

Wheelchair youth is whiz at keeping stats

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Eric is hounded throughout the game with questions from his coach and teammates. "What's the score?" "How many outs?" "What inning is it?" "Who's up?" But he doesn't seem to mind. He always answers in a cheerful voice, even though the questions are asked 10 times.

His mother says he is shy, but not when it comes to baseball. After all, he knows his stuff. "I bet you thought that was a foul," he says to a reporter. "Well, it wasn't because he popped up and his glove kind of pushed it."

"Oh," the reporter says, wondering aloud how he keeps all the rules straight, and what the penciled-in diamonds mean next to the players' names. "That means they scored," he says. "Do you know much about baseball?"

Eric admits he wasn't always such a baseball fan. It wasn't until he, his 13-year-old brother, Ryan, his father, Jeff, and his mother moved here from Georgia three years ago that he got into the game.

One afternoon during his first summer here, a friend of Ryan's came up with a way to include Eric in the neighborhood pickup games. The 10 boys who played, some of whom are now Giants, liked the idea of playing with Eric and brainstormed to make up special rules for when he bats. They gave him a miniature wooden bat to hit with, "which he takes everywhere," his mother said.

"If ERIC hits it to the pitcher's feet, it's a double," said Joel Sidires, teammate and neighbor. "If it goes past the pitcher's head, it's a home run."

"I had 56 home runs last year," Eric chimes in, "and three so far this year."

"It doesn't matter that he's in a wheelchair," Joel said. "It's fun."

It's the bottom of the third (youth baseball teams play six innings), the Giants are batting, but they are down by four. It's hot and everyone's sweating. "How many outs?" someone asks. "One," Eric replies. "Darn" is the reply.

"Mom, can I have another cookie?" asks Eric. "No. You haven't had your dinner yet."

His mother said earlier that she and her family try to treat him like any other child, but admits it's hard

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sometimes, because he does need special treatment. She praised Ryan for being her right hand. "He's wonderful with Eric. He'd never let anyone hurt him."

While Eric still gets his share of stares, his mother said the friends he has made in his neighborhood and on his team are unusual. "He really is one of the gang. At first, they were afraid of his wheelchair, but then when they got to know him, they weren't."

TO HEAR Eric talk, you wouldn't think he's any different than any other 10-year-old. He is extremely glad that school is out for the summer, although he admits he does like math, art and gym. School also has another attraction, he let slip — a little girl named Elizabeth, his "sort of" girlfriend.

Tacos and fast-food hamburgers are big on his list, as well as the Tigers and Pistons. "I have more baseball cards than I can count," he said.

"When I grow up I want to be a baseball player — if they find a cure," said Eric. "If not, maybe I'll be an announcer."

Walking again and attending the University of Michigan are also among his goals. "He has a lot of hope," his mother said.

The bottom of the sixth has finally arrived. The Giants scored four and they win the game 15-12. Everyone is excited.

"These games seem quick," Eric said. "When you're having fun, time will fly."



THOMAS ARNETT/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Eric Meredith's mom, Sherri, helps him set up the scorebook to keep score at a youth baseball game between the Giants and the Red Sox Wednesday at Kenbrook Elementary School in Farmington Hills.

House labeled menace; ordered torn down

By Casey Hans
staff writer

A Farmington Hills house gutted by fire nearly five months ago was ordered demolished last week, after residents and city inspectors testified the house is not secure against vandals and is in danger of collapse.

"As it now stands, it's an extreme danger," city inspector Leonard Chapman told the city council during a show cause hearing June 13. "The biggest concern I have now is that the building could collapse. It's in immediate danger of collapsing."

"And there are trespassers going into this house."

The \$275,000 house on Herndonwood, near the city's eastern border, has remained fire-damaged since

mid-January because the insurance company has not paid owners on their claim. Although local fire officials have declared the blaze accidental, investigators from Allstate Insurance Co. have not yet closed their hearing.

The city council voted 6-1 to order the house demolished within 10 days, with councilman Ben Marks dissenting. This action follows the city's written notice to the insurance company April 25, declaring the house "dangerous" and ordering the company to vacate, repair or demolish the building.

TESTIMONY WAS given by residents who are concerned with the safety and aesthetics of their neighborhood as well as by others, includ-

ing the house's owners, who believe as much of the house as possible should be saved.

Ronald Simpson, who with his wife, Rosa, is buying the house on a land contract, told the council: "We've been trying to get something definite out of the insurance company. We plan to rebuild and want to save as much of it as we can."

Councilman Marks said he disagreed with tearing down the portion of the house not fire-damaged, and added, "I can see no reason not to have faith in what the man (the owner, Simpson) has said."

