

Jewish volunteers bring yuletide cheer, labor to Christmas charities

BY ERIKA M. HIRSCHMAN
STAFF WRITER

For many, Christmas is a holiday to spend with family and friends — and to take a day off work. However, some businesses and organizations need to keep their doors open.

With the help of more than 500 Jewish volunteers, employees of these local organizations were able to be relieved of their duties on Christmas Day to celebrate with their families and friends.

The Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit — along with its

Young Adult Division, Business & Professional Women, Women's Division and Community Outreach & Involvement Department — coordinated volunteers from West Bloomfield, Southfield and Farmington to participate on Monday in what they called "The Volunteer Extravaganza."

"It was a very positive feeling to be able to help the community in some way instead of staying at home," said West Bloomfield resident Ilene Weiss, who volunteered on Christmas Day as part of the extravaganza.

Weiss and her daughter Susan, who also volunteered last Christmas, went along with 30 other volunteers to St. Leo's — a soup kitchen in Detroit.

At St. Leo's, the volunteers wrapped and packaged presents for part of the day, and then helped serve dinner.

"Traditionally, Jewish people tend to feel left out on Christmas Day. But this way we know we were helping by giving other workers a chance to celebrate their holiday," Ilene said.

The project/extravaganza enables the employees of local soup kitchens, nursing homes, hospitals, shelters and other projects to take the holiday off without the worries of who will temporarily look over.

David and Darren Findling of Southfield, who have both also volunteered in other projects, helped out on Monday and participated in the project.

Their duties for the day was to help finish painting a house in downtown Pontiac for PATH (Pontiac Area Transitional Housing) so that a family could be moved in this January.

"It was very rewarding and great to know that we were contributing to the community by restoring a home," said David Findling. "We know we made a significant change... and the idea that we were a part of the Christmas Spirit. We have to help each other out." Both agreed.

In Southfield, Prentis Manor was another one of 27 organizations that benefitted from the visiting volunteers.

Activities director Susan Maness said without the volunteers, "it would have been a much quieter day. Much of our contingent staff and regular staff were out because of the holiday, this way our residents were provided with music and games of all sort."

Prentis Manor on Lahser Road is a Jewish home for the aged and

contains 100 beds. "Although 15 volunteers sounds like a small number, it was really very adequate for the facility," Maness said.

For the last 10 years the Jewish Federation has been involved in many volunteer projects. Among these is the Volunteer Network, which is a smaller version of the Christmas Day Extravaganza.



I'm a volunteer: (Above) As Sara Vight's pin read, she helped Bloomfield Hills Care Center resident Helen Falkenburg with her bingo card on the Christmas holiday. (Left) West Bloomfield resident Linda Gross and her son, Mark, 16, also help out center residents play bingo and get into the Christmas spirit.



Young Volunteer: Emily Eckhaus, 6, of West Bloomfield, assists Mrs. Klegman with her bingo as other residents also play along.



Great Help: Evan Sack, 6, plays bingo on Christmas Day with his grandmother, Ruth Shafkind, who lives at the West Bloomfield Convalescent Center.

Hills among nation's safest

BY BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills is one of the safest cities in Michigan and the nation, according to FBI statistics.

The city was rated 83rd safest in the country and fifth safest in Michigan with an average of 39.52 serious crimes per 1,000 residents. Farmington Hills Police Chief Bill Dwyer was pleased with the result, and added that his own department's figures show an even lower rate of 38.44 crimes per 1,000 residents. That would put it lower than Livonia. West Bloomfield Township, ranked eighth best in the nation, Canton Township at 42nd and Sterling Heights at 67th were the other top Michigan cities.

FBI STATS

"I'm pleased that we're in the top 100 of all cities in the U.S.," Dwyer said. "I think it's both a reflection on the way our officers do their job and on the community we live in. We couldn't do it without the help of our citizens."

Dwyer cited a recent incident in which two Hills residents rescued a woman who had been attacked during an apparent carjacking.

"That's the kind of involvement that makes our city so great," he said.

West Bloomfield Police Chief Ron Cronin was pleased, but wasn't crowing to his friend and

counterpart in Farmington Hills. He credited a "high degree of professionalism" of his officers as well as community support.

"That is what makes a community safe, participation by its citizens," Cronin said.

The figures reflect total serious crime. In Farmington Hills for 1994, there was one murder, 11 rapes, 31 robberies, 121 aggravated assaults, 514 burglaries, 2,204 larcenies and 196 vehicle thefts. That total, divided by the population of Farmington Hills (80,057) times 1,000 is the figure used to get the average number of serious crimes per 1,000 residents.

Detroit (14), Saginaw (9), Flint (11) and Grand Rapids (96) were among the U.S. cities with the highest rates of serious crimes.

FARMINGTON FOCUS

Sarah Fisher benefits

Comet Burgers, a 1950s-style diner in Royal Oak, is helping approximately 40 youngsters from St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center in Farmington Hills ring in the new year in style.

On Sunday, Dec. 31, from noon to 3 p.m. Comet Burgers will treat the kids to meals, soft drinks, balloons and entertainment featuring Barney and a Power Ranger.

The restaurant's co-owners — Kelly Eaman, Paul Rosette and Gullio Ledda — also have raised more than \$1,000 for all the residents of St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center. The money will be used to buy gift certificates for movies, restaurants and other fun events.

"It's important for those kids to know that there are caring people out in the world," said Eaman. "Hopefully, when they grow up, they'll do the same for someone else."

St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center, located at 12 Mile and Inkster roads, provides a home for children with special needs. The center's programs include residential treatment, and foster care and adoption services for severely abused children.

On domestic violence

The subject will be community resources to help victims of domestic violence at the Thursday, Jan. 4, breakfast meeting of the Interagency Council of Farmington and Farmington Hills.

The meeting will start at 7:30 a.m. at The Longacre House, 24705 Farmington Road, Farmington Hills. Penny Hackett-Evans, a community education specialist from Haven, a Pontiac shelter for abused women, will speak.

The Interagency Council is an umbrella group for Farmington-area organizations.

St. Gerald blood drive

An American Red Cross blood drive will be held at St. Gerald Catholic Church, 21220 Farmington Road, just north of Eight Mile, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 6.

First-time donors are welcome. Call Vince Scanio at 474-4541 for more information.

Memory Lane

From the Dec. 29, 1955 edition of the Farmington Enterprise:

■ Citing his age (he turned 90 in July, 1955) and health concerns, Harry McCracken resigned his position as Farmington Township clerk. His announcement brought to an end a 50-year career in public service. He was editor and publisher of the Farmington Enterprise from 1900-02.

■ A photo showed a Nativity scene on the lawn of the Farmington Township Hall at Grand River and Farmington Road.

■ Eighty-seven Farmington-area families received help from the Farmington Goodfellows this year, according to Fred Menke, president.

■ Norman Lewton was elected president of the Farmington Exchange Club during a club meeting at the Universalist Church.

■ Short item: "One thing a girlie does is keep an unfortunate situation from spreading."

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