

# SUBURBAN LIFE

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THURSDAY, JUNE 9, 1994



BEV ELLIS

## Arts group touches many

**P**uppets, poets, painters, plaques, plays and the post office! These are only a few of the diverse areas of involvement that have come about as the result of the formation of the Farmington Area Arts Commission in 1976.

At that time, the cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills established a joint commission to "promote and support the arts" in the area. Nine people were appointed (six from Farmington Hills and three from Farmington) representing various areas of expertise, such as painting, music, dancing, banking, theater, history and education.

Operating with a small budget made available by the joint cities, the commission set out to "share" the funding with a variety of community groups in an effort to encourage, support, promote, or whatever it took, the development of an improved "arts" atmosphere. Little could we guess what the results would be!

We started by providing funds for a cash prize for the Farmington Artists Club shows. The club continues to flourish, boasts a waiting list for membership, enjoys a proud reputation for the quality of exhibits and continues to merit our support.

The Farmington Historical Society has availed itself of our funding for a variety of activities over the years, including a tape and photographic history of Farmington taken from many of the senior residents of the area. Over the last few years, they have conducted a writing contest in the schools.

### Outstanding essays

One of the recent winning essays concerned the history of the Farmington post office. In an ongoing effort to provide "the arts" to everyone, we support the Farmington Community Band in presenting an annual senior citizen handicapped concert for residents from nursing homes, senior care and specialized care facilities.

This involved the additional help of Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Job's Daughters and Farmington School buses for transportation and needed escorts.

"Art to the Schools" was one of our original offerings, whereby the amount of \$50 was made available to all the schools in the district. This money was to be used in combination with any funds the school could provide to present arts-related programs.

### Schools benefit

Over the years, every school has availed itself of these monies to provide poetry, painters, or choral groups, opera selections, puppets, storytellers and other programs to individual classes and full school assemblies. The outreach effect of this program has far exceeded our original expectations.

Our first Artist in Residence was the "Hillbilly Snaphooter," Joe Clark, and for 17 years a Farmington resident has been so honored with cash awarded and his or her name put on a plaque in the Farmington Library on 12 Mile.

Examples of the creations of the visual artists are on permanent display in public buildings throughout the community, including both city halls, 47th District Court, the Community Center, Southwestern Oakland Cablevision Commission offices and the Historical Museum.

### Excited students

Several years ago, we initiated a Student Art Awards contest. There are many anxious noses pressed to the glass of the school cafeteria where the works are judged.

It has become a big thing in as much as the cash awards are given. We have been told by their art instructors that this contest has served as a major force in some students' decisions to continue with a career in the arts.

In resurrecting from my memory, and the files, I can summarize just a few more of the many areas of involvement, like music and drama presentations in nursing homes, and support of the Farmington Naturalists to present a wild-flower preservation program to the schools.

"Exposure to the Arts" classes are presented through the cooperation of the Farmington schools adult education department with guest instructors representing diverse areas.

The Children's Art Tent called "Art & In" was set up during Founders Festival and provided a variety of free, supervised art activities with no parents allowed. This eventually grew to become Kids Day.

Our meetings are open to the public 7 p.m. on the third Thursday of the month from September through May in Farmington Hills City Hall.

Beverly L. Ellis is immediate past chairwoman and an original member of the commission.



STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LEMIERE

Family addition: The Loibls became one person larger when Suzie and Joe adopted Gary Holbrook (second to right). They already had two sons, Mike, 20, (center) and Joey, 23 (left).

## Adoption successes

### Siblings find new lives through Sarah Fisher



BY DIANE GALE  
STAFF WRITER

St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center adoption program for special needs youngsters wrote happy endings to three lives.

Suzie and Joe Loibl have two adult multiply disabled and mentally impaired sons, Joe and Mike, and the couple always wanted to have a bigger family.

That's where St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center in Farmington Hills met their needs. In March the agency made it possible for the Farmington Hills family to adopt Gary, 14, who is also a special education student. He is emotionally and learning impaired.

