory, and took her to the office on suspicion of smoking, which was against school rules. The student denied smoking, and because of "reasonable suspicion," the vice principal searched the student's purse.

Not only did the official discover cigarettes, but drug paraphernalia, marijuana and proof that she had been selling it, in the purse. The student was convicted of controlled substance charges and subsequently she sued.

**DEHONYOS SUGGESTS** a two-pronged test for school administrators to use before searching students:

- justify the search at its inception.
- be sure it is reasonably related in scope, and not extreme.

When seizing materials that will be used in court, Dehonyos asked that as few people handle them as possible, and that the person confiscating place them in a bag and initial and date the evidence.

She warned officials against improper search and seizure because of liability. "If you take some actions that are unreasonable . . . you may be liable for a civil rights violation . . . which may translate into dollars and cents."

# C'ville test scores reported

Scores on the American College Test (ACT) in the Clarenceville School District are down slightly, but still higher than state and national averages.

The district takes in parts of Livonia, Bedford Township and Farmington Hills.

The ACT includes English, math, social studies and natural science, and has a possible 36 points.

Michigan uses the ACT to determine financial aid on the basis of need for potential college students. Most of the colleges in the state require the ACT and not the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) for admission. Both tests are administered in June of a student's junior year and throughout his or her senior year.

**CLARENCEVILLE STUDENTS** have a composite score of 19.1 on the ACT, 0.47 less than the composite a year ago. Michigan's average remained at last year's 18.9, while the national average jumped 0.2 points this year to 18.8.

In Clarenceville, students scored an average 17.4 for English, 19.2 for math, 17.6 for social studies and 21.7 for natural science.

Thirty Clarenceville students took the ACT and none the SAT, said Denis Ringle, counselor at Clarenceville High School. He didn't know how many males and how many females took the exam.

"I'm very pleased about it," Ringle said. "Thirty is about one-third of our junior class. It shows that they learned those areas."

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**FACTS ON FAXON**

In the last session of the legislature, only one bill addressing a mandatory prison sentence for crimes against handicapped and senior citizens was voted upon by the Michigan Senate. SB-169, a mandatory sentencing provision added to the substitute bill (A. Cropsey), was voted "YES" by Senator Faxon.

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