

Suburban Life

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Daddies, daughters fill the dance floor for a valentine date

By Susan Buck
staff writer

CUPID'S ARROWS reached hundreds last Friday and Saturday at the fourth annual Daddy-Daughter Dance at Mercy Center in Farmington Hills.

About 800 fathers and daughters registered this year for the event, breaking last year's record of 750. The high attendance prompted organizers to schedule, for the first time, a second dance on Saturday. Saturday's dance was attended by 100.

"We'll probably hold it in two nights from now on," said Geoff Middleton of the Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Department, which sponsored the dance.

THREE SEPARATE rooms were used. In each, the dance floor was filled by excited girls with red, punch-stained lips.

Price was \$10 a couple. It included carnation corsages and boutonnieres, a keepsake photo, cookies and punch. The girls ranged in age from 4 to 13.

Song request lists were placed on every table prior to guest arrival.

"The girls started arriving 15 minutes early and began placing their requests," said Glenn Bistrick, a disc jockey from Farmington-Hills based FCA Productions.

"They're asking for the Top 40. They want to hear everything from New Kids on the Block. In the past, they wanted to hear Debbie Gibson and the Fat Boys."

Brian Sowa and Jason Pate, disc jockeys from the same company, worked in the other two rooms.

FOR TWO friends, Lauren Lankes, 8, and Lauren Szczerba, 6, the first stop was to the powder room "to put on makeup." The girls attend Longacre Elementary School in Farmington.

"This is a special treat for me because today is my birthday and Lauren surprised me with the Daddy-Daughter Dance, although she's spending more time with her friend, Lauren, going back and forth to the

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— Tom Fields
Farmington Hills

bathroom and getting something to drink," said Ken Szczerba of Farmington Hills, who stood alone.

Szczerba was eventually joined by Tom Lankes and his younger daughter, Marissa.

"We came alone, it's fun," said James Risk of Farmington Hills with his date, daughter Kaitlin, 3.

At a distant table, Tom Fields of Farmington Hills watched daughter Elise, 6, a Longacre student, hold a pencil in her hand and ponder which musical selection she wanted to hear.

"Last year she said of the dance, 'That's a dumb thing, Dad.' This year she wanted to go."

MIDWAY THROUGH the 1½-hour program, dance contests were in each room. Dinner for two at Dimitri's Restaurant in Farmington was the first prize.

Fathers diligently flaunted their best dance moves, trying to keep up with their young partners. Flushed with perspiration, and in some cases out of breath, the dads never let up, much to the delight of their daughters.

Frank Patrick of Farmington Hills repeatedly tossed and caught his 5-year-old daughter, Michelle, with precision in mid-air.

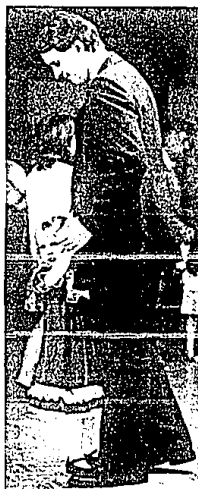
"We do this in the family room all the time," he said.

"I take tap lessons," Michelle said in explaining her ability.

At 8:30 p.m. the long queue of cars began driving from the Mercy Center parking lot.

"Thanks for taking me," one little girl happily said to her father as they walked to their car.

"Thank you," her father replied sincerely. "You're my date."



Three-year-old Kaitlin Risk and her father, James, take a spin around the floor.



Frank Patrick and his 5-year-old daughter, Michelle, were stand-outs on the dance floor during one of the contests.

Staff photos by Randy Borst



The father-daughter trio is made up of Chuck Mau, his daughter Melissa, 4, and Rebecca, 6.



Greg Switaj and his 3-year-old daughter, Sarah, take a cookie and punch break between dances.



Tom Lankes placed his 2-year-old daughter, Marissa, atop a ledge so he could fix her carnation in place before the dance started.