

# Lightner won't seek 4th term

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Public Schools trustee Susan Lightner intends to keep a promise made four years ago: The campaign ends here. Lightner announced at the start of Tuesday's board of education study session that she'll not seek a fourth term. She has served on the board for 12 years and was president in 1986-88.

Lightner's bowing out is expected to open the field for candidates in the June 12 school election. She is the only trustee up for re-election.

Nine candidates ran in 1993 when trustee Jack Cotton decided not to seek re-election. Last year, Ken Stein was the only challenger when popular incumbents R. Jack Inch and Cathy Webb successfully ran for re-election.

Lightner's life has changed over the last couple of years. She remarried and her job duties have expanded at First Federal of Michigan. She has two grown children from a previous marriage.

But she said changes in her personal life were not a factor in her decision.

"When I ran the last time, I said then (in 1991) I wasn't going to run again," said Lightner, whose last name was Rennels then. "Almost every politician probably says that. But I did mean it."

Her announcement appeared to catch other board members off guard.

President Cathy Webb said, "Wow," and added: "Susan, we have to say thank you for the service you've given to the district for 12 years."

Trustees and members to the audience responded with applause.

Lightner said she leaves with the district in good shape. She has been on the board during tumultuous times, including state-aid recapture and the defeats of bond and millage requests.

Lightner has been a constant voice for equity in hiring. She also favored such things as having



Susan Lightner cheerleaders perform at girls athletic events as well as boys.

Her concerns about equality were not limited to gender. She championed those ideals in educational opportunities.

She cited her major accomplishment as presiding on the board when the Farmington district linked its elementary and secondary curriculums. As a result, the district has a cohesive kindergarten through grade 12 program.

"When I came on the board (in 1983), elementary and secondary were two separate and distinct entities," Lightner said. "Curriculum stopped at each level."

She graduated "with distinction" from Wayne State University in 1977 — 16 years after receiving her high school diploma at Royal Oak Dendero. She has bachelor's degree in political science.

Lightner and her husband, John, live in Farmington Hills.

Lightner was known as a community activist through her work with Common Cause and the League of Women Voters when she first ran for the board in 1983. She led a petition drive for campaign reform as chairwoman of Common Cause's Michigan chapter in 1975.

She was also a regular board watcher during those times.



STAFF PHOTOS BY SHARON LEMIELUX

Gaining access: Gary Huespenbecker (above) looks on as Scott DeOrto (left), Ben Chrisom, Elizabeth Ghannan and Matt Fischer sign on to the computer system. At right, after getting a call number from the computer, Alyssa Wheeler uses a time-tested method of finding her book.

## Techno from page 1A

Second grader Ben Chrisom runs his card and a book across a scanner at the checkout desk. He found "Treasure's Under the Sea" by looking under "avd" — short for adventures — on the computer.

He just returned a book on hockey great Gordie Howe that he used for a book report.

"It's fun," Chrisom said. By making reference material easier to find, experts say kids are likely to do more research. However, there are some drawbacks to computer-driven inquiry.

"They have to be careful," Huespenbecker said. "Just because it comes from a computer they think it's gospel. They still have to filter that information." And, as with bound copies, some students still copy encyclopedia entries verbatim. The only difference is now they just print it out from a computer.

Technology is still strides better, Huespenbecker said. Students are going to have to learn to use it. "Why not now," he said. Meanwhile, encyclopedias on the shelf get a little more dusty.



## School board and 3 unions reach accord on 3-year pact

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

What was termed a "thorny problem" appears to have been smoothed over.

Farmington Board of Education and three employee unions tentatively agreed to a three-year pact Monday, replacing a previous contract struck down by an Oakland County Circuit Court judge.

Judge David Brock ruled an existing three-year pact agreed to in 1992 was null and void after the board was misquoted a price by \$4 million for health insurance.

Teachers' contracts were set to expire in August. Pacts with custodial and support personnel expire June 30.

Terms of the new agreement were not available. Assistant Superintendent for Staff and Community Relations Sue Zurvalac met with Farmington Education Association presi-

dent Zan Alley at the central office Tuesday afternoon. Neither would comment on the agreement.

Board members were scheduled to meet in closed session Tuesday night to get details of the agreement.

"I'm withholding all feelings until I can hear all the details," Board President Cathy Webb said.

Three unions representing teachers, custodial and support personnel expect to have a ratification vote within two weeks, Alley said. No details would be released until then.

"Not even a glimmer of one," Alley added.

The agreement brings a close to negotiations, which reopened in January after the court's ruling.

An agreement on non-economic issues was ratified and approved by the board Jan. 25.

Salaries, health and a stipend

were sticking points when negotiations reopened.

"They (negotiations) were very positive and we're very happy to have an agreement," Alley said. "We're looking forward to working together in the future."

Original health insurance rates quoted by MESSA were a factor in granting employees a 4-percent raise in 1992, board members said.

When the mistake was discovered, MESSA offered to pay for the first year — \$1.6 million — but not the remaining \$3.2 million. The district and the unions went to arbitration over the matter, and waited nearly a year for Brock's decision.

"We need to get on with getting on," Superintendent C. Robert Maxfield said. "That's been my message. I think this agreement will be the springboard to working together more collaboratively."

### Open those Caring Arms

St. Vincent and its Sarah Fisher Center in Farmington Hills has won a state regional Caring Arms award for its Post Adoption Support Services (PASS) program.

PASS is designed to give new adoptive families every chance to succeed through long-term support, training and counseling for both child and family members for as long as is needed.

The goal is to provide the extended support needed to help family members succeed in their goal of providing a permanent, loving home for adopted children who are emotionally disturbed, mentally or physically challenged, or have behavioral difficulties due to being born drug- or alcohol-addicted.

"This program competed with several outstanding programs from throughout the region," said Lt. Gov. Connie Binsfield, who announced the award. "The agency and this community should take great pride in this award. The competition was intense."

As a Caring Arms regional winner the PASS program will receive \$500 to enhance the services.

"The goal of Caring Arms is to reward, recognize and promote programs that make a difference in the lives of families and children," Binsfield said.

### FARMINGTON FOCUS

#### The Express pulls in

The Farmington Downtown Development's Winter Fun Series for youngsters continues at 2 p.m. Saturday, March 11, with a performance of Chautauque Express at the Civic Theatre on Grand River.

Express entertainer Guy Louis takes his material from popular American music and gets the audience involved in the performance. Admission is \$2 per person.

#### Memory Lane

From the March 10, 1955 edition of the Farmington Enterprise:

■ Earl Powell and Craig Rockefeller were named valedictorian and salutatorian, respectively, at Farmington High School.

■ Don Nichols, a Farmington High junior, was picked captain of the 1955-56 Falcon basketball team.

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