



Douglas Whitten, an eighth grader from East Middle School, was one of several older students visiting Alameda Early Child-

hood Center March 1 for the launch of National Reading Month. Here, he reads a book.

RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Spotlight's on reading in schools

Reading is one of the educational basics, and a number of Farmington schools are gearing up with special programs this month, designated National Reading Month.

At both Alameda and Fairview early childhood centers, students and staff are celebrating the month by focusing on the young reader.

At Alameda, the month was launched March 1, with East Middle School students performing a musical version of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. The older students then visited each classroom and read to the younger children.

Other activities throughout the month include storytelling, bedtime stories, and a program asking parents to record titles of books they read to their children, then encouraging parents to continue

reading. Each door in the school is decorated this month with a different story.

AT FAIRVIEW on Friday, children will come to school dressed as book characters. In addition to encouraging reading throughout the month, the school will have a "character parade" followed by a balloon launch.

At East Middle School, March was launched with students wearing readable buttons for "read a button day."

Other activities include a book-mark contest, poster/art project contest and a student council book donation project. Special reading oriented weeks will include leisure reading week, author/story week and volunteer week.

Self-serve card is latest way to charge gas

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IF THE customer's purchase is Express Credit or Debit, the customer inserts and removes his card, following instructions on the display screen.

The customer dispenses the amount of gasoline he wants, replaces the nozzle and waits for the receipt.

If paying inside, the customer presses the Pay Inside button and pays the cashier after dispensing the gasoline.

THE MOBIL station at Grand River and I-96 also has the reader. They were installed in July, manager Connie Vowel said she had employees out at the pump to educate customers.

"Customers really liked it," she said.

Vowel also mentioned the problem of jammed receipts.

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— Dan Loopp
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moisture, the receipt tapes jam. I have to go out daily and unjam them. Another problem is when a customer rips the receipt off too soon, the next one will be jammed," Vowel said.

TWO FARMINGTON Shell stations, at 12 Mile and Middlebelt and 12 Mile and Orchard Lake Road, use the readers. Readers at Shell stations work basically the same way as those at Mobil stations.

"I've had more positive reaction than negative to them," said Denis Carmody of Twelve Mile and Middlebelt Shell. "With this cold

weather, people don't take the time to learn to operate the machines."

He cited one instance of jammed receipts during the eight weeks since the readers have been installed.

ACCORDING TO Darryl Marx of Marx Auto Care on Orchard Lake Road and 12 Mile, a Shell station, the reader is used by 60 percent of customers who use credit cards.

"They're great," Marx said. "But we're still training some of our customers."

It was "like a nightmare" educating

people when the machines were first installed in May, Hodgson said. People still fail to read the directions and often push the wrong buttons, she said.

"People who are used to it have no problem at all. People in a hurry appreciate it," she said.

Mike Ciesla, a trainee mechanic at the 12 Mile and Farmington Road Mobil station, which offers a full service bay, was both hot and cold on the machine.

"A lot of people like it, but the receipts jam up too much," he said.

ACCORDING TO Hodgson, credit card gasoline purchases, in general, have cost more per gallon for the last six years, even before the self-serve credit card reader was installed. Today, that amounts to approximately 4 cents more per gallon, she said.

"In 1985, when we first opened, the volume of gas purchases was

one-half what it is now," Hodgson said. "They gave the machines to the stations that had the heaviest credit card users. Older people are more hesitant to use it."

James Fineran, a spokesman for Dresser-Wayne, the Salisbury, Md.-based manufacturer of the machines, said it is company policy not to answer phone inquiries.

IT IS too early to tell how successful the self-serve credit card reader will be, said Dan Loopp, executive director of the Michigan Service Station Dealers Association in Novi.

"It seems fine so far," Loopp said. "Our only concern is if oil companies decide to totally computerize."

Ed Schmitz, manager of marketing for Shell headquarters in Houston, sees "island card reader," as industry spokesmen refer to it, as the first step toward possible total computerization. But he doubts that it will ever occur.

The reader is in 150 Shell locations throughout the United States, usually the newest ones, Schmitz said.

SHELL BEGAN testing the reader during the mid-1970s. Shell uses both the Dresser-Wayne and Gil Barco readers. Both work quite well, Schmitz said.

Schmitz said he has never had a problem with jammed receipts or frozen buttons in Houston.

"What we found happens, though, is that customers don't ask for a receipt," he said. "The machine only gives a receipt if you ask for one."

The reader is hooked to a telephone line linked to a computer that immediately checks customer credit.

"If it's bad, it won't start," Schmitz said.

Schmitz compared the reader to a new feature on an automobile apt called it a time saver.

"I'm basically for it," he said.

Parents ask for sibling choice at Highmeadow

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programs this year, not including those from private programs, according to assistant superintendent Mary Lou Ankele.

There are another 55 children who didn't make it in last year's Highmeadow lottery whose parents asked that they be kept on a waiting list. Ankele said she had already had 71 calls this year asking about when another lottery would be held.

"Our dilemma is not only to accommodate," Ankele said. "I can only recommend to the board our position — there are a lot of kids who want this kind of school."

PARENTS SAID they have waited since the creation of Highmeadow last year for the district to formulate a policy addressing siblings.

Highmeadow PTA president Sue Shapiro said she heard about the administrative policy at a social event, and was upset that the district had not given parents a say in the decision. But she said after the Feb. 28 meeting, she was optimistic about the board's consideration.

Parents stressed they felt such a policy would be in the interest of the family unit. Several parents said they had children in multiple schools; one said she would be shuttling between four schools in the coming school year.

Sue Shapiro, Highmeadow PTA leader, said she was not given a chance to voice her concerns.

There's no necessary reason for last year's policy to be this year's policy," added another parent, Bruce Fay.

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