



Principles of being principal: North Farmington High Principal Deb Clarke shares some insights on the job with Farmington High senior Annemarie Scanio during Students Operating Schools Day Feb. 28. Students shadowed district and building administrators for the morning.

Table talk: Students Operating Schools Day includes a mock meeting of the board of education. Student trustees tackled an agenda at board offices. Students also sat in with trustees at the board's Feb. 25 regular meeting. Jonathan Weinberg, Seth Weingarten, Katy Blackwell, Larry Affholter, Susan Schmidt and Jeff Hofman served as student trustees.

STAFF PHOTOS BY TOM HOFFMEYER



Tasks: Acting superintendent and Kelli Crawford of Harrison High and school board president Susan Schmidt from Farmington High discuss issues.

Students take over schools for a day

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Students had the run of the Farmington schools for a morning, which provided more than enough of a glimpse into the daily operation of a school.

The job is not easy, they said.

Annual Students Operating Schools Day gives kids a chance to see what goes into running a school and a district. Some 43 students took part in the fifth annual activity, which is similar to government days offered by both cities.

Farmington High senior Annemarie Scanio tagged along with North Farmington High Principal Deb Clarke. She got a quick glimpse into the seriousness of the job.

"She had to deal with a student conflict and I had to leave the office," Scanio said. "I completely understood."

Harrison High junior Lynn Popowiecki watched as Longacre Elementary Principal Bill Smith used diplomacy after a neighbor of the school complained about custodians putting broken branches onto their property.

"I was really surprised by some of the problems he had to deal with," Popowiecki said.

Yet, despite the pressures, both students admired the grace with which principals juggled their jobs.

"I really liked how he handled the kids," said Popowiecki of Smith. "He wasn't too harsh. He was firm, but he wasn't too mean."

Scanio watched how Clarke walked in the hallways and managed to chat with many of her students, asking them about an activity or sports team they were involved in.

"She's a really neat lady," Scanio said. "I was honored to be her counterpart for the day."

Administrators seize the opportunity to get feedback on what kids expect out of the school district, said Don Cowan, director of K-12 Instruction, which organizes the event.

"We were talking about schools of the future and the need for technology," Cowan said. "Their emphasis was preparing them so they could adjust to this changing world."

Hills mayor eyes a second term at helm

BY WILLIAM COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi is showing no reluctance at breaking new political ground again.

The 37-year Hills resident will run for re-election in November. "I enjoy the position," he said. "I'm doing some good for the community."

Vagnozzi, who became the first directly-elected mayor in 1995 after a change in the city charter, would also be the first to win re-election to the two-year post.

The semi-retired journalist still writes for a AFL-CIO's publication The Detroit Labor News, but prides himself on his attendance at various city functions, meetings and events.

"I really enjoy these functions," Vagnozzi said. "It gives me a chance to talk with people about the city and hear their concerns."

Vagnozzi, 71, said he has drawn many of the ideas that led to public involvement in government from suggestions by citizens.

The mayor's office, along with the six city council seats, is non-partisan. Vagnozzi has worked successfully with members of both parties at the county, state and national levels, but doesn't shy away from his long service as a Democrat.

Vagnozzi has run unsuccessfully for state office and was a "council watcher" before winning a seat on the city council where he has served for 10 years.

He served as mayor under the former system of appointment by council members in 1991. He also served on the Farmington school board in 1973-74.

His accomplishments while mayor include setting neighborhood meetings, expanding television coverage of council meetings, notifying more residents about proposed zoning changes in their neighborhoods, and allowing residents to call in questions during council meetings.

"We have also started televising planning commission public hearing meetings and the hear-



Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi

ings held by the parks and recreation commission dealing with the millage renewal," he said. "I am continuing to work to include more people in the notification process."

Vagnozzi has also used the Council of Homeowners, with its representation of neighborhood subdivisions, as a conduit for new ideas and a sounding board on various zoning and other issues, including the proposed public safety millage that passed in 1995.

"What I like about area meetings is that the association presidents bring back reports," he said. "COHA has been a very good support group for the city."

Vagnozzi supported and suggested public meetings concerning key issues such as Detroit Edison's response to power outages in the city.

A cellular tower study committee also provided a wealth of information on that issue.

Vagnozzi is an outspoken proponent of less density. He has pushed for larger lots in such areas as that east of Woodcreek, in the 13 Mile and Orchard area and the Middlebelt and Power Road areas.

He also led city council opposition to a rezoning proposal at Haggerty and Nino Mile for the construction of a Kroger shopping center.

'I enjoy the position. I'm doing some good for the community.'

Aldo Vagnozzi
—mayor, Farmington Hills

Vagnozzi, who will again use his trademark walking of neighborhoods to campaign, said he hopes he won't have to spend the \$12,000-\$13,000 he had to in his last campaign against attorney Paul Sowerby, who spend \$50,000.

If re-elected, Vagnozzi said he'll continue to:

- Carry out the promises of the public safety millage.

- Work to implement the findings of the city's traffic study.

- Work for passage of the parks and recreation millage renewal.

- Work to implement the findings of the technology study committee.

- Work to expand youth programs to include summer activities.

- Continue efforts to protect Woodland Hills as a nature park.

- Try to improve fire and Community EMS response times on medical emergencies and continue to work with the citizen-business committee to improve the Grand River corridor.

The mayor said he enjoys working with City Manager Dan Hobbs, who he helped select after the departure of Bill Costick to the private sector.

Vagnozzi, who came to this country as a boy from Italy, is announcing early, as he always has.

"I have never been one to play games as to whether I am a candidate or not," he said. "Nor have I felt it is in the best interest of the community to wait until the last moment to announce a candidacy."

Vagnozzi and his wife of 48 years Lois have four grown children and seven grandchildren.

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