



photos by SHARON LEMIEUX/staff photographer

Flanders Elementary fourth grader Jenny Reeve gets advice about straightening an axle on her team's milk carton box car from visiting engineer Dan Homme.

Kids learn from pros how to engineer cars

By Casey Hens
staff writer

About half of the hands in Anne Hommes' fourth grade class at Flanders Elementary shot up last week when students were asked: "who might be interested in becoming an engineer?"

All those students might not choose engineering as careers. But the interest is there.

It's all thanks to auto engineers who are coming into classrooms at Flanders, William Grace, Wood Creek and Longacre elementary schools and East Middle School this year to help students learn through a hands-on project called "A World in Motion."

Throughout Metro Detroit more than 30 districts, including the Farmington Public Schools, are involved in the project sponsored by the Society of Automotive Engineers, designed to keep student interest in math and science up in grades four through six.

"It's sort of fun," said student Kendal Fabian. "You learn lots more than going out of the textbook. We all try to do the best we can do."

THE FLANDERS fourth graders are working in mixed gender teams of four and five students — designing and building derby cars out of milk cartons to learn the properties of loads and balances, friction, aerodynamics and how to construct working wheels and axles just like they do at the Big Three. After designing, building and thoroughly testing their cars, the students will hold a derby finale to test their design.

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— Kendal Fabian
Flanders pupil

"The competition part is very minor compared to the learning," said Hommes. "But, of course, everyone will be excited about winning."

In the hallway at Flanders on Monday, one team was testing loads and balances by putting weights in the rear wheels. Extra design features included rubber banded wheels. "We chose rubber bands because they have the most traction," explained team member Mickey Owen.

Another team member, Brianne Collins-Mason, said the project had taught her a lot. "I think it's interesting," she said. "It's fun with the co-operating, because you all work together. You learn a lot — math, social studies and reading all at the same time."

That teamwork is key, because that's how engineers work in the real world.

Dan Hommes, Anne Hommes' son and an engineer at the General Motors Proving Ground in Milford, has been the engineering consultant throughout the "Flanders" project. The recent U-M graduate who grew up in Canton Township and Farmington Hills helped pilot the project at Flanders last year while he was

an engineering student.

"I HAVE BEEN a car nut all my life," he said. "I knew I wanted to be involved in cars. I just didn't know how." A high school counselor suggested engineering, but he hadn't heard anything about it until then, he said.

"SAE is promoting it (the program) heavily," he added. "It's a serious effort. The future of our country is in building things, and you can't do it without engineers."

For the Flanders kick-off, Dan Hommes brought a new 1992 Corvette to the school to show students its design, then helped them along and offered tips as they designed and built their small cars. Anne Hommes used a kit provided by SAE and paid for by the Farmington schools science department for the lessons and activities.

Judy Adams, SAE coordinator for special programs and student relations, said "A World in Motion" project is part of the society's larger Vision 2000 initiative which does other things like offer college scholarships to engineering students.

"The primary motive is to keep children interested in math and science," she said. "Studies show that students in the third grade are still interested, but by grade seven their interest has diminished. So we focus on grades four through six. Some places in there students begin to lose their interest."

The program started last year with 12 pilot schools in Metro Detroit, including Flanders. Today, more than 300 schools are working on the program in more than 30 districts from Oxford to Toledo.



Teamwork and problem solving are two concepts that Katie Wright, Jason Barragato, Sean Murphy and Laura Giovannini (background) practice as they test their vehicle.

Ex-safety chief dies after surgery

Daniel A. Byrnes, who was recalled as a "caring individual" during his days as Farmington's director of public safety, died March 17 following surgery in Irvine, Calif. He was 51.

Mr. Byrnes, who was chief of police at Cal State Fullerton at the time of his death, started his law-enforcement career with the Farmington Department of Public Safety in 1964. He became director in 1973 and resigned in 1979.

One of his duties as director was to hire Frank Lauboff, the current head of the Farmington department. "The first promotion I received was from Dan Byrnes," said Lauboff. "He was my boss for a lot of the years I was here. I remember him as a caring individual. He cared very much about this department and the people in it."

His final duties in Farmington included administering the police and fire departments and helping organize a public safety reserve unit, cross trained in police and fire work, one of the first in Michigan.

Mr. Byrnes graduated from De-

troit Cooley High School in 1958 and added bachelor of arts and masters degrees from Cal State Fullerton. He had 25 years of law enforcement experience.

HE STARTED work with the Department of Public Safety at Cal State Fullerton in September 1984 as a lieutenant. He was promoted to chief of police in October 1988.

As director of public safety, he planned, organized and directed the operations of the department of public safety, including general law enforcement, crime prevention, emergency and disaster preparedness, and parking administration.

Among some of the committees he became involved with on campus were the Human Relations Task Force Committee, Transportation/Parking Advisory Committee, President's Advisory Panel and Occupational Safety and Health Committee.

He was also a member of the Orange County Chiefs of Police and Sheriffs Association and a member of the CSU Public Safety Executive Council.



Daniel A. Byrnes

He became ill Feb. 26 and died Tuesday, March 17, at the University of California, Irvine.

Survivors include his wife, Judy, a secretary in the Office of the President of Cal State Fullerton; sons, Dan, Steve and Lance.

A memorial service will be Friday, March 27, at Cal State Fullerton. Representatives of the Farmington department will attend, Lauboff said.

The family has asked that, in lieu of flowers, contributions be made in Mr. Byrnes' memory to the CSUF Foundation, 800 N. State College Boulevard, Fullerton, Calif. 92634.

State Lutheran leader to preach at St. Paul's

John Heins, president of the Michigan District of the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod, will be the guest preacher at the 11 a.m. service Sunday, March 29, at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 20805 Middlebelt Road, Farmington.

Heins is a native of Shelton, Neb., was ordained and installed into the Holy Ministry in 1958 at Faith Lutheran Church, Grand Blanc. He served there 1958-74. In June 1974, he was installed as pastor of Guardian in Dearborn where he served until 1985 when he was elected president

of the Michigan District. The program is part of St. Paul's Lutheran observance of its centennial anniversary. Guest organist will be William Grambow, music director at Child of Christ Lutheran Church in Highland, Mich.

A dinner is served at 1 p.m. Roger Mallard, director of Christian Education of St. Michael's Lutheran Church in Portage, will be the guest speaker.

A nursery will be provided at the worship service and dinner. For information, call 474-0675.



The Rev. John Heins
Lutheran district president

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