

Harrison High students court justice system

BY AILEEN WINGHEAD
STAFF WRITER

Justice was served at Farmington Harrison High Thursday — literally — as the school auditorium was transformed into 47th District Court, giving students a first-hand look at the legal system.

Hundreds of students observed the court proceedings, conducted in four sessions throughout the day, as actual cases were heard and sentences were handed down to defendants by Judge Marla E. Parker. Now in its third year, the program that brings court to Farmington high schools is coordinated by Don Cowan, executive director of instruction and student services for Farmington.

"This has been done with schools in other districts for quite some time, and we had discussed the possibility of conducting it in our schools several years ago," Cowan said. "I know Judge (Brian) MacKenzie has brought it to the Walled Lake Schools, and I had observed (court) out at Novi High School. I was very impressed. So two years ago we started a pilot program at North Farmington High, and last year we brought it to Harrison and Farmington High."

"It's a very realistic, practical experience for the students and has received excellent reviews from our teachers."

Teen-agers can relate

Cases presented for sentencing involved, for the most part, situations that teen-agers could possibly face themselves, said business teacher Judy Brankel, who helped organize the program for Harrison.

Cases included marijuana possession, operating under the influence of liquor (OUIL), minor possession of alcohol, assault and battery, breaking and entering — most committed by youthful defendants.

"Because of the nature of these cases, the kids are able to see the reality, the consequences of certain behavior," said Brankel. "The only experience, the only reference, a lot of kids have to court is 'L.A. Law.' Well, this is no 'L.A. Law.'"

Andreanna Maddox, a senior at Harrison High who spent most of the day watching the proceedings, agreed.

"I want to be a lawyer, and this way I get to see how the courts actually work," she said. "I'm surprised at how quickly everything keeps moving along."

I thought it might have been more like 'L.A. Law,' but it isn't. That's a television show, entertainment. This here is real people."

Fellow student Joshua Burt, also a senior, noted that "there are so many kids who experiment with a lot of (illegal) things, and it's a good idea to expose students to what can happen to those who face prosecution."

"We're seeing all different aspects, and all the social issues that go along with certain actions. And this also helps show the downside of doing something illegal," Burt said.

Exposed to the system

All defendants who had their cases presented before the students had agreed in advance to do so. One defendant, Donald Walker, 25, who appeared for a preliminary exam on a breaking and entering charge and fleeing a police officer, admitted he was nervous "with everybody looking" at him. But he said the program was a good way "to give kids a chance to see and learn about right and wrong."

Walker's attorney, Ted Friedman, who has participated in similar programs at other schools, added that though not every student will be influenced by watching the court, there is a definite "useful potential" for those observing.

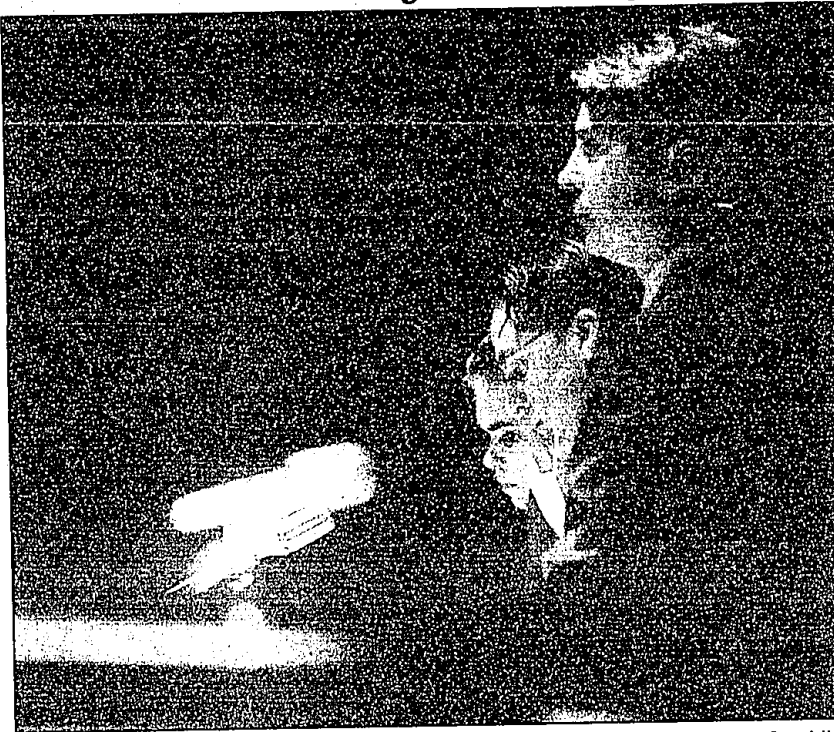
"By exposing kids to the system, there is a lesson to be learned. They find out what happens if they get into trouble." Further, he praised Walker for being "gracious and cooperative" in agreeing to come before the students with his case.

