

High marks for Farmington kids

MEAP, MEAP . . . Here come the MEAP test scores again. There are increases in the scores for many Farmington-area schools.

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

The Farmington school district might need sunblock if its MEAP performance keeps glowing brighter each year.

The Michigan Educational Assessment Program test is given annually

to students in grades four, seven and 10 for reading and math, and grades five, eight and 11 for science.

This year, there are increases in satisfactory scores in reading for grades four (up 6.4 percent) and seven (up 6.8 percent). Math scores are also higher in grades four (up 7.4 percent)

and seven (up 9.5 percent). Tenth graders scored slightly higher in reading, but had a slight dip in math (1.5 percent). Scores remained stable in science for all grades.

Those results follow a three-year trend that has seen the district's test scores increase in reading and math while remaining consistent in science.

"We hope to continue an upward trend," said Judy White, assistant superintendent for curriculum and staff development. "That's our goal."

Specks on the shine

A few specks take the shine off this year's results.

Some 10th and 11th graders didn't meet the benchmark for a state-endorsed diploma. That means 199 students will have to retake the math test. 135 will need to do the same in reading and 31 in science.

At Gill Year-Round, one of the district's schools of choice, had one of the lower reading scores on the fourth grade level with only 40 percent.

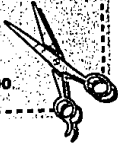
See MEAP, 3A

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• While you are clipping turn to the Taste section in Monday's paper for quick and easy recipes your family will enjoy.

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IN THE PAPER

TODAY

Smile pretty: Plans for a photographic portrait of the Farmington City Council have developed into some negative thinking. /2A

Husked, then shelled: Farmington Hills' Paul Welday, congressional aide to U.S. Rep. Joe Knollenberg, isn't headed for Nebraska after all. /3A

OPINION

Don't give up! They may be retired and some of them are grumpy, but these men haven't given up on having an impact on what goes on in their world. /9A

MALLS & MAINSTREETS

Healthy breathing: Troy's The Somerset Collection greenery won two plantscape awards for a clean-air-conscious West Bloomfield firm. /5B

TASTE

Festive fare: Exercise your low-fat options with dishes guests will love. /1B

Recipe Make-Over: Laura Letobar cuts the fat in beef Stroganoff. /1B

SPORTS

Hoop rivalry: Farmington High tried to stay on the winning track in boys basketball Friday against cross-town rival North Farmington. /1C

Sports column: Observer writer C.J. Risak discusses the ever-changing requirements for high school pool depths. /1C

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Mural, mural on the wall . . .



SHAWN LEMERIS/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Proud artist: North Farmington student Josh Weinberg poses in front of the Egyptian mural he painted for his teacher.

Teen artist makes his mark on garage

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

When Joshua Weinberg was asked to do an inside job on his teacher's garage, he did it with a brush stroke of genius.

Using a 12-by-36-foot back wall as his "canvas," the North Farmington High School sophomore painted a mural depicting Egyptian history for his Spanish teacher, Pam Sofferin.

"Incredible," said Sofferin, who lives in Farmington Hills. "I think that would cover it."

Weinberg, 16, spent his weekends working on the project, which took 100 hours to complete. The painting wasn't a classroom assignment, either. He received a commission, which Weinberg added was a "very generous" amount of money.

"When I was younger, my parents

would buy me coloring books," said Weinberg, who has been drawing editorial cartoons since he was 10. "Instead of just coloring in between the lines . . . I'd give someone a hat or I'd draw a flower on someone's vest. I'd draw anything I thought was appropriate and make it somewhat different."

The teenage artist certainly left his mark on a wall usually a show-

case for garden tools, rakes and backaws. Weinberg's work, though, is considered a cut above the rest.

He's won first prize in a Detroit Free Press editorial cartoon contest and one in the American Political Scholar Award program. His editorial cartoons have been featured in the book "The Best Cartoons of

See MURAL, 2A

Did the legal system fail Jackie Ponke?

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Jackie Ponke's murder Jan. 8 in a Farmington dental office served as a chilling reminder to those who are targets in domestic violence cases: Laws — no matter how stringent — don't always provide protection from someone intent on harming them.

Ponke had moved out of her Oxford home with her daughter Nov. 22. She sued for divorce a few weeks later and

ANALYSIS

filed for a spousal abuse injunction and restraining order a few days before she was hammered to death.

She told family and friends of threats made against her, some as specific as "cutting her into five pieces with a chain saw."

Yet, it wasn't enough to trip the switch on the legal mechanisms de-

signed to protect women in such perilous situations.

Her husband, Raymond Ponke, is charged with first-degree murder in her slaying.

Some family members question the system, saying it failed Jackie Ponke. Others aren't so sure.

"I can't give that an affirmative answer," said Joyce Wright, director of communications for Haven, a domestic violence shelter serving Oakland

County. "It sounds like from what I've read . . . perhaps he would've found another opportunity."

Jackie Ponke's brother, Dennis Lutz, said his sister felt helpless. She did call police, but a spokesman for Oxford police said their hands were tied when they were summoned.

Others had seen the warning signs. Dr. Alan Bredin, in whose dental

See PONKE, 2A

Time for Brunch

The Farmington Area Philharmonic and the Botoford Inn are getting together to show they know what to do with winter.

They're co-sponsoring the inaugural Winter Fantasia Ice Brunch from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 30, at the Botoford Inn, 28000 Grand River, Farmington Hills, to benefit the Philharmonic. Cost is \$25 per person.

Keeping 'Watch' on crime

Farmington Hills residents interested in the Neighborhood Watch program should at-

FARMINGTON FOCUS

tend an orientation meeting at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 9, in the city council chambers in Farmington Hills City Hall, 11 Mile and Orchard Lake roads.

Residents of Neighborhood Watch subdivisions who have not attended an orientation meeting should be there, organizers said. For more information, call the Hills Police Department's Crime Prevention Section at 478-9640 during business hours.

Memory Lane

From the Jan. 28, 1954 edition of the Farmington Enterprise:

■ Farmington established a Court of No Record for juveniles who commit minor first offenses.

■ More than \$3,000 was collected in the Farmington-Clarencenville area during the annual March of Dimes Mothers March, according to Mrs. James Lillie, chairman.

■ Less than 5 percent of the registered voters went to the polls in the recent Farmington Township election. The city election drew less than 7 percent of the eligible voters.

■ Jerry Rice scored 11 points in Farmington High's 45-30 basketball loss to Southfield.

Items for Farmington Focus may be mailed to the Farmington Observer, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48336, dropped off at the newspaper office, or faxed to 477-9722.