

Pupils learn to handle pressure of teen years

By Casey Hane
staff writer

When Farmington-area students enter middle school this fall, they will be braced for whatever comes their way, thanks to the efforts of some high school students.

Many fifth graders participated this year in a Peer Resistance Skills Program put on by members of three area Students Against Driving Drunk chapters.

Student teams from Harrison, Farmington and Mersey high schools visited area elementary schools beginning in January, giving a first-hand account of dealing with pressures of the teen years.

It's fun," said SADD member Kara Kurtz, who will be a sophomore at Farmington High this fall. It's nice to put their fears to rest."

As a high school freshman this year, Kurtz said she could empathize with their fears about entering a new school.

Harrison principal Clayton Graham related the "Peer Resistance" program to recent community-wide interest in addressing drug and alcohol abuse. "The program is being received with a great deal of support," he said.



SADD MEMBERS received nine hours of training about peer pressure and how to resist it. They then prepared a lesson for the younger students. During each 50-minute session, younger students learn about four different types of peer pressure and five techniques for saying "no." Team members give basic information, then demonstrate the techniques through role playing by involving the young students.

The Peer Resistance Skills Program was part of the annual goal-setting for Harrison's chapter, according to Harrison teacher and SADD chapter advisor Maria Schneider. It was one of several

chapter projects for the year.

Done as a pilot in Ingham County last year, this is the first time Farmington-area SADD chapters have incorporated such a program. Although it is designed for both fifth and sixth grades, the high school students concentrated on younger students.

"This is the best age in which to present it, when kids are being approached to experiment with drugs and alcohol," said Bob Lekovich, a counselor and SADD chapter advisor at Farmington High School and a SADD regional director.

PROGRAMS WERE scheduled

this year at Beechview, Eagle, Wood Creek, Larkshire, Flinders and St. Fabian. "We plan to present it again," Lekovich added.

Fifth grade elementary teachers filled out evaluation sheets, which generally praised the program. "The fifth graders are very interested in what high school students have to say," said one teacher. "It was very worthwhile," and "They related well to younger students," others related.

Measuring results from the program is difficult, Lekovich said. "Some things you can't measure. You just feel good about it, or you don't."

Absentee balloting process explained

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Farmington Hills city clerk Joan Reynolds wants to clear up some confusion with absentee ballot applications for the Aug. 2 primary and Nov. 8 general election.

The official applications automatically mailed to voters 60 years of age and older will be mailed by the city clerk's office sometime this week. The applications many voters have received recently accompanied by candidates' political literature is not from the city, Reynolds said.

"Some of the older people are really confused," she said. "They want to know why we are including that literature with the applications. They think it's coming from us. It's not. My concern is that they think I have sent them out."

Increasingly, political candidates are purchasing voting lists from the city and sending out their own absentee voter applications. The return envelopes bear a stamped city address giving the appearance it's coming from the city, Reynolds said.

The only official application is from the city. The city's distinguishing items are the voter's name, address and precinct voting number typed on the application itself, Reynolds said. "The other

ones don't have this," she said.

THE CITY will accept the completed applications sent to voters by candidates. But they are causing confusion because many voters are receiving multiple applications and mailing them all into the city. That means city clerk employees must take the time to process the multiple applications, which means multiple work and increased costs for the city, Reynolds said.

"We need only one request, and we are going to be getting at least seven applications from the same voter," Reynolds said.

The city application also provides a place for voters to sign if they want to vote absentee in both the August primary and November general elections so they don't have to register twice.

Voters have until 2 p.m. Saturday, July 30, to have an absentee ballot application processed. After that deadline, voters wanting to vote absentee will have to visit the city clerk and vote in the office. After the deadline, voters will not be allowed to take the absentee ballots home to vote, Reynolds said.

Absentee ballots received by early application will be accepted right up to election day. "But if you're voting absentee, you're not supposed to be voting on election day," Reynolds said.

Dad dies, girl kept from class

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Dessert, a teacher at Harrison High School in Farmington, and Erin were stopped before the start of classes Wednesday, by assistant principal Carol Schurstein who is completing her second year in that position.

Schurstein noticed a crowd of school friends around Erin, many of them tearful, according to Robert Landroche, director of the department of secondary education.

Landroche, who was not present at the time, said Schurstein was unaware Erin's father had died the previous day.

Dessert said a group of Erin's friends had not gathered. A single friend was hugging the girl when Schurstein approached and asked, "What's the problem?"

Schurstein, Dessert and Erin proceeded to the school office where Dessert said Holmes counselor Jean

Cogill joined them to discuss the situation. Holmes principal Richard Haertel was absent from the school.

The group also was joined a short time later by Dessert's father, Allen McCoy. He was alerted to the problem at school during a phone call to Helen Hill by Schurstein who wanted to confirm it was Erin's decision to attend school.

Schurstein also called Landroche at school administrative offices, who concurred with Schurstein's decision the girl should not attend school that day.

"I do not want to say anything to cause the child any more distress, nor do I want to debate an administrative decision in the newspaper. In my judgment, the girl would not have benefitted from the educational process and (her presence) would impact on other students," Landroche said later.

The decision was based on phone conversations with Dessert and

McCoy, reports by Holmes teachers that students at the school were upset, and Schurstein's assessment of the situation.

DESSERT AND MCCOY object to the manner in which Erin was told she could not attend school.

"She was callously told she was not welcome, her presence was inappropriate because she could possibly cause a disturbance. Then she was told it was for her own sake," Dessert said.

Erin was composed and not crying, according to Dessert, who said Cogill spoke at length with the girl, both with and without Schurstein present, and said Erin "would be fine" attending school.

"We went up the entire (administrative) ladder and no one in the whole line had any sympathy for this girl trying to go to school when her father had just died," said McCoy.

Dessert, McCoy and Erin left the

school at about 10:30 a.m. after, they said, Schurstein threatened to call the police if they did not leave.

"This is certainly a turn-about," said Helen Hill, adding, "we need to realize our children are precious. We need to understand their emotions."

Erin attended school Thursday after being told late Wednesday afternoon she could do so by Livonia Public Schools Superintendent James Carli. She stayed home Friday. Two sisters, Megan, 16, and Kelly, 17, who attend Livonia Stevenson High, decided not to attend school last week after their father died.

Funeral services were held Saturday.

Landroche said Holmes administrators have been asked to file a complete report on the incident. District administrators will review and analyze the report "to see if there is anything we can learn from it, if there is something else we should be doing."

Sarafa says he owes no political favors

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"The idea is who can work with both parties and get results. I think I'm the best candidate for those kind of results."

Sarafa's Chaldean ancestry has been both a boon and a target during the early weeks of his campaign.

He has received much financial support from the Chaldean community, yet he doesn't want to be seen as a one-dimensional candidate.

tuency, which includes Farmington, Farmington Hills, Beverly Hills, Bingham Farms, Franklin and Southfield Township.

"Ethnic-based politics is nothing new," he said, adding that Chaldean community leadership is "one motivation" for his efforts, but "not the

prime reason."

His endorsements are diverse, including business heavyweights such as Max Fisher, a Republican Party activist and a well-known financier from Farmington Hills; and Frank Stella, Michigan Republican Party finance chairman and a longtime Detroit business executive.

Sarafa was first endorsed by Colleen Engler, 1986 Republican candidate for lieutenant governor, who was elected to the state House at the age of 22.

All his support, both financial and other, comes from within the state, he added.

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