Another defendant, 19-year-old Mark Clifton, a former Farmington High School student being sentenced for minor possession of alcohol, questioned whether the program was effective at all.

"I know a lot of kids that were watching I didn't expect a full audience," he said. "I was made an example of in front of all the kids. It was like 'Don't do what this kid did, or else.'"

"But a lot of this stuff goes in one ear and out the other for these (students)," Clifton said. "I know that's what it would be like for me if I was sitting out there listening to all this."

Still another Harrison student, senior Randy Forth, said there is a clear lesson to be learned by watching the court proceedings.



STAFF PHOTOS BY SHARON LEONARD

Justice served: Mark Clifton, former FHS student, stands before Judge Parker with his attorney Todd Williams (center) and prosecutor Steve Meads. Parker could have sentenced him to 90 days for an OUIL violation, but gave him three days plus fines and a suspended license.



Court comes to school: Farmington's 47th District Court was moved from the Courthouse to the auditorium for a day. The setting was unusual but the cases were real.

Local talk show to discuss drug abuse among youth

BY TOM BARR
STAFF WRITER

They'd better break out some extra folding chairs for the Tuesday, Oct. 10, edition of the "Let's Talk" cable TV show hosted by Ben Marks. They've already hired a hall and expanded the time slot.

Marks' talk show is being turned into a town hall-type meeting that night, and a large crowd is expected.

The subject of the cable show is "Drugs and the Effect They Are Having On Our Young People." The show will be filmed before a live audience from 7:30-9 p.m. Oct. 10 in the auditorium of Farmington High School, 32000 Shawansee.

The show will appear on cable TV's Channel 12 one week later, Oct. 17, beginning at 9 p.m.

Marks, former Farmington Hills councilman, will chair the panel discussion. The 15 panelists include representatives from state and national legisla-

tures, sheriffs and police chiefs of nearby communities, and local high school students.

Panelists will address their concerns and views, and the audience will be asked for questions and comments.

The show has drawn a lot of interest in the community, said Marks, who normally hosts "Let's Talk."

"I would expect 200 or so in the auditorium," he said. "The schools already have sent notices about it home with the kids."

Marks, explaining how he came up with the idea for the show on drugs, added, "I was reading the Observer, someone was saying that we are losing the war on drugs. So I thought this would be a good way to get some dialogue going on this subject."

"When people begin to put on the pressure about solving these problems, sometimes things start to happen just a little bit."

Marks said the program will be offered to 61 local access cable

Dwyer is one of seven high-ranking police officials expected to take part. Others: Detroit Chief Isaiah McKinnon, Southfield Chief Joseph Thomas, Sterling Heights Chief Thomas Derocha, Oakland County Sheriff John Nichols, Wayne County Sheriff Robert Picano and Macomb County Sheriff's Inspector Rick Kalm.

Also expected are: Tony Antone, from Sen. Spencer Abraham's office; Paul Welday, representing U.S. Rep. Joseph Knollenberg; State Sen. William Van Regenmorter; and State Rep. Michael Nye.

Student panelists are: Melissa Foreman and Janelle Horton, both of Farmington High School; Harrison High's Brandon Fay; and North Farmington's Stephanie Wylie.

U.S. Sen. Carl Levin will not attend, Marks said. Instead, the senator will send a videotape to be played during the program.

Marks said the program will be offered to 61 local access cable

Ice arena to host grand opening

The city of Farmington Hills, through its Department of Special Services, is sponsoring a communitywide grand opening for the new ice arena.

Called the Farmington Hills Ice Arena, it is on Eight Mile Road, one-quarter mile east of Halsted in the Founders Sports Park.

This state-of-the-art facility is a two-surface arena that includes a snack bar, pro-shop, meeting rooms and serves as the headquarters for the Farmington Hills Figure Skating Booster Club and Farmington Hills

Hockey Association. There is also a room designated for a full-service restaurant to be complete within the next year.

The facility will be open from 10 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. on Saturday and 12:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday for the public tour, skate and skating demonstration. Special events are scheduled throughout the day. Everything is free except the Red Wing Alumni game. Tickets for \$3 are on sale at the arena with all proceeds going to Red Wing charities. The game is at 6:30 p.m. Saturday.

Area skaters who have competed at state and national levels will be part of the figure skating demonstration at 1 p.m. on Sunday and again at 4 p.m. Sunday. Individual programs, pairs dance teams and precision teams will all skate to various routines. A complete schedule is available by stopping by the arena or the Special Services offices at 31555 11 Mile Road at Orchard Lake Road or by calling the arena at 478-8800 or Special Services at 478-9578. Schedules are also available at either branch of the Farmington Public Library.

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