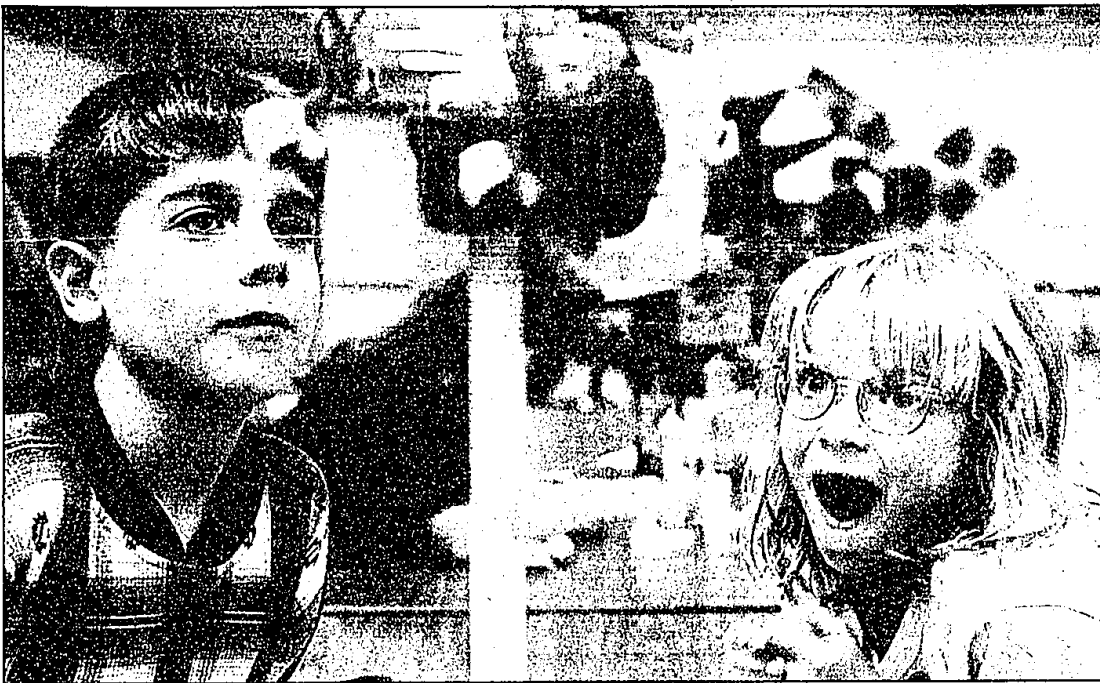


Joys of toys:
Fourth grader
Skyler Ander-
son, left, and
third grader
Brittany Web-
ster play a
game called
"Monkey
Madness."
Brittany
loved it, but
Skyler said it
was a game
for younger
kids.

STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON
LEWIS



Kids take their toying around seriously

BY TODD WICKS
STAFF WRITER

Monkey Madness, Frantic Ants, Brain Warp — parents, learn these names.

These toys and games were among the top choices of kids who participated in Duracell's Ninth Annual Kids' Choice National Survey, which ended last week at Gill Primo Time, the YMCA after-school program at Gill Elementary School.

Duracell sponsors the event to help parents decide which toys to buy for the upcoming holiday season.

"The toys are either out now or will be by Christmas," said Chris Finger, director of Gill Primo

Time. "Duracell takes the surveys and turns them over to 'Good Morning America' and other TV shows. They use kids because they're the ones getting toys as gifts. They're the best measuring stick."

Kids ages 4 to 11 tested about 25 toys for two weeks and elected their favorites to the top ten Friday. The Prime Time children were among 550 "play-testers" in 20 cities around the country.

"We have questionnaires to fill out on each toy," said Courtney McKenna, 8, who listed some of the testing criteria: "We see if they work right, if they're for bigger or younger kids, if all the pieces are there, or if they're broken."

Skyler Anderson, 9, continued. "We see if the directions are good or if the toys are easy to put

together, if it's a fun game or not."

Parents got in the toy-testing act, too. "They like it," said Finger. "They look at them and actually play with some of them. They'll say 'Oh, that's got a lot of pieces' or 'I'm not buying that.'"

The Prime Time kids seemed to enjoy hand-held electronics games and toys best, with board games faring the worst, getting only the one play required by the survey before being relegated to the corner.

