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Farmington Observer

Volume 100 Number 31

Thursday, January 19, 1989

Farmington, Michigan

84 Pages

Twenty-Five Cents

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Slain family mourned

By Kevin Brown
staff writer

Murder victims Bill and Bette Darnell took risks in putting their deep Christian faith into practice, said the Rev. Timothy Scott at a memorial service on Tuesday.

"People may have said, 'They did the wrong thing,'" Scott told about 100 mourners gathered at the Schrader Funeral Home in Plymouth. "But would the world be any safer if they didn't take the risk?"

"They felt they could do what they could do to make the world a better place," said Scott, pastor of St. Agatha Catholic Church in Redford Township.

THE DARNELLS — William Jr., 34; Bette, 46, and their daughter Stephanie, 2½ — were found mur-



Bette Darnell (left), daughter Stephanie and husband William Jr. are shown in a family portrait.

dered in their Old Redford home on Cooley in northwest Detroit Jan. 12.

Bill Darnell's Farmington Hills co-workers discovered the bodies, as co-workers were concerned when Darnell didn't show for work that morning.

Also found dead in the home was Alicia Smith, 24, an unwed mother taken in by the couple.

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State probes nursing homes

By Casey Hans
staff writer

State public health officials will investigate a Farmington Hills-based nursing home group after the Internal Revenue Service froze corporate accounts this week, causing several staff members who had not received paychecks to stop working.

The accounts were cleared and employees at the nine Care Centers of Michigan were paid this week after more than a one-week delay, according to financial director Rob Whitty. The facilities represent 140 nursing care beds in Oakland, Wayne and Livingston counties.

"Our main concern is to see that they have adequate staffing to provide services," said James Buchanan, an investigator for the Michigan Department of Public Health, which licenses and regulates nursing homes. He said an investigation would begin immediately.

The facilities include Oak Hill Care Center in Farmington and Williamsburg Convalescent Center in Farmington Hills and other facilities

'We were in negotiations with the IRS over some back taxes. The IRS decided to move ahead and act.'

—Rob Whitty
financial director
Care Centers of Michigan

in Royal Oak, Detroit, Howell and Novi. The IRS froze the accounts while past due taxes were being negotiated, according to Whitty.

WHITTY SAID he met with IRS agents Tuesday to rectify the situation. Employees received past due paychecks that afternoon. "We were in negotiations with the IRS over some back taxes," he explained Monday. "The IRS decided to move ahead and act. They've frozen my funds."

Whitty continued working with the IRS this week on a total resolution of

the tax matter, and was prepared to handle this Friday's payroll, he said. Care Centers employees are paid every other Friday.

Deborah Marlow, a nurse at Oak Hill, said employees had been waiting for paychecks since Friday, Jan. 6. "We were supposed to be paid Friday (Jan. 13), then Monday (Jan. 16)," she said.

After Monday's meeting, she was hopeful but not optimistic. "They're telling us 'Stay, we'll pay you time and a half.' What's time and a half of nothing?"

IN ADDITION to being upset over pay, Marlow said she is concerned with the employees who walked off the job at the Farmington facility Monday — including some of the kitchen staff — adding to an already short-staffed situation.

"The residents are still there — the patient care is going to suffer," she said.

Whitty said of the 1,200 people employed by Care Centers of Michigan, "only five chose not to work" during the past week. All at Oak Hill. He said care would not suffer because of the situation. "Five people

are not going to stop the show," he added.

Mike Connors of the Citizens for Better Care, a group which monitors nursing homes in Michigan, said they are aware of problems being experienced by Care Centers of Michigan, and are approaching the situation from the patient's perspective.

CBC planned to call health officials in Lansing directly this week to see that the matter is watched closely from the top. "It needs to be more than just the local office monitoring," he added.

THE NINE Care Centers of Michigan are home for many elderly and disabled who require regular nursing care. The facilities are owned by Dr. Edwin Blumberg of Farmington Hills, who did not return phone calls to comment on the situation.

Five of the facilities — Williamsburg, Novi Care Center and three nursing homes in Detroit — were purchased in 1988 from California-based Beverly Enterprises.

The two Howell centers, Livingston Care Center and Greenbriar Care Center, are the only nursing care facilities in Livingston County.

Schools seeking proper formula

On Monday, a look at Farmington Public Schools' Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) science scores and the "gender gap" in science education.

By Casey Hans
staff writer

DECLINING ABILITIES in science throughout the nation have prompted Farmington school officials to focus on what should be done locally. This emphasis is being mirrored elsewhere as educators awake to low student skill test scores, statistics that show the United States falling behind in science and technology and a lack of student interest.

"There have been major changes and a realignment," explained Judith White, assistant superintendent for curriculum and staff development for the Farmington district. "A lot more hands-on science — we're working in that direction."

In recent years, the district has:

- Developed an upper elementary science consulting program.
- Appointed a K-12 science coordinator.

- Revamped curriculum and course descriptions. Elementary and middle school curriculum has been rewritten and high school curriculum is in the process of being redone for more hands-on activities.
- Added a new health curriculum at all grade levels.

