

# Parent: Attitude on firearms class was 'horrifying'

By Darrell Clem  
staff writer

A parent last week accused Walled Lake school officials of showing "no compassion whatsoever" for a group of parents that filed a now-dismissed lawsuit challenging a school firearms program.

"The attitude of the administration has been horrifying," Sam Holman of West Bloomfield said.

Holman and 11 other parents filed suit last year in Oakland County Circuit Court to challenge a decades-old firearms curriculum that teaches sixth graders to shoot .22-caliber rifles.

And even though the suit has been dropped, Holman stressed that parents retained the right to reinstate it. "But we hope we don't have to."

The next step will be for parents to put political pressure on school board members to answer questions that school administrators, such as Superintendent James Grider, failed to address about the firearms program, Holman said.

**SCHOOL OFFICIALS** two weeks ago issued a one-page statement announcing that the school district had adopted new guidelines for the program and that the lawsuit had been resolved. Holman, spokesman for the group of parents, was out of town at the time and could not be reached for comment.

Though Holman conceded last week that most of the parents' concerns about safety have been answered, he said it is "utter nonsense" for school officials to say the lawsuit has been resolved.

Holman cited two key elements of the suit that he said remain unanswered: Parents want school officials to justify the educational value

## Walled Lake School District

of the firearms program and address the "psychological aspects" of it.

Parents remain concerned that, despite societal violence involving firearms, "we still stick rifles in the hands of 11-year-olds," Holman said.

The program, launched in late '80s, was started because the Walled Lake area historically has been a rural community in which hunting has been a major sport, school board president Sammy Ruetenik said last week. The program has been aimed at teaching firearms safety, and parents who object to it have been allowed to let their children opt out.

Still, the group of parents that spent \$22,000 on the lawsuit believe school officials should reassess the program's merit.

**HOLMAN CONCEDED** that some concerns have been addressed. For example, he said, the sixth graders discharging firearms now must wear safety glasses, and instructors who once did not have to receive state certification now must do so.

"I can't imagine the school district running a chemistry class or a math class without a certified instructor," Holman said.

Parents remain baffled that the state Department of Social Services is responsible for the program but allows the local district to monitor it, he said. "They're relying on the fox to watch the chicken coop."



SHARON LeMIEUX/staff photographer

## Big man's job

Tim Doot and his 4-year-old son, Timmy, shovel snow on the driveway of the Farmington Hills home in which Tim was raised. Tim, his wife Cathy and their four children are currently living in Austin, Tex., and came home to visit their families in Farmington Hills and Livonia during the holidays.

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## Society of St. Vincent de Paul honors 2 volunteers

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul recently honored two of its volunteers from the Farmington Hills area for their charitable work.

Honored with the Frederic Ozanam Length of Service Medallion were Albert O'Connor for 70 years of service and Myron Durkee for 50

years of service as volunteers of the society.

Both have spent countless hours visiting people in need of food, clothes, housing and other types of emergency assistance.

The medallions were presented by

Ernest Onisko, who is president of the St. Fabian Conference for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, where they are still active members.

The occasion for this award ceremony was the society's second annual award banquet, which drew 800

church volunteers and community leaders from across Southeast Michigan.

The medallion is named after the founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, who organized the first group of Vincentian volunteers to help the poor in Paris in the 1830s.

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