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Giving — theme of kindergarten project

By Casey Hans
staff writer

'There's a lot of (parent) volunteer work in the classroom. They believe in the program.'

— teacher Gayle Zimmerer

ALAMEDA EARLY Childhood Center kindergartners learned a lesson in giving this month.

Some did household chores, while others raked leaves or fed the family cat. They all found ways to earn money to buy books for needy chil-

dren. The project was a voluntary one, but all the children participated, according to teacher Gayle Zimmerer.

"There are a lot of things the kids learned from this. They developed an awareness of the children who didn't have books," Zimmerer said. Students also learned how to earn money, its value, and the importance of giving it away without receiving any reward, she said.

Alameda's kindergarten is part of a centralized kindergarten pilot program, which began in the Farmington district this fall.

A total of 79 students are attending the pilot at either Alameda or Fairview early childhood centers, according to Alameda supervisor/principal Mary Lou Sommerville. There are two classes at each center; many of the children are bused to school each day.

THE CENTRALIZED program is an elective one; parents choose whether to send their children to the early childhood centers, or to kindergartens at individual elementary schools.

Nearly 100 students enrolled in the program when it began in September. Numbers have declined because of shifting populations and "relocating" of families, assistant superintendent Mary Lou Ankele told the school board in November. Sommerville said other parents removed their children from the half-day program because of day care concerns.

The holiday book giving at Alameda is just one project veteran kindergarten teacher Zimmerer is doing for her youngsters, who live throughout the district.

The Alameda kindergartners earned \$86 — enough to purchase 45 children's books, which were donated to children through the "Gift of Reading" program sponsored by Focus: HOPE and the Detroit Free Press.

Kindergartner Steven Ryan's money-raising venture was a bit different: he collected 84 deposit bottles to generate money for the project.

All the children designed their own "wrapping paper," selected a



photos by RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Gayle Zimmerer, an Alameda kindergarten program teacher, helps Kristien Oleson, 6, wrap a package.

book to give, wrapped the books and signed their names to them. Zimmerer is encouraging such multifaceted projects in her classrooms.

THE CENTRALIZED pilot is a program she supports. Zimmerer requested a transfer into the program from her previous post as a developmental kindergarten teacher at Fairview. Another veteran kindergarten teacher, Barbara Bennett, is teaching two centralized kindergarten sessions at Fairview.

"The parents have been very supportive," Zimmerer said about the pilot program. "There's a lot of (parent) volunteer work in the classroom. They believe in the program."

The one-year optional pilot was instituted this fall, after several hundred parents attended a school board meeting in the spring. They were protesting the possible centralization

of the district's entire kindergarten program.

A parent at that meeting suggested the optional approach and it appears the district plans to leave it that way.

"I really like the idea of the option," said Sommerville, who also served on a 1985-86 early childhood task force that recommended some changes in the kindergarten program. "I don't think the community is ready for a full (centralized) program."

She said the centralized program has been an easy transition for many children who attended other programs at the early childhood centers. There are also many "first borns" — students who don't have older brothers or sisters to follow into elementary school, she said.

The centralized kindergarten pilot is part of an early childhood study

being conducted in Farmington this year chaired by Richard Rutter, supervisor/principal at Fairview. The study committee includes principals, administrative staff members, residents and kindergarten and first-grade teachers from each elementary building.

Committee members are attending early childhood conferences, visiting programs in other districts, and are planning an in-service session for kindergarten and first-grade teachers this year, according to a report from Superintendent Graham Lewis. An early childhood consultant from Michigan State University is also being used as a resource.

"They (the committee) will investigate relevant issues facing Farmington, as we prepare to adjust the curriculum to reflect current practices," Lewis said.



Alameda student Collins Edmonds, 6, shows off a chain he made out of red and green paper.

inkwell

Inkwell provides primary and secondary school news and information about Farmington-area students. The column appears monthly throughout the year as part of the Observer's "School Page." Send news items to: The School Page, Farmington Observer, 33263 Grand River, Farmington, 48024. Include a telephone number where a contact person can be reached during the day.