Hills resident Henry Bornstein, an attorney, spoke in favor of repairing the house. He also represents former residents Robert and Shirley Lanier, who sold the house to the Simpsons

on a land contract. He said no legal action is planned, but that the Laniers should be considered a party with a secured interest in the matter.

A representative from the Forestbrook/Pebblebrook Homeowners Association called the house unsightly. "It's been left in disrepair for too long. It's an attraction for children and vandals."

"This house has been trashed, let's face it," said another resident. "It should be done away with."

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MAYOR JODY Soronen spoke in favor of the city order. "It's been five months, and now it's our obligation to take some kind of action," she said.

"It seems to me we've waited for five months," councilman Aldo Vagnoni added. "My feeling is, let's get started. Approve the condemnation tonight and see what happens."

After hearing testimony from the

residents and inspector Chapman, plus zoning officer Barbara Aldrich, the council voted to:

- deem the structure unsafe;
- order the Simpsons to demolish the house within 10 days;
- notify secured parties, which includes a bank holding a mortgage on the house; and
- allow city administration to demolish the house if the property owners fail to do so. The cost of this would be charged to the Simpsons.

WL Schools OK budget

By Carolyn DeMarco
staff writer

The Walled Lake school board will spend more than it takes in next year, making up the shortage from savings.

The 1988-89 budget, adopted June 15, shows \$42 million in revenues and \$42.3 in expenditures. The difference of \$300,000 will come from fund equity leaving \$3.3 million.

An additional \$218,000 will have to be cut from fund equity because of the cost of the proposal to allow a Headlee override.

Linda Moskalik, assistant superintendent for finance, said the school district will receive \$5.2 million more in revenue in the 1989-90 school year than it did in 1987-88 because of property tax increases and new construction.

"Along with that new SEV are 281 students, though," she said. At a cost of \$4,100 per student, the district will spend an additional \$1 million to

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serve new enrollments. The increase has prompted adding 15 classrooms only enrolling 144 teachers.

Major projected added expenses unrelated to new enrollment are:

- Salaries, \$1.3 million.
- Fringe benefits — \$850,000.
- Rerooling — \$245,000.
- Classroom computers — \$145,000.
- Buses and station wagons — \$170,000.
- Purchased services — \$161,000.
- Capital outlay — \$243,000.

TRUSTEES PATRICIA Jackman and Robert Gallagher cast dissenting votes in the 4-2 passage of the budget, Jackman said. "It is not a conservative enough approach. We are spending out of fund equity with

more expenses than revenues. Given the climate we need that fund equity in reserve."

Welday faces three Republican challengers in the Aug. 2 primary: Beverly Hills Village president Michael Bouchard, Farmington Hills councilwoman Jan Dolan, and Farmington Hills resident Mike Saraf.

The 69th District covers an area including Farmington, Farmington Hills, and the villages of Beverly Hills, Bingham Farms and Franklin.

Rep. Brotherton announced last January he would not seek re-election, opening the race to newcomers.

Opportunity knocks, Welday decides to run for 69th seat

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else," he said, "but that there were opportunities for me if I wanted to take them." Welday decided he wanted to be painted into that scene.

He worked for the campaign of Republican gubernatorial candidate Richard Headlee in 1982 and headed a 1986 primary attempt by gubernatorial candidate and Oakland County executive Daniel Murphy. In 1987, he served as deputy campaign director for the Jack Kemp for President campaign in Michigan.

He has remained active in both local and state-level Republican clubs.

WELDAY SAID he feels a strong bond with the Farmington-area community, a major part of the 69th District.

"I decided I was going to stay in this community," he said. "I've watched this community grow. I have many friends, people I've gone to school with. Many have encouraged my political career."

"I really feel I've got a strong appeal in this area."

Welday is campaigning door-to-door, targeting precincts, and the voters he feels will come out for the Tuesday, Aug. 2, primary.

If he wins both the primary and general elections, he feels he "can-

get in and not waste a lot of time learning the job. I think people want someone to solve their problems," he added.

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June 25
"Mammoth Follies"

Children's Concert Series

July 23
"Little Red Riding Hood"
Another favorite fairy tale brought to life by the Pirella Göttsche Company
Pavilion Sold Out! Lawn S3

August 6
Bob McGrath of "Sesame Street"
A Festival debut for one of the pre-school set's favorite singers
Pavilion Sold Out! Lawn S5

Saturdays, 11:00 AM
Gates Open at 10:00 AM

The world's first dinosaur musical performed by the Hudson Vagabond Puppets with life size characters

Pavilion Sold Out! Lawn S3

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