

Checking the equipment



Oh, you kid: Heather Dimmitt, 2, along with about 20 other children from Botsford Hospital's day care center, enjoyed a Transportation Day demonstration put on by members of the Farmington Hills Police, the Hills Fire Department, Botsford, and the city of Farmington, among others. Heather is testing a street sweeper operated by Marv Ripaldi, right, who works with partner Ray Lam. The kids had a "hands-on" look at ambulances, bulldozers, a rehab van, a garbage truck, tow truck and several types of cars Friday morning.

SHARON LEMIRUX/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

2 girls teams get cheering squads

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

A new program in Farmington Schools would give female athletes a fair shake and flexibility — and, many hope, something to cheer about.

Under a revamping of the high school cheerleading program, girls basketball and girls soccer teams will have squads to root them on at their games. Also, instead of a yearlong requirement, the program will be broken down into two seasons.

The "pioneer" plan was unanimously approved after considerable discussion by the Farmington School Board at the May 18 meeting.

The restructuring is designed to bring equity and free up more time for cheerleaders who may want to be involved in other activities.

"Number one, I think the plan is fair," said trustee Susan Rennels-Lightner, who has been active in calling for a restructuring. "I've had students tell me when I've met with them that basically they feel as athletes they deserve more support."

Rennels-Lightner, though, had some concerns. The plan includes adding cheerleaders at boys' soccer matches in the fall as well as girls soccer matches in the spring.

The trustee thinks the pilot program is trying to accomplish too much.

She also pointed out three boys sports (football, basketball and soccer) would have cheer squads while girls teams would have two (basketball and soccer).

Athletic director Ron Holland said the program will be re-evaluated after the fall season.

The plan calls for all three high schools to develop two cheerleading squads, a varsity and junior varsity with 15 members each. Both would cheer at home football games (varsity cheerleaders would still travel to away games).

The contingent could then be broken up into smaller groups, which would perform at girls basketball and boys soccer events. The number depends on how many try out, according to Holland.

Also included is a spirit group, which is designed for students

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Susan Rennels-Lightner
school trustee

who want to root on their school teams but who might not want to be a cheerleader.

The new set-up will require more money.

Holland figures new uniforms alone will run \$2,500 to \$3,000. Also, an assistant coach will be needed to assist the head cheerleading advisers.

Additional costs concerned some board members. Board Trustee John Cotton, who has served as an athletic director, said equity comes with a price.

"You can't have it both ways," Cotton said. "If you're going to do it, you're going to have to pay for it."

Some parents have questions, though. For one, they wonder when the cheerleaders would have to practice if they are going to more games.

"The concept is wonderful," said Norene Yuskowatz, a North Farmington High booster who is involved in the cheerleading program. "The logistics of it will be difficult. Hopefully, it will work."

Holland said he's aware of the pros and cons. Some students have shied away from cheerleading because of the year-long commitment, he said.

Breaking up the season would offer more flexibility, he added. There would be two tryouts, one for the fall and another in November for winter and spring sports.

Cheerleading advisers and principals along with Holland helped devise the new plan. The plan is innovative, Holland said.

Few districts in the state have attempted such a program. With girls athletics on par with boys athletics, a restructuring is a step in the right direction.

"I think we're committed to seeing it succeed," Holland said.

Hills tries to take pain out of drain

BY BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

A meeting to discuss the mammoth Minnow Pond Drain Project began with levity and ended with gravity.

City Manager Bill Costick of Farmington Hills started the meeting on a light note.

"Welcome, I'm Mayor Nancy Byles," Costick quipped.

The initial laughter turned to serious discussion of the \$12 million project that will include a 60-foot-wide excavation through the Kendallwood subdivision to install an 8 1/2 foot diameter pipe, designed to help protect the area from severe flooding. Project engineers, city and county officials, and members of two committees from the area, which includes

Kendallwood and Westbrook subdivisions, attended.

Costick, Tom Biasek, the city's director of public services, city and consulting engineers and Ron Korttunen of the Oakland County Drain Commission explained to about 20 residents the way the project would be handled.

Costick made it clear, especially to Kendallwood Drive residents whose street will be torn up, that debate about whether to go forward on the project is over.

"The city council has made a clear decision to proceed with this project," he said. "That's what we're going to do."

Biasek said the main construction on the pipe will begin in the spring of 1994. Although the partially complete retention basin at

13 Mile and Farmington will have a smaller capacity than originally planned, the pipe under 13 Mile will be 8 feet in diameter instead of 10 feet, and the pipe going under 12 Mile will be changed, the effect for residents along the pipe's route will be the same.

"Effectively, there is no change in the size of the pipe in Kendallwood," Biasek said.

The pipe had at one time been proposed to run under Farmington Road, but many cost and engineering factors made Kendallwood Drive the best route.

"The whole project is gravity — gravity doesn't fail," he said.

Costick said the project, which will be closely managed by the city, will be bid out this winter. "So that we can come out of the

door running in the spring."

Kendallwood Drive residents said they were concerned about the amount of dust, the loss of trees and shrubs, the effects on the health of older residents, the possible danger to children and insurance against damage to homes and property.

"Put yourself in my place," said resident John Dickson. "If this was happening to you, what would you do? You're going to tear the hell out of that community."

A public meeting for all residents in the affected subdivisions is scheduled for 7 p.m. Wednesday, June 16, in the city council chambers, 11 Mile and Middlebelt.

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