

Students pull right strings

BY AILEEN WINGBLAD
STAFF WRITER

It truly was a "Day for Strings" in the Farmington area last Saturday as stringed instrument students from throughout the school district were treated to special music clinics and personalized instruction from several professional musicians.

About 250 students from fifth grade through high school turned out for "Day for Strings" held at Harrison High School. Sponsored by Farmington Public Schools, school band and orchestra boosters and community musicians, the daylong event was the first of its kind for the area involving guest conductors and the local musicians — many of whom are affiliated with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

The program concluded with a concert for family, friends and the public.

Paul Barber, music coordinator for Farmington Public Schools who helped organize the event, said the day was planned in hopes of inspiring students and parents "to appreciate and understand how important the arts and music specifically are to the quality of our lives."

Barber urged community support for the arts, a part of education which is "an ongoing process and lifelong endeavor." He also praised those who helped make "Day for Strings" possible. "Superintendent Michael Flanagan has told the district to try and reach out to the business community for involvement . . . that is what we've done. We are all part of the community here, donating time to share with the kids," he said.

Professor Robert Culver from U of M's School of Music, guest conductor for the high school orchestra, echoed Barber's sentiments, warning against the dangers of "cuts and stress in the arts community."

"This is a microcosm in the community that I don't think we can ignore. Here, we see education at work. We can feel the growth, awareness and potential here today. Farmington is fortunate as a community to have the organization and resources to put together this type of program. This is indeed an incredible day," said Culver.

Along with Culver, guest conductors included: Robert Phillips, Saline area School; Roxanne Oliver, Troy Schools; and Andrew Dabczynski, Waterford Schools.

Professional musicians — on hand for support and assistance were violinists Larry Hutchinson, Bruce Smith, Linda Snedden-Smith, Ron Fischer and Velda Kelly, as well as cellists Paul and Karen Wingert and Farmington Schools retired string teacher Marge Mowat.

Also, Tom DeLuca, violin maker, presented to the students a lecture-demonstration on the proper care of string instruments.

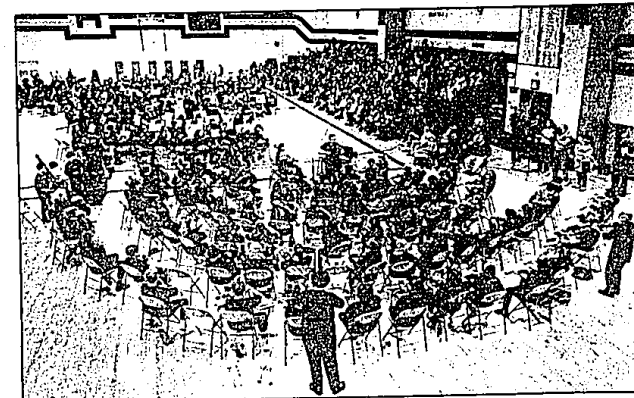
Following the series of music clinics and section rehearsals, the students performed several selections in the Harrison High gymnasium. And while each group's performance seemed to delight the audience — who were packed tightly on bleachers or standing along with sidelines — it was perhaps the high schooler's rendition of "Rocky Top" that was especially stirring to the crowd.

Led by Professor Culver, the high school orchestra had the audience toe tapping and hand clapping to the tune's sprightly rhythm.

"I can't believe it . . . this is so exciting to see professionals teaching the kids here," said Superintendent Flanagan. "Talk about a partnership with the community. This is really quite an arranged partnership. The kids have learned so much in one day."



STAFF PHOTOS BY GUY WARREN



Stringing along: Strings teacher Kay DeLuca (above) works with Nitsan Bengal, a fifth-grader at Eagle Elementary School in the Farmington District. This (left) was the scene in the Farmington Harrison High School gymnasium Saturday — truly a "Day for Strings."



All the trimmings: Student Claudia Fobbs (left) and teacher Barbara Hardy help prepare Thanksgiving dinner at Farmington Alternative Academy.

Academy staff talks turkey with students for feedback

About 65 teachers, administrators and staff members got some real "feedback" from students at the Farmington Alternative Academy.

And they ended up being well-fed in the process.

Fifteen academy students cooked up a turkey dinner for the educators and served it to them Friday. The meal included oven roast turkey with gravy, onion-sage dressing, mashed potatoes, confetti kernel corn, ambrosia salad, fresh cranberry sauce, relishes, corn bread and butter, pumpkin pie, apple crumb pie, coffee and milk.

"This is a way for students to

become comfortable working together," said Dianne Duthie, academy coordinator. "Some of them will go on for more training (in food service). This helps them as well."

This is the second year students have cooked up the traditional feast, Duthie said. Students take the food and nutrition class as an elective or as preparation for a program offered through the Oakland Technical Center in Walled Lake that prepares students for food service jobs, she said.

The Academy offers students from the three high schools in the district, a non-traditional educa-

tional setting with emphasis on smaller classes. Students still must meet the same curriculum standards as traditional students, but have been placed in the academy because a traditional setting has not worked, Duthie said.

Students are placed in the Academy because of poor attendance, dysfunctional families, or other problems that might force them drop out of school, Duthie said.

"Because of the smaller class sizes, most of these kids are doing well," Duthie said. "We expect 15 students to graduate this spring."

There are 40 students at the academy.

Tavern plans holiday dinner for kids

Matt Brady's Tavern in the Holiday Inn of Farmington Hills and the St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center will provide Thanksgiving dinner for the children of the center on Thursday, Nov. 26, beginning at noon, at Matt Brady's.

"Holiday cheer is achieved through togetherness and happy faces," said Susan Payne, owner of Matt Brady's Tavern and host of the children's dinner.

"Through the gifts of family love and festive settings, Matt Brady's Tavern and the St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center are making the holiday something worth celebrating," she added. "There is no holiday joy greater than that of a smiling child excited by all the events of the season."

Served by the staff with a "homestyle tradition,"

the children will be able to enjoy the company and closeness of their friends and staff guardians in a festive environment. Payne said, "It's our way to bring the kids home for the holidays."

Boys and girls at the St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center, ages 5-15, sometimes cannot go home for the holidays because of an unsuitable home situation.

Betty Speyer of the St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher homes said, "We are grateful that Matt Brady's Tavern cares enough to give our children a happy holiday. This year the number of our children unable to go home at Thanksgiving and Christmas has almost doubled, and over 40 percent of the children in our care will never return home."

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