

Schools miles ahead of driver ed rules

By LARRY O'CONNOR
Staff Writer

Driver education students will have to step up the classroom work before they step on the gas, according to new state mandates. Farmington Public Schools officials say they are already miles ahead of the standard.

Effective Sept. 1, a minimum of 22 hours in classroom instruction are required along with four hours behind the wheel.

Students in Farmington schools' summer program must have 30 classroom hours as well as spend 4 1/2 hours navigating in a parking lot and three hours driving on the street.

"We always felt it was important

to give the students as much training as we can give them," said Betty Wolford, who oversees the district's drivers ed program.

New minimum competency standards affect commercial driving schools as well.

Students only needed a minimum of 10 hours in the classroom and two hours on the road. They could meet those standards and pass a 215-question written competency test to receive a driving certificate.

Additional testing is also required under the new regulations.

Farmington-based Wolverine Driving School offers up to 30 hours of classroom instruction and six hours behind the wheel, a

company spokeswoman said.

"Nothing is going to change, except the program will be longer," said Wolverine manager Tracy Cruseberry said.

"I definitely think it's better." Added Farmington Director of Public Works Gary Goss. "Any increase in training would be applauded on my part."

The Michigan Secretary of State used to test aspiring drivers both with a written test and behind the wheel. Now it's only a written test.

"They should do both," Cruseberry said.

Under state law, public schools are required to provide driver education. Farmington schools spent

\$53,000 on its summer program in 1993, \$16,000 of which was reimbursed by the state.

Some 165 students participated this summer, which is down from the 220 to 240 who usually take the course.

The drop surprised school officials. One possible reason is that the program is only offered in the summer when students are busy with other activities, Wolford said.

Some opt to take a private course. Wolverine Driving School charges from \$129 to \$169.

"It would be nice if we could offer it year-round, but it would cost a lot of money," Wolford said.

RECREATION NEWS

Each week, the recreation division of the Farmington Hills Department of Special Services presents a synopsis of upcoming activities. For more information regarding programs, call the recreation office at 473-9570. For city council agenda items, call the Newsline at 476-3838.

FALL SOFTBALL

Registration is now being accepted for men's (Monday, Tuesday and Thursday), women's (Wednesday) and co-ed (Friday) evening softball at the Recreation Office. Teams will play a 10-game schedule, doubleheaders each night, plus playoffs for the top four teams per league. All games will be played at Harrison High School. Registration fee is \$370 per team, plus an umpire fee of \$8 per team at the field. For information,

call Cathy at 473-9579.

AMUSEMENT PARK TICKETS
Tickets for your favorite amusement park can be bought at a discount rate at the Recreation Office. For those going to Cedar Point, Crossroads Village, Detroit Zoo, Four Bears Water Park, Kings Island, Sea World or Greenfield Village, stop by for a savings on tickets to the facilities.

EQUIPMENT RENTALS
An assortment of recreation equipment is ready for picnics, birthday parties or special events. Reservations must be made at least three working days in advance by calling the Recreation Office at 473-9570. Deposit fee is required on the day of equipment pickup. Equipment sets are: picnic pacs, volleyball, softball bases, croquet, badminton, para-

chute, tug-o-war rope and floor hockey equipment.

HALLOWEEN HAUNTED WALK

The seventh-annual Halloween Haunted Walk will be Oct. 28 and 29 at Heritage Park. Groups, organizations or individuals who would be interested in creating a station on the trail to provide the chilling effect of the spirits of Halloween are sought. Call Herman Smith at 473-9570.

FALL PROGRAM REGISTRATION
The Recreation Division will be extending its regular 8:30 a.m. to

4:30 p.m. office hours to 8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. for the dates of Sept. 6, 7 and 8 for participants wishing to register for our fall programs.

Take advantage of the extended office hours to register for a class.

PUNT, PASS AND KICK
Children 8 to 15 years of age can compete in the Punt, Pass and Kick on Saturday, Sept. 10, at Heritage Park. Competition for the divisions will be as scheduled:

- 8- to 9-year-olds at 9 a.m.
- 10- to 11-year-olds at 9:30 a.m.
- 12- to 13-year-olds at 10 a.m.
- 14- to 15-year-olds at 10:30 a.m.

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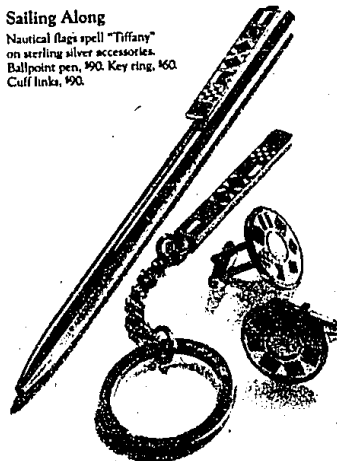
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