

Schools' secretary 'warm,' 'caring'

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Earleen Kiser's cheerful and warm "hello" was a telephone greeting that made visitors feel welcomed and friends smile at Farmington Public Schools.

Her voice of reason and understanding could also soothe the most frazzled administrator or school board trustee with whom she worked in the superintendent's office.

Mrs. Kiser died as a result of blood clots in her lungs March 24 at Botsford Hospital. She was 53.

She had been ill for two weeks with a bladder infection, but her condition was not believed to be life-threatening. She was rushed to the hospital after she had difficulty breathing and died shortly after.



Mrs. Earleen Kiser

ly after. School officials and friends were expressing disbelief and shock over her death Tuesday — the same day of the district's \$110 million bond and millage renewal election.

"I referred to her as the Earth Mother," said Superintendent Bob Maxfield, who worked with Kiser during the past two years. "There were so many people she reached out to and so many people she had touched."

Mrs. Kiser started working with the district as an administrative secretary at Power Middle School. She transferred to the superintendent's office in 1988 and served as board of education secretary until two years ago when she became executive assistant to the superintendent. She always managed to handle

the hectic pace of a school district office gracefully, school officials said.

"She was the ultimate professional and, at the same time, the most caring, wonderful person you could ever work with," said Cathy Webb, trustee on the Farmington Board of Education. "We were never lacking for anything. She was always there for us."

"She was a great hug giver. Everyone in the building depended on her hugs," Mrs. Kiser took the position of executive assistant beyond the realm of 9 to 5.

She served as vice-president of Farmington Youth Assistance and volunteered as a staff mentor for Harrison High's SAIL program. She also appeared in three community and school productions: "Oklahoma," "Music Man" and "Damn Yankees." "She was really into the musicals," said daughter Nikki Hynes, who describes her mother

or as an excellent cook, avid antique and craft collector and, above all, a wonderful parent.

"She would forget about herself and take care of everyone else," Nikki said.

Mrs. Kiser grew up in and was a resident of Redford. She was a graduate of Thurston High.

She is survived by sons, Chris (and Kim) of Detroit and Scott (and daughter-in-law Tina) Kiser of Jacksonville, Fla.; daughter Nikki (and son-in-law Rich) Hynes of Redford; parents Earl and Corinne Partin of Redford; brother and sister-in-law Kerry and Cheryl Partin of Garden City. She is also survived by one granddaughter, Ashley.

Visitation is 5-9 p.m. Thursday and noon to 9 p.m. Friday with a memorial service at 11 a.m. Saturday at Neely-Turkowski Funeral Home, 30200 Five Mile, Livonia.



Doing it all: Legacy owner Hector Puente, center, chats with Jeannine and Don Gundie of Farmington Hills and friends Gerry and Tom Payne of Northville.

Legacy from page A1

became a restaurant, the building itself was unique for a bank, with two levels and a spacious, two-story open interior lobby (now dining) area. Not all banks have 20-foot tall windows, requiring custom 24-foot drapes. "When I saw this place, it all came together for me," said Puente, 37, who has studied interior design as well as art history and culinary arts. "I know exactly what it could be."

Puente and Frederick had lots of family help in the genesis of The Legacy. His family has owned the Mexican Garden restaurant in Southgate for 17 years. His father, Hector Sr., is involved in The Legacy. His brother-in-law did the plumbing. Cousins did the drywall and painting.

Meanwhile, Puente and Frederick were designing the interior and, along with chef Paul Schmidt, the menu.

"We tried to design something away from the franchise concept," Puente says. "And we're moderately priced, because I didn't want to create a place just for special events. I want people to come back and enjoy dinner, not just come once a year."

The result was unveiled when The Legacy opened Jan. 17. Just

over two months later, "We have a lot of great regular customers already, which I really enjoy," says Puente, who lives in Farmington Hills.

Live jazz is featured at The Legacy on Fridays and Saturdays. Some opera and big band performances may be on tap in the future. "I like jazz," says Puente. "I like the old Cole Porter music. I don't think they make music like that anymore."

The cornerstone of a restaurant is its food. The Legacy's credentials include two chefs formerly of the Ritz-Carlton in Dearborn, Schmidt and Mira Weeks.

The food, says Puente, is "continental presented elegantly." Traditional items of beef, meat and pasta are on the menu. Lunch entrees run \$7-\$16, with five of the 11 entrees under \$10.

The Legacy Dinner Club is open for lunch on Monday, lunch and dinner Tuesday through Friday, and dinner only on Saturday. At any of those times, one is likely to see Puente moving about, making sure details are tended to, asking customers if they're enjoying their meals, or just about anything else.

"I bus, I wash dishes," Puente says. "I do everything."

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CLARIFICATION

A voting precinct map published on March 23 was incorrect. See Page A12.

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