"Joe and Mike are my biological children, both are significantly handicapped and it seemed better not to have more," Suzie Loibl said. "We always wanted a big family, and you still love them whether they're born to you or not."

"The 14-year-old is already potty trained, and there's a lot to be said for that," she added laughing.

"Gary is a wonderful kid, and we're delighted. He's made a wonderful contribution to our family."

He's done more for our family than we've done for him."

He has a fine-tuned sense of humor, keeping the family laughing, especially with his Michael Jackson imitation. Gary also has a keen ability for organizing things, and he likes doing chores. Without even being asked Gary recently straightened out a utility room. He also cuts the grass regularly and does other odd jobs around the house.

Gary, a teaching assistant, plays on the East Middle School football team and participates in Special Olympics.

"Life's not always perfect, but he tries really hard and he's a really good kid," Suzie Loibl said, adding that she has been blessed, "I have three great kids and a great husband, and you can't ask for more than that."

Meanwhile, Sarah Fisher wrote another happy ending for Gary's sister, Terry. The siblings were sent to St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center in 1990. They lived there for three years, according to Sallie Giles, St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center

community relations coordinator.

In addition to growing, learning to overcome fears and building trusting relationships, the siblings waited for a family to love and care for them.

Last year, when Terry was 15, she met Pam Sievers, of Southfield, at an adoption festival at the center. Terry and Sievers began a special relationship. Within months Terry was placed to live in Sievers's home. Terry's adoption was finalized in December.

Sievers, a volunteer for Special Olympics, introduced Gary to the Loibls at Special Olympics events. The Loibls got to know Gary, but didn't say they were planning to adopt him until they were sure.

"You need to have a commitment made first," Suzie Loibl said.

Gary began living with the Loibls as a foster child in January and was adopted in March. Sievers and the Loibls make a point of getting Gary and Terry together now and then, because they are extremely close.

Another pair of siblings found a home recently through Sarah Fisher Center. After living in separate foster care families for four years, 13-year-old Lashon and 12-year-old James, were reunited when they were adopted by Lucille Carr of Pontiac through the center's special needs adoption program, Giles said. Since their adoption was finalized

in March, Lashon and James have flourished. James, who had difficulty in school, earned all A's on his report card this semester.

The family remains involved in the center's post adoption program and Carr, a single mother, recently became a foster care parent, giving Lashon and James a 6-year-old foster brother.

Since 1992, St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center's special needs adoption program has placed 24 children with abused and neglected backgrounds into nurturing, stable and loving families, Giles said.

The center began a post-adoptive program in April 1994, which helps families through the transition and offers counseling to children and parents.

Realizing the adjustment is a slow process, the center provides support to ensure the family moves in the right direction, Giles said.

For 65 years, St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center has helped support children and families in crisis.

The center's six programs include residential treatment, special needs adoption, foster care, Marilla Outreach Services, Seton Community Preschool and Infant Child Care, and Transitions, a residential program for mothers and infants.

Overall, these programs provide services to 250 infants, youth and families on a daily basis.

## Dental assistants can sink teeth into program

BY BETH SUNDRLA  
STAFF WRITER

They're smiling over at Peak Performers Inc. A yearlong pilot program to train dental assistants has graduated its first class, and the second class is nearing completion at Oakland Community College's Orchard Ridge campus in Farmington Hills. A third class will be beginning soon.

The program is one that students can sink their teeth into, with 220 hours of classroom instruction and training in 12 weeks. Students must also complete 300 hours of internship work, some paid, some not, at a dentist's office.

Some students take longer than 12 weeks in order to complete the internship work. But that's still faster than other dental assistant training programs, many of which take two years.

That's the attractive part of the new program for many students, according to Annette Frederick, school coordinator for Peak Performers Inc. "Many of our students didn't have two years to commit (to a traditional dental assistant training program)," she said.

Tuition, books, supplies and material are free

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SHARON LEMIERE/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A closer look: Dental Training Assistants of Michigan students look on as Dr. Riggert treats a student posing as a patient.