

photos by RANDY BORST/staff photographer

A papier-mache tyrannosaurus rex dinosaur was used to campaign at Wood Creek. It was made by fourth graders Shaun Neal, Andrew Saperstein and Charles Hoffman. Pictured is Barbara Bachman's fourth-grade class on election day, Nov. 4.



Fourth grader Amanda Plasecki cast her vote for the Stegosaurus. Pictures were printed on the ballot so that younger Wood Creek students who couldn't yet read could still vote.

Wood Creek candidates offer cold-blooded choice

By Casey Hens
staff writer

It was a beastly sight at Wood Creek Elementary Friday.

Students campaigned frantically for their favorite candidates as young voters in grades one through five were already heading for the polls in a very different type of mock election.

"We'd love your vote, so vote for Rex," said one last-minute plea over the school's loudspeaker during morning announcements.

It wasn't just any commonplace "Rex" they were stumping for. It was the giant, carnivorous tyrannosaurus rex, who was pitted against the herbivorous brontosaurus and stegosaurus in the Wood Creek election battle of the dinosaurs.

THE TRIO of beasts was selected during a primary process several weeks ago by fourth graders in Barbara Bachman's class, who then broke into camps and campaigned for whom they thought was the "best beast."

The idea came from student teacher Cheryl Kennedy, who said students weren't the only ones getting in on the act. Some adult voters were ready to write-in some of the Wood Creek candidates on their official ballot Tuesday.

"The parents love it," she said. "We have people coming in and saying they'd 'rather vote for stegosaurus than what we have now'."

The process from start to finish took about two months, Kennedy said. The project gave students initiative, like the "Rex" campaign team of Shaun Neal, Andrew Saperstein and Charles Hoffman. The three fourth graders built a papier-mache model of their idol to wheel around the school as part of their campaign strategy.

THE FOURTH graders in all the camps worked on banners for the cafeteria, installed campaign signs throughout the school and made political speeches as part of their campaigns. Some gave out candy during campaign speeches. Kennedy said it was a team effort.

"I wanted to do something on the elections," she said. "I thought this was much better because the whole school could get into it. I'm really pleased."

The fourth graders also got to enjoy a victory party Friday afternoon, to celebrate their efforts. It was held before the announcement of the winner, with teachers stressing it wasn't who won, but the campaigning and voting process that was important.

Even Farmington superintendent Graham Lewis and deputy superintendent Michael Flanagan visited the Farmington Hills school Thursday. Of course, they had to cast their ballots absentee.

As part of the room's election education, Detroit Free Press editorial cartoonist Bill Day visited in October to tell about his job during an election year, Bachman said. The students were pleased when Day used one of their ideas — about the recently trapped whales — for his cartoon the next Sunday, Bachman said.



Fourth grader Scott Owens drops his ballot in the box at the main office at Wood Creek Elementary.



Cheryl Kennedy, student teacher for fourth graders, at Wood Creek Elementary. The Nov. 4 dinosaur election was her idea.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Arthur Leonard has been carving his chess set for 20 years and still has three pieces to go. The wood he uses is from a walnut tree that was cut down in the back yard of his Farmington home. He currently has 29 pieces completed.

He carves maple and oak to create 2 chess armies

By Susan Buck
staff writer

All Arthur Leonard needs are three more chess pieces and his chess set will be complete. Leonard, a Farmington resident, began his on-again, off-again effort to construct a chess set from black walnut and maple tree billets 25 years ago.

Some of the wood came from a felled tree in his back yard, some came from a neighbor's tree.

Leonard seldom plays the game now. His leisure time is spent designing the game pieces.

"Chess is a very sophisticated game," Leonard said. "I need another black bishop, a white knight and one more black pawn."

A simple jackknife is the primary tool of Leonard's hobby. Occasionally, Leonard also uses a set of Exacto knives.

"It starts out as whittling. For the detail, it becomes carving. Whittling is done with one hand holding the wood and the other hand doing the cutting. In carving, the piece is fixed, with both hands doing the work," Leonard said.

THE CHESS set was planned to be unique. "I thought it would be inter-

people

esting to make the chess set with helmets in different styles," Leonard said. "I tried to have a lot of different things that don't even show up unless I tell people about them. For instance, trying to determine what kinds of weapons the major pieces should have."

Leonard's set took on a size of its own.

"This whole thing is much larger than an ordinary chess set," he said. "The pawns are 3 inches and the kings and queens are 8 1/2 inches. One of the ramifications of this is that I'm going to have to find a chess board big enough to play all this. For starters, I thought I would use a big piece of checkered cloth and just unroll it."

A horse copied from a bookend became the top of a knight. The knights are fashioned after the classical orders of architecture: Ionic, Doric, Corinthian and Composite.

To ensure authenticity and measurements that are true to scale, Leonard researched his project through many trips to the library,

personal books and observing real life.

USING A small mirror, Leonard constructed the faces of his chess set pieces by studying his own facial planes. "They (the chess figures) all look like him," chuckled wife, Nancy, a Farmington Historical Commission member.

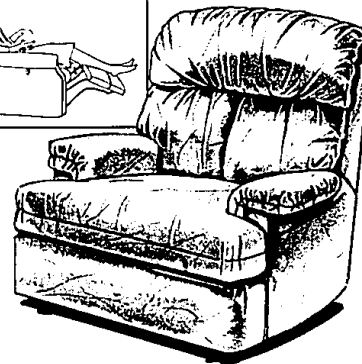
She also posed as a model for one of the queens. Leonard was curious how a human being would stand while holding different weapons.

As a general practice lawyer in downtown Detroit, Leonard frequently studied the Corinthian-style pillars of the City-County Building on Woodward, where his office was located.

Four years ago, he moved his law office to a building known by Farmington residents as The Winery, located on Grand River near Orchard Lake Road. He retired from his practice in May 1987.

Leonard is a Detroit native and a graduate of Central High School and Wayne State University.

He and wife, Nancy, moved to their 1858 historic home in 1968, with their daughter, Jane, then in the 11th grade. A graduate of Farmington High School, Jane is now a Ypsilanti jeweler.



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