

Students imitate crucifixion path



STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LEMIRE

At St. Fabian: Fifth-graders at Farmington Hills' St. Fabian School, led by teachers Mary VanZandt and Carol Balash, participated in a symbolic march called the Stations of the Cross Thursday, April 4, imitating the path Jesus walked before being crucified. At right, Joe Rohde, playing Jesus, has his sweat wiped away by classmate Lauren Audette. In the photo above, St. Fabian students — including (from right) Kathleen Muccino, Abby Hunter, Kristen Nofer, Michael Davison, Stephanie Ross, Brian Doot, Kristen Smith — attempt to turn the story of Jesus into practical lessons of how to treat fellow classmates.

Michigan career points to top post in school district

Editor's note: The following is a profile of one of the three finalists for the position of superintendent of the Clarenceville School District, which includes the southeast corner of Farmington Hills.

BY MARIE CHESTNEY
STAFF WRITER

Alan K. McLean is the only one of the three finalists for Clarenceville superintendent who has spent his entire educational career in Michigan.

His current assignment is in Vermontville, where he is superintendent of Maple Valley Schools. McLean arrived in 1994 in the wake of a teachers' strike that he said had destroyed morale in the small, 189-employee district.

After the strike, employees had gone without a contract for two years. After taking over the top job, a contract was reached in three weeks, McLean admits he is not the Superman that event might make him out to be.

"The bargaining units wanted to settle and get things back to normal, so negotiating was not all that difficult," McLean told the

Clarenceville Board of Education Wednesday during his candidate interview.

"MASE had been negotiating, and they had three bad years. I said, 'Why don't you let me try it. Things couldn't get much worse.'"

McLean graduated from Alma College in 1970 with a degree in English. He has earned two advanced degrees from Central Michigan University, a master's in 1976 and an educational specialist degree in 1996.

His first job, teaching English, came in 1970 in Whittemore-Frescott Area Schools in Whittemore, Mich.

In 1979 he was named adult/community education director and assistant superintendent for the same district.

In 1989, he was named superintendent, a job he held until he moved to Maple Valley Schools in 1994.

After getting the contract settled, McLean's administrative woes were far from over. To boost student achievement, the district launched a building consolidation plan that affected students in

three schools. Some students suddenly found themselves in a school miles from their home.

"We did this for curriculum reasons, not money reasons," said McLean. "The same instruction was not coming out of the three buildings. First, we got a livable contract. Then we split the community up by moving kids five miles away. It totally fragmented the community."

At this point, McLean discovered how important parents are to the educational process. One mother said parents might take to the moon more if the school buildings had fresh coats of paint. So the district bought \$1,000 worth of paint, and the parents wound up painting murals in all the elementaries.

The healing that took place because of one woman and her idea about paint became the focal point of numerous newspaper stories. And the stories promoted even deeper healing, McLean said.

McLean runs a district with a \$5.5 million budget. In 1987, he was named Educator of the Year in Inoco County.

In-line skating club ready to roll

Now that the weather has improved, the Farmington In-line Skating Club wants to get rolling.

The club's Wednesday Downtown Skate for beginner to intermediate levels starts 6:30 p.m. April 10 behind the Farmington Downtown Center on Grand River and Farmington roads. Wednesday skates run through October and are open to the public.

The Farmington In-line

Skating Club is a volunteer organization formed in 1994. The group is made up of area professionals who have taken up in-line skating as a form of exercise.

Eventual plans include forming training, safety and etiquette classes, neighborhood watch programs and participation in Heritage Days festivals.

In the past, 35 people have participated in club-sponsored skates. The group expects membership to double this year and

is looking for sponsorships. Group sponsorships start at \$300 and are available up to corporate level at \$5,000.

The non-profit group is also seeking donations of cash, materials and services. Money raised will help pay for safety materials, club and sponsor banners, communication gear to monitor events, newsletter and shirts.

For information on the club, call 478-8310.

Hills seeks roundabout cure for congested intersection

BY BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills City Council members heard about a possible solution to traffic congestion at the Northwestern/Orchard Lake/14 Mile Road intersection in a roundabout way April 1.

Farmington Hills Director of Public Services Tom Blasell made a presentation to council members at the study session and showed a video from the Maryland Department of Transportation promoting the concept of the roundabout.

A roundabout is a circular road with an island at an intersection of two or more roads that forces traffic to slow down and yet keeps flow continual instead of having traffic stop and go in "platoons" at traffic lights.

"They do well with high volume intersections," Blasell said. "It works because drivers are comfortable at a slower speed. You can't go around it fast."

Roundabouts are a regular feature of traffic control in England, Scotland and Ireland, where they've been used for years. Gainesville, Fla. was the first U.S. city to employ a roundabout and Annapolis, Md. and Gettysburg, Pa., are two of the better-known cities that use them.

In a roundabout traffic approaching the circle with the island must yield to traffic already in the circle. As traffic clears, cars enter the circle, drive counter-clockwise, and turn right to get off onto any of several roads. The island forces traffic to slow down, but usually doesn't stop.

The concept has lessened accidents from 35 percent in France to 74 percent in Norway. And because several cars are not stopped

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to idle at a red light, there is a savings in fuel resulting in a savings to the environment.

But Blasell said the ideal roundabout must be correctly designed. He said the circle at the Arch de Triumf in Paris, France is a "disaster." Insurance companies will not cover cars that enter that particular drive, he said.

Officials from the Michigan Department of Transportation, the Southeast Council of Governments, the Road Commission for Oakland County, West Bloomfield Township and citizens who met over the past two years to come up with solutions to traffic problems in the area proposed changes. The roundabout addresses those problems.

The State of Michigan has already earmarked \$26 million for traffic improvements for the area.

Although Northwestern Highway had been planned in 1941 to follow Orchard Lake into Pontiac, and then planned to extend to US-23 to Flint in the 1950s, those plans were delayed and ultimately scrapped. There are already plans for subdivisions in West Bloomfield that would go where Northwestern would have extend-

ed. Other changes in population and other freeways followed, leaving the current intersection.

Traffic congestion, especially at rush hour, and accidents have increased as the area has developed. Blasell said if trends continue, another 100,000 residents in Oakland County and additional jobs will only add to the traffic.

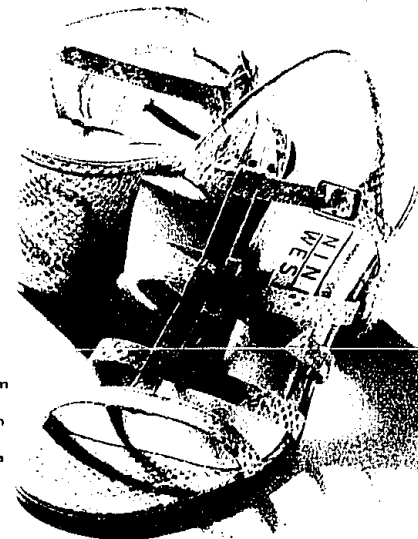
"Concept team" meetings in late 1994 gave officials public feedback on motorist and resident priorities. The cost of improving Maple Road, 14 Mile and others would be about \$50 million. From those concerns, MDOT came up with the concept of the roundabout as a way to address the problem in a less expensive way.

Blasell said the proposal will be made formally later this month.

Assistant City Manager David Call said that any improvements will take time.

"The state now feels that with the participation of citizens and the affected communities, when the money becomes available the project will be done in phases," he said. "The idea is to find a plan we can all support conceptually and get to the specifics later."

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