

Pals at the pod: Carol George, Sorrows volunteer and parent, helps Steve Gasso and other third-graders at the computer pod. Others students at the computer pod. (with ear muff) and Megan Ryan.



STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LEMKE

## Lady of Sorrows reboots library with computers

The Parent-Teacher Guild at Our Lady of Sorrows Middle School finally feels the byte after two years of fund raising.

The school's library is \$60,000 richer with computer equipment because of the guild's efforts. Our Lady of Sorrows Middle School hosted an open house March 19 to show off the library's new hardware and software.

Students are able to use four CD ROM workstations, printers, a digital camera and a scanner in the library. With the new equipment, the library is also automating its card catalogue, book circulation and inventory.

A modem and phone line will be installed so students can access library materials from home.

Along with a technological overhaul, the library received new carpeting and a coat of paint.

The upgrade was planned by the school's Technology Committee, which included school administrators, faculty, and members of the school board and teacher-parent guild. In the future, the school will look into developing network capabilities for the computer lab, library, classrooms, school office and parish office.

## Highmeadow lottery upsets parents over few school openings

By LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

Spring is here: Parents shutout for openings in the annual Highmeadow Common Campus lottery are questioning the process.

The year's protests are more vociferous and vocal than usual.

That's because a sibling priority policy had 45 of the 50 openings at the Farmington District's school of choice already going to brothers and sisters of current students.

That left only five openings for 148 applicants in the lottery March 13.

Three residents complained at a Board of Education study session March 5. Hills resident Sam Iyer continued his case at the board's regular meeting March 26.

"Fundamentally, it doesn't make it right whether 100 people are for it," Iyer said. "It is a discriminatory practice. I don't feel it is right."

Giving preference to siblings to fill openings has been debated but not.

Sibling priority policy was approved in 1989 for Highmeadow Common Campus and Gill Year-Round School. Complaints have come mostly from those who want to enroll in Highmeadow, though.

Highmeadow Common Campus offers alternative elementary education for grades 1-5. The school, selected for National Exemplary status in 1994, continually leads the district in performance on standardized tests.

The idea behind the sibling priority statute is to keep families together instead of having children spread out around the district. That's particularly a concern for families where both parents work.

Opponents have called it elitist and said the policy creates a private school paid for by public tax dollars.

The board upheld the sibling policy after a heated discussion two years ago. Then, a large turnout of Highmeadow parents and former principal Janice Colton spoke in favor of keeping it.

"The sibling priority is something that has been in question for

a long time," said Don Cowan, director of Kindergarten through Grade 12 instruction. "My feeling is it's a difficult one to deal with because there is a good argument on both sides."

An unusually high number of incoming siblings this year has brought the policy to the forefront. Highmeadow Principal Barbara Reams said.

About half of Highmeadow's 308 student population is in third or fourth grade. Parents often have children two or three years apart, which might explain the increase, she said.

"We have very few parents who wouldn't accept that spot," Reams said.

A similar situation occurred in 1991 when an influx of siblings left only seven openings. Cowan said.

Board trustees said they intend to look at the policy in the future. For now it stands.

Iyer wanted specifics at the board meeting, but felt he didn't get any.

"You're asking the same questions," Board President Joe Svoke said during the meeting. "At this point and time we have a policy in place for the 1996 school year."

Iyer asked Svoke if he thought it was fair. Svoke didn't answer the question directly.

Iyer said he and another parent are considering posing that same question before a judge. He and the parent want to get names of those who applied for the lottery for a possible class action suit. Iyer's son is enrolled at Montessori school. He pays \$7,000 a year in tuition, as well as school property taxes.

Asked if he'd still be as vocal against the policy if his son were picked, Iyer said he would. He also has a 12-year-old.

"I would still want them to open it up so others — like my son — have an equal chance," Iyer said. "If you're asking if I were lucky and my son received a spot through the lottery, would I still have this discontent? I would."

## FARMINGTON FOCUS

### Last one in's a...

Dig out the bathing suits and earplugs: the swimming pool at Oakland Community College's Orchard Ridge Campus in Farmington Hills is open again.

Openers on Olympic-size pool at OCC-Orchard Ridge, south of I-696 between Orchard Lake and Farmington roads, have been completed. The pool passed inspection by the Oakland County Health Department March 16, and swim classes and community open swimming have resumed.

