

Violence from page 1A

Close to home
Locally, at Farmington High School, Kenneth LaFleur, a 16-year-old boy, suffered a concussion (closed head injury), broken facial bones and a fractured jaw after being punched Dec. 8.

The boy who struck LaFleur will be charged with aggravated assault and remains suspended, said Don Cowan, director of building and student services.

Earlier this month, Oakland County Probate Court's juvenile division fined a female Farmington high school student \$50 for punching another girl earlier in the school year.

At Harrison High School, a female student reported that a boy fondled her and exposed himself to her in a school stairwell.

To Arbelbide, the "boys will be boys" response is not an acceptable reason to explain away behavior.

"Boundaries get crossed when somebody takes out their hand and touches another person," Arbelbide said. A 1987 school safety study indicated that 15 percent of students regularly get harassed.

One out of 10 is regularly attacked by bullies. Bullies have a greater chance of continuing their behavior into adulthood, Arbelbide said.

"There are verbal and emotional bullies," she added. "Bullying can be by hazing, being teased or dared, threatening or ostracizing."

Continual reassessment of available programs, a strong monitoring program, role-playing activities, parent patrols, student response teams and peer support groups are proactive methods to deal with violence, Arbelbide said.

Joanne LaFleur, Kenneth's mother and a Clarenceville school consultant, is anxious to work with Cowan and Farmington High Principal Jim Myers to explore additional crisis intervention programs.

Kenneth LaFleur returned to school eight days after the incident.

"The dizziness can take six months to go away," Joanne LaFleur said.

Intervention
Student assistance teams, made up of teachers and counselors, are available for crisis intervention and prevention, Cowan said.

"They haven't done a whole thing up to this point," Cowan said. "We haven't seen a need."

All secondary-level Farmington district schools have such teams, Cowan said. Three of five elementary schools are piloting a similar program.

"I'm not one to hide things, but there's no more of a problem than what we've had," Cowan said.

Hilary Mahon, Farmington High Boosters Club president, called the LaFleur case "an unfortunate incident."

"He (LaFleur) is back in school," Mahon said. "There's no major aftereffects. It happened; it's ended. He wasn't beaten, he was punched. There's four fights a week (at the school). There's no sense in blowing it out of proportion. It's a teenage thing. Some kids are prone to fight."

Public often misunderstands effects of closed-head injuries

By Sue Buck Staff Writer
Closed head injuries and their effects on the human brain are often misunderstood, experts say.

"Head injury is the No. 1 killer for people under 42," said Gaylord Walker, executive director of the Michigan Head Alliance, based in Brighton. "No two head injuries are alike. There's still a lot to know about cognitive rehabilitation."

Short-term memory loss and an inability to concentrate often follow head injuries, he said.

"You don't have to hit your head to have a head injury," Walker said. "You don't have to be in a coma to have a head injury."

After an injury, the brain does not start swelling immediately, but can take three to four hours to swell, Walker said.

"Often a brain injury will not show up on a CAT scan," he said. "When people see a broken arm, they say, 'Oh, he's hurt.' But

those with closed head injuries don't come home in bandages."

Dr. Mary Elizabeth Roth of Providence Hospital, Southfield, also commented on closed head injuries. She's chairman of the Department of Family Practice.

"You can puncture someone to death," Roth said.

People look for lacerations in trying to assess the magnitude of closed head injuries. One (closed head injury) is enough to kill some people, Roth said.

On the other hand, Mohammed Ali had a number of closed head injuries, she said.

"Every one is a unique injury," Roth said. "A concussion means that there is loss of consciousness and bruising of the brain."

Even if symptoms do not show

up until the next day, it is still considered a concussion.


People sometimes look at the politics connected with an injury when assessing severity, she said.

With facial fractures and broken bones, there's no cast. The doctor makes sure the bones are lined up. Injuries take six to eight weeks to heal, Roth said.

"Pictures should be taken at the time of injury," Roth said.

When someone gets injured on the football field or at a sporting event, it is considered newsworthy. Comparatively, injury incurred on school property is not considered newsworthy by some, Roth said.

"A concussion can be as simple as hitting yourself on a kitchen cabinet, and you see stars for awhile," Roth said.



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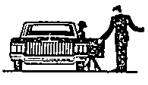
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