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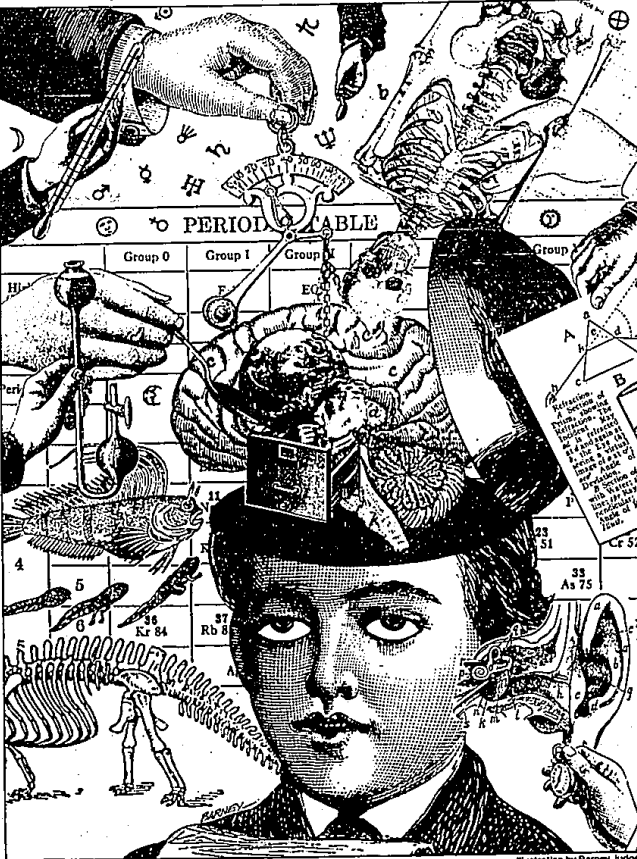


Illustration by Barney Judge

Kids losing 'lab wars' on science front

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

The problem is clear. But the solution has some educators wringing their hands and others rolling up their sleeves.

The problem, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, is that schools in the United States are producing students who are essentially illiterate in science.

A so-called national report card issued in September shows that students tested in 1985-86 generally scored lower than they did when tested in 1970.

"Evidence indicates that both the content and structure of our school science curricula are generally incongruent with the ideas of the scientific enterprise," the report card concludes. "By neglecting the kinds of instructional activities that make purposeful connections between the study and practice of science, we fail to help students understand the true spirit of science."

The science report card was based on an assessment of 11,046 students in grade three; 12,142 in grade seven; and 11,744 in grade 11.

Students in grade three scored an average of 224 (out of 500), or about the same as in 1970; youngsters in grade seven scored 251 on the average, or below the estimated average of 255 in 1970; and those in grade 11 scored 286, or about 17 points below their 303 score of 15 years ago.

"SO, WHAT'S NEW?" was part of the response within the Michigan Department of Education, said Nancy C. Mincemeyer, state coordinator for the improvement of math and science.

State officials suspected that proficiency in science and math had been on the decline for about a dec-

science: an
educational
MELTDOWN

ade, she said. "So the report card basically reaffirmed what we thought in the first place."

In 1986 when Michigan first gave science tests to those students tested: in the state, 56 percent of the 10th graders could answer half of the questions correctly. In Oakland and Wayne counties, the percentages were 62 and 40, respectively.

"The results (of the science report card and state tests) were disappointing, but not surprising," said Dr. LaMoine L. Motz, one of two science consultants for Oakland County Schools. "Science has been a low priority item over the last two decades. As a result of a 'mindless curriculum,' our top students aren't as good as those from other countries."

Motz is directly involved in the science curricula of 28 school districts in Oakland County. He is also president of the National Science Teachers Association.

"There's even some question about whether the average graduate has enough background in science to make the kinds of educated decisions expected from citizens in a highly industrialized country," Motz said.

Educators point to teenage pregnancies and the lack of information about venereal diseases as indicative of an uneducated public.

AS BAD AS the science report card is, it may have understated the

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2nd possible bus shooting studied

By Bob Sklar
staff writer

Police don't know if a possible second school bus shooting incident along 14 Mile Friday was related to a similar confirmed incident 45 minutes earlier.

Both incidents occurred along 14 Mile, west of Farmington Road — on the Farmington Hills-West Bloomfield border.

A reward of up to \$1,000 is available through the Oakland County Chamber of Commerce Silent Observer Program for information leading to the arrest and conviction of whoever took part in the confirmed shooting incident.

Call tips to the Farmington Hills

Police: 474-6181. Identify yourself as a Silent Observer.

In the second incident, Channel 7 news assignment editor John Traflet was talking to Walled Lake Consolidated Schools bus driver Marilyn Goodwin on Verona, at 14 Mile, in West Bloomfield, at 3:30 p.m. Friday when they heard a pop coming from the direction of Farmington Hills.

"I don't know if it was a shot. It sounded like a shot. But nothing was hit on my car or the bus," Traflet said.

"We don't know if it was a gunshot or a backfire. We don't know where

it came from. No one or nothing unusual was seen," said Sgt. Charles Nebus, Farmington Hills Police Detective Section supervisor.

AT 2:45 p.m. Friday, 10-12 Walled Lake Western High School students were aboard Bernadette Vowles' school bus turning left from 14 Mile onto Timbers Edge Boulevard in West Bloomfield when the driver of an eastbound car passing on the right fired two pellets or BBs into the emergency door windows.

The shots shattered the safety glass in a spiderweb pattern but didn't penetrate it. Damage was esti-

mated at \$200, said Lois Lange, Walled Lake schools spokeswoman.

The gunman, driving a 1986-88 red Fiero, was described as white, 17-23 with dark brown hair, spiked on top and jellied back. He possibly had a mustache. He was wearing a white or light-gray Adidas sweatshirt. A female passenger was described as 17-19 with neck-length blond hair.

POLICE HAVE no motive for the gunman's actions. They don't believe the students aboard the bus exchanged derogatory gestures with the driver of the car.

Officers have spent this week following up "a lot of tips and leads," Nebus said.

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