Last year, Beechview Elementary kids did the Duracell test, while Gill participated in one held by WDIV-Channel 4.

Needless to say, the kids enjoyed it.

"When we first got the toys it was really hard," said Finger. "They were just jumping all over, like, it was Christmas day."

In the holiday spirit, a majority of the kids decided that although Duracell lets them keep all of the toys, they will donate some to children who won't receive any presents at the holidays.

But even playing can turn into work, said Katie O'Connor, 9. "If you play the toys a couple of times they're fun, but if you play them a long time they get really boring."

Farmington schools team up to spread word on nutrition

BY TODD WICKS
STAFF WRITER

Farmington schools are trying to make the Team.

A new program by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Team Nutrition is designed to help implement changing national school-meal health guidelines. The USDA recently gave Michigan a grant of \$195,710, and is encouraging schools to apply for \$500 portions.

"We're using Team Nutrition as a vehicle for getting the message out," said Debra Larson, nutrition supervisor for Farmington schools. "It's hopefully teaching kids to eat balanced meals, and that by eating a school lunch, if you eat the whole thing, you're going to have a balanced meal."

While the USDA is stressing menu and preparation changes, Larson said that Farmington is one step ahead of them.

"We've already changed our menu to be under regulations," she said. "We've trimmed the fat to be no more than 30 percent of

the total calories. We've increased fiber by offering more fruit and vegetable choices every day. We also found, believe it or not, that we had to increase calories. Desserts are now offered more frequently, but we try to make them nutritious."

Some of the area elementaries already on Team Nutrition have received educational materials featuring characters from the Disney movie "The Lion King."

"It's a partnership that we're very excited about," said Larson. "It helps children enjoy the benefits of healthy eating in an entertaining way, with characters that they can relate to."

She had not been made aware of the grants, but said, "Whenever there's money out there, we try to bring it into the district."

To join Team Nutrition, schools are asked to build a nutrition Dream Team.

"They suggest putting a teacher, a parent, someone in the community like a nurse or dietician, people who have children in schools, or who are interested in the redevelopment of

the menu, on the team," said Joan Hatch of Oakland Intermediate Child Nutrition.

The USDA grant money, being distributed through Michigan State University, is then used for a class activity.

"It might be that they would take an experiment into every classroom and have students learn something more about foods, like high-fat versus low-fat foods," said Hatch.

"I would love to see a class put a small refrigerator in the classroom with all healthy foods and see if their grades are any better than the class next door."

"Kids could get prizes for selected a healthy meal that day. They might start learning to read labels. Those are just a few examples."

Hatch stressed the importance of learning good nutrition both at home and school.

"You can't just do it in the cafeteria. If we teach it in the classroom and take it home, you can really change eating habits. Then we can really make an impact."



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Harrison marching band takes top honors in 2 competitions

BY DIANE HANSON
SPECIAL WRITER

The Harrison High School Marching Band, under the direction of Mark Phillips and assistant, Andy James is celebrating two first-place awards in a row.

Under adverse weather and field conditions at both the West Bloomfield Band Competition on Sept. 21 and the Novi Fanfare Marching Band Competition on Sept. 23, the band took top honors for Flight III competition and numerous caption awards (Flights are determined by the number of students enrolled at the school, not the size of the band).

"I feel really good about where we are right now," Phillips said. "The kids are working really hard. Everyone seems real focused with a real positive, supportive attitude toward one another. We've tried to encourage a lot of student leadership this year in terms of really supporting and working especially with the new kids."

That positive, supportive attitude seems to be a

successful combination for the 132-member band and color guard. The program this year is a beautiful portrayal of life and love through a musical combination of Puccini's Opera, "La Boheme" and the modern day version Jonathan Larson's, "Rent."

The Harrison band's performance swept the Flight III field with a score of seven 1.80 for first place and caption awards for Best Winds, Best Marching and Maneuvering, Best Percussion and Best Color Guard.

Other first placements went to Algonac in Flight IV, Lakeland in Flight II and Plymouth-Canton in Flight I.

The Farmington Marching Band, under the direction of Norman Logan with assistant Mike Randall, took fifth place in Flight II. The Farmington musical program is George Gershwin's, "An American in Paris."

Upcoming competitions for Harrison will be Bands of America Midwest Regional at the University of Toledo, Oct. 19; and Michigan Compelling Bands Association State Championships at the Silverdome, Pontiac, Oct. 28.

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