The process of restoring the 17-year-old pool lasted six months and cost nearly \$103,000. Improvements included installation of a new liner, replacement of the drainage system and new deck flooring.

Beginning with the spring semester, aquatic classes such as deep water running, skin and scuba diving and kayaking will be offered. Open swimming will be available to the public for a nominal membership fee.

For more information on the OCC pool, call 471-7539. For information on spring semester credit classes, call 471-7536.

### Something to sing about

First ratel That's what the judges said about Farmington High School's concert choir which participated in the recent Michigan School Vocal Music Association Choir Festival at Howell High School.

Farmington's choir, directed by Evelyn Schuette, was given a first-division rating allowing the group to move on to state-level competition in Jackson in early May.

"I'm proud, the principal's proud, the entire school's proud of these kids," said Schuette.

The choir was judged on performances of two a capella pieces ("And So It Goes" by Chicco and the required 16th Century Madrigal "How Merry We Live," by Moore), as well as its eight-singing skills.

"Sight-singing? That's when they put music in front of you and you have to sing it for the first time," Schuette said. "It's very difficult."

### Any Athenas out there?

The Chamber of Commerce of Farmington and Farmington Hills is accepting nominations

for the Athena Award given annually to an individual — man or woman — who has:

- Achieved excellence in higher business or profession.
- Served the community in a meaningful way.
- Assisted women in reaching their full potential.

"The award is built around promoting women in business," said Marie Esposito of the Chamber of Commerce.

Deadline for nominations is May 3. Nomination forms may be obtained at the Chamber of Commerce office, 33000 Thomas St., Farmington, or by calling 474-3440. The award will be presented at a luncheon in May.

The Chamber of Commerce and Bob Saks Oldsmobile co-sponsor the event.

### In days of old

Geoff Hoerauf, who re-enacts 18th Century events, will speak on Indian use of indigenous plants as food sources, medicine and tools at a meeting of the Farmington Area Naturalists at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 9, in the Spicer House in Heritage Park, Farmington Road between 10 Mile and 11 Mile roads. The event is open to the public.

### Mom-Tot program

Mayfair Can-On Preschool in Farmington Hills is accepting applications for its Mom-tot program for the 1996-97 school year.

Classes are held 12:30-2 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays for children ages 21 months to 3 years. For more information or to register, call 626-2769.

### Meet the Democrat

A political fundraiser will be held for Stephen Dibert, a Democrat running for state representative in the 37th District that includes Farmington and Farmington Hills, at 7 p.m. Tuesday, April 16, at Alcocino's restaurant at Grand River and Haggerty. Cost is \$15 per person. For more information, call 315-9999.

### Money saved — and earned

Gay Reigle of Farmington Hills was among 19 State of Michigan employees to receive recognition and cash awards for

their suggestions that saved the state \$109,735.

Reigle, a Michigan Opportunity Skills Training (MOST) worker with the Department of Social Services, received \$465 for her idea for automation of the accounting system.

Cash awards are determined on the basis of 10 percent of the state's net first-year savings, up to a maximum of \$5,000. Since the program's inception, more than 2,000 employee suggestions have been implemented.

### About public transit

Richard Kaufman, general manager of SMART, the suburban bus line, and a former Wayne County Circuit Court Judge, will speak on public transportation at a Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce luncheon at 11:30 a.m. Friday, April 19, at the Holiday Inn of Farmington Hills, 10 Mile and Grand River. For reservations or more information, call the chamber at 474-3440.

### Attention, area seniors

Joyce Hunt, director of access and benefit services for the Area Agency on Aging, will speak on "Aging and Intimacy" at the Western Oakland Senior Salute 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, April 20, at the Costick Activities Center, 28600 W. 11 Mile Road between Middlebelt and Inkster roads, Farmington Hills.

A variety of dance and musical acts, all comprised of senior citizens, will perform.

"Our senior advisory council has arranged cloggers, line dancers, and organist and even a gentleman in his 90s leading a gutbucket band," said State Rep. Jan Dolan, R-Farmington Hills, who is co-sponsoring the event. "I'm anticipating a lot of fun."

Also offered will be food, a consumer fair and several speakers.

Items for Farmington Focus may be mailed to the Farmington Observer, 33411 Grand River, Farmington 48335; faxed to 477-9722; or dropped off at the newspaper office. For the computer literate, the Internet E-mail address is: packy



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