

Vocational school sheds its best-kept secret title

Administrators there call it Oakland County's best-kept secret — the South Oakland Vocational Education Center in Walled Lake. But the secret's not a secret anymore. Last year, SVOVEC was selected as one of 12 exemplary career opportunity program centers in the nation.

Like most secondary schools, however, the school is in a period of declining enrollment. Today, 922 students attend classes there as opposed to 1,050 in 1981.

"We're just like Hardee's and McDonald's," said Jane Clover, public relations person and counselor. "We're fighting for students."

The vocational center also is fighting the stigma of a school for those who can't compete in regular high schools. Clover said, "We serve students who want job skills, the silent majority who don't go to counselors except if they're in trouble. The blue collar think of themselves as skill-oriented."



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Derrick Guguera, a Clarencville High adult night school student, puts the finishing touches on a julienne salad.

we're attempting to reach the gifted."

SVOVEC STUDENTS come from public school districts — West Bloomfield, Walled Lake, Farmington, Clarencville, Novi, Huron Valley and South Lyon — as well as private schools within those district boundaries.

Students, mostly high school juniors and seniors, are bused from their home districts for half-day sessions for a variety of courses. The other half day is spent in their home school.

Among the courses offered are: auto body, automated office, auto mechanics, architectural drafting, cosmetology, data processing, dental and medical office assistant, diesel mechanics, electronics, engineering design and

illustration, floral design, food service, greenhouse management and landscaping, machine trades, modern printing, visual merchandising and welding.

Evening vocational classes for adults desiring to complete high school requirements are available through individual district community education offices. A summer school is also offered in selected subjects.

The center is one of four vocational centers administered by Oakland Intermediate Schools. Others are in Royal Oak (southeast), Pontiac (northeast) and Clarkston (northwest).

SVOVEC is operated by Walled Lake Schools with a half-mill of Oakland County tax money first approved in 1967. The center opened in 1971.

She keeps her cool

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the anguish on the phone, her adrenalin pulled her through. Green later met the baby and parents.

"Babies... that can really bother you," she said, describing similar incidents she's encountered since. "But once the call comes in, you're so fast to react."

Green received a civilian citation from the police department for helping the baby. She received a citation for helping another baby a couple of days before the Luttmans called. Her training in CPR and basic first aid have gone a long way in helping her help others over the phone.

Green tries to follow up with the callers she helps. Sometimes, that's tough, but she tries, especially when babies are involved.

In her nine years, she's encountered just about every incident possible. When she first began her career, there wasn't any training in how to handle people in emergencies over the telephone.

IN THOSE days, becoming a dispatcher wasn't a career job. Because of the stress and changing

hours, there was a lot of turnover. But Green learned by doing.

Talking by phone with people who are often very upset is quite different than doing the same thing face-to-face.

"You may forget something very vital, but you'll never do it again," Green said. "A lot of it is common sense. If there's a robbery in progress, you ask if there's a weapon. If there's a family fight, you try to keep the caller separated from the spouse."

"At the time of the phone calls, you're just a cold person and I'm really not. I'm sympathetic. But you can't let anything at the time throw you off."

Getting as much information as possible from the caller is critical. She also tries to keep the caller on the phone until police arrive. "You are an officer's lifeline at that point in time. He has to go by the information you are giving him," she said.

As dispatch coordinator, a promotion she received in 1984, Green handles staff scheduling, serves as shift leader and as an assistant to her supervisor, Sgt. Joseph Rebb, communications division commander.

THE STRESS and the hours can be tough. But she never really feels the stress until after an incident, or once she gets home. To relieve the stress, she exercises. "You've got to relieve the stress, otherwise it builds up."

Right now, she's working the morning shift, which means getting up at 5:15 a.m. and driving from Wixom to be at work by 7:15 a.m. She works to 3 p.m.

Dispatchers rotate shifts every four months. She prefers the night shift. The night hours are more exciting because there's more criminal activity, Green said.

Despite changing hours, she maintains a routine that works best for her. Her years with the police department haven't changed her mind about becoming an officer. "I never came into dispatch wanting to be an officer. I have no desire to be out there," she said, adding that her two brothers are former police officers.

She became interested in dispatching through her contact with Farmington Hills officers. Her parents owned the former Green's Towing, which did a lot of work for the department.

police/fire calls

Listed below are some of the Farmington-area police incidents, fire calls and court cases reported during the past week:

- **2 CHARGED**
A 28-year-old Farmington Hills man and a 25-year-old Novi woman were charged in the break-in of a model home on Sheffield Court, in the Nine Mile-Haled area, Feb. 11.
- **ARRAIGNED** Friday before District Judge Michael Hand of Farmington, the two stood mute to one count of breaking and entering of a building with intent to commit larceny. Innocent pleas were entered.
- **PERSONAL BOND** was set at \$5,000, pending a preliminary examination in 47th District Court. The defendants face a sentence of up to 10 years in prison if convicted.
- **TWO WERE ARRESTED** outside the house about 8:35 p.m. Feb. 11, after a burglary alarm sounded. Their car contained light fixtures and furnishings believed taken from the house, said detective Brian DeGrande of the Farmington Hills Police Department.
- **CARS RECOVERED**
A Farmington Hills homeowner discovered a 1987 Dodge van stolen from Waterford Township parked in

- his driveway on Hawberry Feb. 9.
- **A Farmington Hills officer** on patrol discovered a 1983 Pontiac stolen from Troy parked along Doreen Feb. 10.
- **A Farmington Hills resident** discovered a 1981 Chevrolet stolen from Warren parked in the driveway of a nearby house on Leyte Feb. 11.
- **A 1976 Chevrolet utility truck** was recovered in Detroit after being stolen from R. V. Electric, 32722 Eight Mile in Farmington, Feb. 10.
- **CAR FIRE**
An estimated \$2,500 in damage was reported to a car that caught fire while the occupant was driving it along Grand River in Farmington Feb. 10.
- **AT ABOUT 7:30 p.m.**, as the Ford Escort approached Smithfield, it stalled, then flames and smoke were noticed coming from under the car's hood.
- **GASOLINE** was listed as the fire's cause. It took Farmington firefighters 10 minutes to extinguish the flames. The hood of the car had to be pried open, because the latch was broken.
- **THE VEHICLE** was owned by a Dearborn company, according to a Farm-

- ington Department of Public Safety report. There were no injuries.
- **THEFTS REPORTED**
Cash was reported stolen from the Muirwood Apartments Activity Center Jan. 23-25.
- **A wallet and cash totaling \$165** were reported stolen from a locker at the Farmington Area YMCA, 28100 Farmington, Feb. 2.
- **A 1988 Pontiac Bonneville** valued at \$14,000 was reported stolen from Kendallwood Apartments Feb. 8-10. It was recovered in East Detroit.
- **A 1984 Chevrolet station wagon** was reported stolen from a house on Tredwell Feb. 9-10.
- **A plastic bag containing 84 cloth** diapers valued at \$105 were reported stolen from the front porch of a house on Cadillac Feb. 10.
- **A ski jacket** valued at \$125 was reported stolen from a student locker at North Farmington High School, 32900 13 Mile, Feb. 11.
- **A 1984 Buick Century** valued at \$7,000 was reported stolen from a garage on Leyte Feb. 11. It was recovered in Farmington Hills.
- **A 1988 Pontiac** valued at \$5,000 was reported stolen from a driveway on Averhill Feb. 11-12. It was recovered in Detroit.

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