

Homemaking class has changed with the times

By Casey Hans
Staff Writer

Growing out of the more traditional home economics classes, Farmington Public Schools' Life Management program has expanded to include less time in the kitchen and more time for learning coping skills.

A major review of the program is underway, as educators seek better ways to teach all students, male and female, how to handle life.

"We deal quite a bit with how kids... feel about it," said Earl Baumunk, director of vocational and career education. "The focus is a little different."

This shift began in 1984 with a change in state financing rules. Farmington changed the name of the

program to "Life Management" last year so today's student would be more comfortable in the program. And improvements are continuing.

A four-year self-evaluation and "action plan" guides the staff. And just last month, the district went through a major "peer review" process, when a team of educators from across the state toured classes and interviewed those in the middle school and high school buildings about the program, Baumunk said.

A FINAL written report from the team, expected in June, will offer the district suggestions on how to better the program, Baumunk said. He expects much of the focus to be on the middle school area, when Life Management curriculum begins.

Margaret Cotter serves on the advisory board for the Farmington program. She believes programs like Farmington's are necessary in today's schools to help students build self-esteem.

"There are too many children today who are not getting it," said Cotter, a private counselor in Farmington Hills and teacher at Oakland Community College. "I really feel strongly about what they're (Farmington schools) doing. Children have to be taught self-esteem."

"Children do not move from calculus in order to survive in this society. Life management is important no matter how you live or where you live."

COTTER HAS had personal experience with adults who did not receive life skills training during

their school years; her Positive Living Skills class at OCC has been popular with adults for 10 years.

Traditional home economics programs used to prepare young women for careers as homemakers, but the needs have expanded to include the living skills Cotter mentions, Baumunk said.

Today, Farmington's program focuses on essential day-to-day living skills, human relations and parenting skills, consumer skills, career awareness, teaching students to make decisions and managing the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

THE FARMINGTON program is a requirement for middle school students, and an elective offering in the three high schools. The Farmington

district receives about \$15,000 each year to help support the program. Money is used for up-to-date materials, supplies and in-service training for the 12 Life Management teachers.

About 1,200 students benefit from the courses offered each year, Baumunk said. "It can have a significant impact on a number of kids."

Baumunk said the district is still trying to overcome the "home economics" label. It is encouraging more boys to sign up for classes, which range from nutrition, community work and teen issues to one called, "On Your Own," which gives

seniors independent living skills.

"The revised curriculum promotes the growth of the whole individual and improves the quality and stability of life," said a statement in the staff-directed action plan, which suggests the program eventually be made a graduation requirement.

"These students not sufficiently prepared for life's experiences will be greatly disadvantaged."

Any changes proposed by the peer review team would be considered this summer and into the new school year. They would possibly be implemented in the 1990-91 school year, Baumunk added.

Eateries, stores to be in revamped plaza

Three familiar names will join a well-known health and beauty aids store in the remodeled former site of Tally Hall at Hunters Square, 14 Mile and Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills.

Marvin's Mechanical Museum, an entertainment center with old-time amusement machines, Anita's Kitchen, a restaurant with a Middle East

cuisine, and the Honey Tree, a restaurant with a Greek cuisine, will join the 30,000-square-foot F&M health and beauty aids store.

"Watch Us Grow!" proclaims a sign in front of the 40,000-square-foot site, being remodeled by A.J. Elkin Construction Co. of Farmington Hills. The remodeled site is ex-

pected to re-open this summer.

Tally Hall opened as a festival food court in 1981, growing to 45 food booths in its heyday. It closed in January.

Last December, Robert Schostak, vice president of Southfield-based Schostak Brothers & Co., managing agent for Tally Hall's owner, Hunters Square Limited Partnership,

said: "It's time for a change. The festival food court concept is no longer an attraction for the upper-income shoppers who dominate the Hunters Square trade area."

During changeover at the former Tally Hall site, it has been business as usual for Loehmann's and the 34 other stores that make up the rest of Hunters Square.

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