

All-Star pom pon crew sparks Olympic cheer

BY LAURIE HUMPHREY
STAFF WRITER

Several Farmington-area girls are getting the chance of a lifetime, and they get to see the Olympics, too.

"To be able to go... it's such an experience," said Julie Glover, 17, a senior at Farmington High School. She is one of six Farmington High School students invited to perform at Coca-Cola Park in Atlanta for the 1996 Olympics crowd.

Glover is part of the Michigan All Star Team, a select group of pom girls chosen from across the state. The annual tryouts to become one of the elite are rigorous, and the competition is tough.

"These girls are exceptional," said Karen Blazaitis, creator of the Mid-American Pom Organization. "They come from all over the state. They are the cream of the crop on their high school teams."

The 200-member group has performed for the Citrus Bowl in Florida, the Fiesta Bowl in Arizona, the Michigan Parade in Lansing, the St. Patrick's Day Parade in Chicago, for Detroit Pistons games...even the 1993 Presidential Inaugural Parade.

"(But) this will be an experience they will never forget," said Blazaitis.

"They will get to perform for an international crowd, which is something we've never done before. It's something that's always been a dream of mine."

While there are more than 200 high schoolers which belong to Michigan's All Star Team this year, Blazaitis will only take about 80 to the Olympic performance.

One reason is money, said Blazaitis, also of Farmington Hills. "It's somewhat expensive."

All girls were given the choice of whether to go, and the opportunity to fund raise.

So if you're an All Star, have \$850 and have no plans for the week of July 23, you were on a bus to Atlanta to perform at the Coca-Cola Park.

"We'll also be down there when they shoot a commercial," said Glover. "But I don't know if we'll be in it."

Farmington High School seniors Lauren Helisek, 17, and Katie Seed, 17, will join Glover at the international showing. So will 1996 Farmington High School graduates Tracey Finlayson, 17, Kelly Smith, 18 and Nicole Berling, 18.

"I don't know what to expect," responded Lauren Helisek, when asked if she was nervous. "I won't know until I get down there."



STAFF PHOTO BY BRADLEY LEMLEY

Olympic feet: left to right Lisa Gutman, Harrison High School; Farmington High School, Katie Seed, Nicole Berling, Tracey Finlayson, Kelly Smith, Lauren Helisek, and Amy Friedman, Harrison High School. Also performing at the Olympics but not pictured is Julie Glover.

But if the crowds don't make the group nervous, nothing should.

After hours of practicing their four routines, they know them by heart.

And just to make sure, the group performed for Coca-Cola Park representatives when they arrived Wednesday.

"If we don't know it, we don't perform (today)," said Seed.

The All Stars are divided into four groups. Each group is assigned four routines to be performed the same day, back-to-back.

The rest of the time, they will sight see and take in a girls Olympic soccer game for work well done.

And Cindy Helisek, Lauren's

mother, said pom poms in work, especially for the three All Stars still in high school. Not only are they practicing for their Olympic debut, they also have to know their high school routines for competition.

"They've been practicing every morning from 7:30 to 10 a.m. (for the Farmington High School team) since they got out of school June 8," she said.

In addition, the trio practices for the Atlanta showing at home and have had three three-hour sessions with the entire All Star Group.

Those practices are centrally-located however since the team comes from all over the state.

"There is no time for fixing," said Cindy Helisek. "They have

to learn it on their own and be able to perform."

The girls are staying at the University of Georgia, 40 miles away from the Olympics site.

Also attending, but performing on different teams, will be Harrison High School students Amy Friedman, 17, and Lisa Gutman, 17.

There are a number of students going from Farmington Hills' Mercy High School also, but their names were not available.

Haggerty from page A1

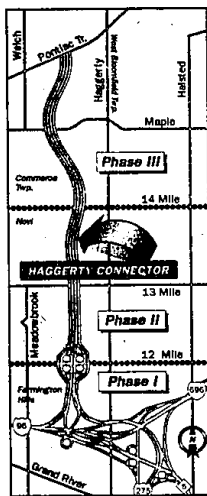
upgrading five existing bridges as part of the \$23.5 million portion of the project.

MDOT is also planning construction on 13 Mile Road in cooperation with the City of Novi to improve 1.3 miles of cross roads.

The Haggerty Connector has been a key priority for Gov. John Engler as part of the Build Michigan program. The connector was designed to eliminate traffic congestion on Haggerty Road and 12, 13, and 14 Mile roads and improve traffic safety conditions with less congested freeways.

Phase III, the final phase of the project, will begin north of 14 Mile Road and link the interchange from Maple Road and Welch Road at Maple to Pontiac Trail. Maple Road will be reconstructed as a boulevard from west of Welch to 1,000 feet east of Laura Lane and Pontiac Trail will be reconstructed as a five-lane roadway from Big Trail Road to Haggerty Road, including the intersection.

"The Haggerty Connector will provide Oakland County residents with the infrastructure needed to support the tremendous economic boom in this area," according to Wolke. "This project will play a vital role in the continued growth and development of Oakland County as it carries people to their homes, businesses and places of employment."



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ment." According to MDOT Transportation Planner Hugh McNichol, the connector will help business growth by facilitating

traffic off of the freeways and onto the Mile roads.

"Currently there's no access to southern Oakland County for five miles (between Novi and Orchard Lake roads)," McNichol said.

West Bloomfield Township Supervisor Jeddy Hood is pleased with the construction project thus far.

"I really do see a difference in the traffic patterns," Hood said.

According to Hood, some of the traffic flow from 14 and 15 Mile roads, which would normally go east to the Lodge Freeway, is going west to Haggerty to M-5 to I-695.

"I think when it reaches it's final destination, we will see a change in the traffic flow," Hood said. "I'm excited to see it moving on," she said, adding that it gives drivers a choice.

Farmington Hills Director of Public Services Tom Binell said the connector would not only help Hills residents, but anyone trying to go north through the community.

"I think the community has been waiting for a long time for this," he said. "It will not only help residents on the west side of the city, but I think it will ease traffic on Orchard Lake and Northwestern, which will help the who community."

Farmington Observer contributor William Coutant contributed to this report.

Fraud is topic of breakfast discussion

Moreof Sheplew Weinstein, PLC, a Farmington Hills CPA and consulting firm, will host a free breakfast discussion on preventing white collar crime.

They will profile embezzlers, give an insight into who they are what they know, what motivates them, some methods they use, and some steps to take to prevent them.

Employee embezzlement is one of the most common crimes in today's society. The breakfast will be held from 7:30-9:30 a.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 6, at the Skyline Club, 2000 Town Center Drive, Suite 2800, Southfield. Limited seating is available. For reservations please contact Kendall Mercer at 855-8200.

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