TOP WINNERS

Five students from North Farmington High School took top honors in the Junior engineering Technical Society's National Engineering Aptitude Search Test — more than any other school in this year's program. All placed in the top five percent of students tested.

The test was administered by the Lawrence Institute of Technology in Southfield.

North Principal Don Cowan and LIT Dean of Engineering Robert Ellis presented awards to the following students: Junior and first-place winner James Sung; second-place winners Tim McMin, a Junior, David Appel, a Junior, and Michael Elum, a senior; and honorable mention-award winner Amy Thursam, a sophomore at North.

All the North Farmington winners reside in Farmington Hills.

Some 287 students participated in this year's exam at LIT, which tests student abilities in verbal, numerical, science and mechanical comprehension.

WRITING WINNER

A Mercy High School student has won a national writing competition. Mary Strimel of West Bloomfield was one of two students nominated by the Farmington Hills school's English department for the National Council of Teachers of English Achievement Awards in Writing competition. She was selected as one of 700 national winners out of 6,000 entries.

HE'S COMMENDED

Farmington Hills resident Steven

Tobocman, a senior at Bloomfield Hills Cranbrook Kingswood Upper School, was commended by the National Merit Scholarship Corp. He was lauded for his score on the 1986 preliminary scholastic aptitude exam.

MUSIC CLINIC

The concert orchestra from Power Middle School in Farmington Hills attended a string clinic at Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti this fall. The clinic was an all-day activity sponsored by the Michigan School Band and Orchestra Association.

SHE PUBLISHES

Michelle Jacobsen, a seventh grader at Power Middle School in Farmington Hills, published a review of a children's game, "Presidential Game," in the October issue of "Creative Kids," a national magazine based in Mobile, Ala.

She submitted the article as a project in the gifted and talented program last year while a student at Longacre Elementary. Mary Joyce Reader at reviewed the project at Longacre.

HATS OFF

French classes at Power Middle School in Farmington Hills celebrated a French holiday Nov. 24 by making hats. DELTA coordinator Barbara Robbeck and teacher Martie Forts helped coordinate the project. Student hats were judged on creativity and won prizes.

STAFFER LAUDED

The Michigan Association of School Psychologists' Presidential Award was presented to James Miner, a special education psychologist for Farmington Public Schools. He received his award at the association's annual conference held in October in Traverse City. The award was given "in appreciation and recognition of professional activity, leadership, and dedication to professional and school psychology." The conference stressed the philosophy "All Children Can Learn."

50 PARTICIPATE

Fifty Mercy High School students participated Dec. 1 in a day-long student leadership forum at the Farmington Hills school.

Mercy is one of 1,400 secondary schools that participated in nine state Board of Education forums this month. The forums are held as part of Project Outreach, implemented by the state board in 1981 to improve public attitudes about public schools.

CAREERS STRESSED

The second math and science careers seminar for sixth and ninth grade girls is planned for Friday, Jan. 23 from 8:30-1:30 a.m. at Oakland Community College. It is sponsored by the Farmington Gifted and Career Development Department in cooperation with the Farmington branch of the American Association of University Women. Students from Farmington schools, and other neighboring communities, are being invited to the event. A keynote speaker from the National Aeronautics Space Administration is scheduled to speak.

BLOOD DRIVE

A community blood drive sponsored by Farmington Public Schools employees and the American Red Cross is slated for Monday, Dec. 21, from 1-7 p.m. at Ten Mile School. Employees are volunteering for everything from setup to serving refreshments to scheduling appointments and giving blood. To schedule an appointment, call Gert LeFevre at 477-1300.

HOLIDAY SPIRIT

Students at Gill Elementary in Farmington Hills are working to make a child happy this holiday season. As a school project for December, each class will fill 15-inch stockings with gum, nuts and small personal items for the Red Cross to distribute to needy children. The students are also collecting canned goods for the Farmington Area Goodfellows.

GROUP SCHEDULED

The Interlochen Arts Academy Dance Troupe is scheduled to perform at Farmington High School this winter, a program co-sponsored by the school district and the Farmington Community Center. The performance is scheduled for March 1 at 7:30 p.m. in the high school's auditorium.



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