

Suburban Life

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Jaycee Tom Griswold (at left) begins decorating the Christmas tree last month in Downtown Shopping Center. About a week later area residents gathered to sing carols as the tree lighting

ceremony got under way. The tree, the decorations and the ceremony were all gifts from the service organization.

It's Jaycee Week

Members want to tell about their chapter

By Loralne McClellan
staff writer

THE FARMINGTON AREA Jaycees have been cited as one of the three top Jaycee chapters in the state for their overall programming.

Members of the local chapter want to tell how they were selected for that top spot — out of 180 chapters in the state — at a social get-together for all comers scheduled to wind up National Jaycee Week activities at 2 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 26, in Country Lanes on Nine Mile Road between Grand River and Middlebelt.

Matt Ratliff, who took on what amounted to be a second 40-hour-a-week job when he took on the presidency of the Farmington Jaycees, says he was blessed with "absolutely the best officers and board a president could have." He is doubly blessed with his wife Kathryn, who is one of his four vice presidents, takes Jaycee-related phone calls that interrupt dinner, and acts as his personal, albeit unofficial, secretary.

During his term as president, Ratliff has overseen as many as 25 projects going on at any one given time in various phases. He jokes that he could attend a committee or subcommittee every night of the month.

"With 170 members there are 170 different interests," he says. "The thrust of the Jaycees is to develop young leaders through the experiences of following a project from inception to completion, so there are

always a variety of projects going on. Times change. Some projects get outdated and are dropped. New ones are constantly being added."

A PROJECT CAN be an in-house seminar or workshop or conference that is designed strictly for the individual development of its members. Or it can be a social outing restricted to members only. Or it can be any one of the myriad of money-raising events that make up the \$40,000 a year budget. Or it can be any one of the service projects that put that same \$40,000 back into the community.

Along with the \$40,000 in cash, the Jaycees generally can expect to count on another \$30,000 in goods or services from area businesses or individuals that can be used in service projects for the community.

Ratliff rattled off a few of the projects that have been initiated in just the last few months, or weeks, that are in progress now.

"The Shiawassee sledding hill is still a little too steep," Ratliff said. "We've got it now with a proper enough slope so there is no sled that will make it onto the street. But there still is some architectural design work and some engineering to be done before the winter is gone."

The Jaycees will be deeply involved in the recycling programs for both Farmington and Farmington Hills that will go into effect in July. A Winter Festival is a something new for the sister cities the chapter is planning.

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— Matt Ratliff

filled and distributed.

The National Jaycees take credit for starting the annual fund-raisers for the Muscular Dystrophy Foundation with Jerry Lewis in Florida.

The Michigan Jaycees got the first Drug Awareness pilot program going here that has since been imitated by many states.

The Farmington Area Jaycees meet at 7:30 p.m. the second Tuesday of every month in The Elks Club, on the east side of Orchard Lake Road, north of Grand River. All meetings are open to all interested people. Membership is open to those between 21 and 39 years. Inquiries are taken by calling 477-JCCS.

A Yellow Ribbon campaign is expected to go into effect within the next week or so.

All wooden ramps for residents in Farmington Nursing Home are being replaced with concrete ramps.

Work on the sledding hill and the nursing home ramps are both examples of costs being drastically cut by those donating goods or professional services to aid the Jaycees in completing the projects.

RATLIFF grew up in Farmington with parents who were members of the Jaycees and its auxiliary. He can remember helping in his 10-year-old way with projects his folks were working on and he knows the chapter's history well — back to the time residents wanted a swimming pool in the high school — and it was the Jaycees that pushed the swimming pool project to completion.

"The same type of community survey that told the Jaycees a swimming pool was the big desire in the '60s is the same community survey we make now that tell us what the residents want or need here today," he said.

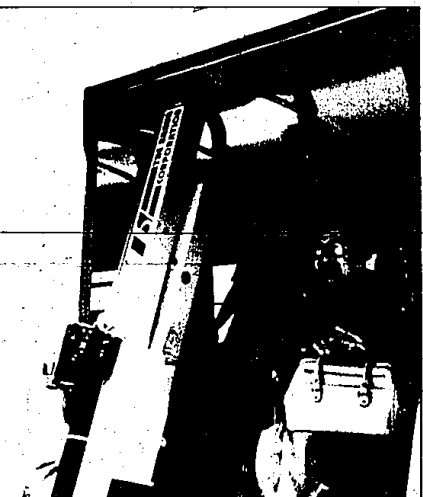
A few items on the annual agenda that have, unfortunately, never changed are the Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets that are



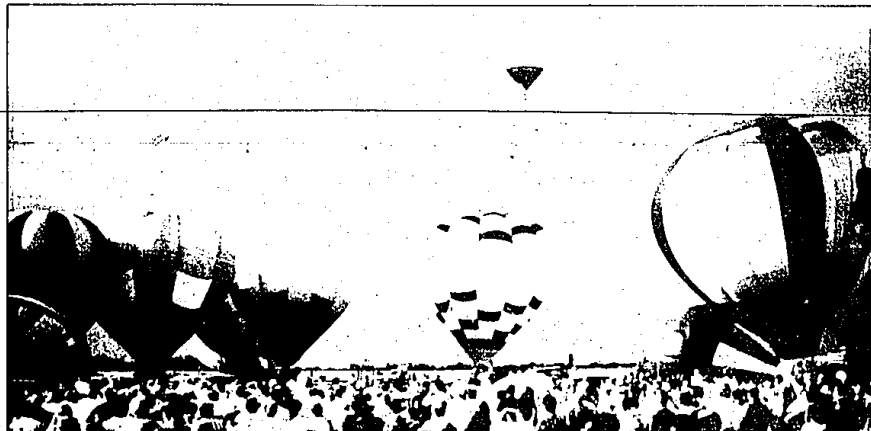
The Haunted House, open for about 10 days every October, is the Jaycees' biggest money maker of the year.



A visit from the Easter Bunny is an annual spring event planned by the Jaycees for area children.



Jaycee Kathy Ratliff was on duty when residents from dozens of nursing homes were transported to Harrison High School for Farmington Community Band's annual concert that is designed specifically for senior adults and those with handicaps.



One of the Farmington Jaycees just-for-fun socials last summer was a trip to the Hot Air Balloon Festival in Battle Creek.