

District ushers in next generation of employees

Editor's note: This is the first in a series of stories on preparations for the upcoming school year. On Thursday, we'll give you an inside look at how teachers are urged to add "Heart and Soul" to their lessons.

By TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

Larry Lobert sees good things ahead for all of the Farmington school district's new employees who got a special welcome last week. But he could hardly hold back his enthusiasm about the 40 or so fresh-faced teachers he just hired for 1997-98.

"You have here the best and the brightest teachers you can find in the metro area," Lobert, executive director of personnel services, said during new employee orientation at the Farmington Training Center. "This is an outstanding group of talent, some with experience and some right out of college."

As he spoke, the latest faculty member to be hired, Theresa Walsh, walked by. "She's Chelsea's loss," said Lobert, referring to the Chelsea school district where Walsh taught last year.

Walsh, whose husband Dave is 47th District Court administrator, was hired the day before the orientation started. The family now can look to purchase a home in the Farmington area, instead of commuting from Saline. She will teach third grade at Forest Elementary School.

"It's excellent," said Walsh about the orientation. "It really helps us see the big picture of things. I'm excited."

But the district put out the welcome mat for more than just teachers.

On Tuesday, the estimated 70 new employees hired in all departments within the past six months were treated to welcome, workshops and a video produced in conjunction with the 1995 Stand for Children rally in Washington, D.C. (Teachers also attended orientation workshops on Wednesday and Thursday.)

Orientation activities were designed to boost teamwork, jump-start collective morale and drive home the district's mission and vision — to be a customer-driven organization where all students are expected to excel. Classes begin on Tuesday, Aug. 26.

"It's a combination of introducing people to resources in the district," Lobert said. "... It's folks being in the same boat as they begin this process."

Assembling the program was Jerry Fouchay, director of curriculum and staff development. Orientations in the past were held solely for teachers; this year's was extended to include those from other job classifications.

"What we really want to be able to do is embrace all our new employees," Fouchay said. "We're part of this group that aspires to this vision."

Farmington schools is striving toward a goal to become "the premier school district" of the early 21st century.

Non-teachers participating in Tuesday's orientation included bus drivers, custodians and secretaries. So did Susan Pacer, who was hired as a media technician at O.E. Dunckel Middle School.

And Pacer was impressed by it all.

"This whole morning has been absolutely wonderful," said Pacer, following a luncheon where newcomers and their immediate supervisors were paired off. "I'm a Farmington resident and a long-time volunteer in the schools, on various committees. ... But I was able to see it all from a different

■ 'It's a combination of introducing people to resources in the district . . . It's folks being in the same boat as they begin this process.'

Larry Lobert
Farmington Public Schools
personnel director

ont perspective today. This is truly rewarding."

Pacer said she sees nothing but positives coming out of the assembling of all new employees, regardless of their jobs, to learn from each other and the students they'll soon be serving.

"What it does is emphasize the importance of teamwork and that we're all together working toward one goal," she said. "And that's providing a complete environment for our students."

Superintendent Bob Maxfield offered welcoming remarks to the employees, and stressed the need to be aware of the educational needs of students and their parents.

He also emphasized that every employee contributes to the overall scheme and that each pupil is important.

About the former, Maxfield said a bus driver once told him that "he teaches the first class of the day."

To illustrate the latter, Maxfield picked up a two-inch thick computerized printout of the district's 12,000 students and dropped it to the floor. He then randomly picked names and began telling hypothetical stories.

"I told them it's about the kindergarten coming to us with high expectations," Maxfield said. "It's about the third grader who had a rocky experience. I try to leave them with that message. That they leave an impression."

The final two days of teacher orientation, meanwhile, featured breakout sessions about the latest in scholastic reading materials, defining the kind of teaching career they want to achieve and what can be expected on the first day of classes. They also toured various educational resources at Farmington Harrison High School and the administration building.

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They're back: Cori McLaughlin, right, and Kristin Kilner are both new teachers in the district and were both students at Farmington High School.

Teachers return to where they learned

By TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

August 26 is sure to be a strange day for Cori McLaughlin.

McLaughlin graduated from Farmington High School in 1983. A little more than four years later, she's returning to her alma mater. Only this time, she'll be "on the other side" of the classroom.

The prospect of working with some of the teachers who inspired her to go into the field particularly excites McLaughlin, who is among 41 new faculty members welcomed during last week's orientation.

For McLaughlin, slated to teach 10th grade English, her hiring enables her to work side-by-side with her English teacher — Gina Van Horn.

"That's going to take a long time to get used to," said McLaughlin about being Van Horn's colleague. "We'll be in the same department."

McLaughlin, a cheerleader during her Falcon days, has already stopped back into Farmington High, as she

■ 'It's weird being on the other side.'

Cori McLaughlin
—new teacher and Farmington High grad

readies for the 1997-98 school year. She collected some materials to peruse during her prep work.

"It's weird being on the other side," said McLaughlin, 22, who earned her teaching degree from Miami of Ohio University. "It's also weird calling some of my old teachers by their first names."

But she also anticipates her return to FHS being very rewarding, too.

"I feel very extremely fortunate to be in a school district like Farmington," McLaughlin said. "I also feel fortunate to give back to the high school, after gaining so much from my educational experience there."

"To be able to teach with the people

that helped steer me in the direction of education is something I feel fortunate about."

McLaughlin isn't the only former district student coming back to teach.

Also among the newcomers is 24-year-old Kristin Kilner. She is getting set to teach half-day kindergarten at Wood Creek Elementary School. She graduated from FHS in 1991, after having attended classes in the district since her grade school days.

"It feels at home," said Kilner, who has less than two years experience as a substitute teacher in the district. "I'm real excited to give myself back to the district that gave so much to me during the years."

According to Kilner, the three-day orientation between Tuesday-Thursday, mostly at Farmington Training Center, did even more to make the new teachers feel welcomed.

"It's an excellent way to give us background about the district," she said. "And it's a great way to start off the year."



STAFF PHOTO BY BRYAN MITCHELL
District's gain: Theresa Walsh, formerly taught in the Chelsea Public School District and is one of 40 new teachers to join Farmington schools. She is the wife of David Walsh, 47th District Court administrator.

Masked bandit robs fast-food restaurant

A man wearing a ski mask, dark clothes and gloves brandished a handgun and robbed a fast-food restaurant in Farmington Hills around 10 p.m. Thursday, police reported.

Three employees were near the drive-through area at Wendy's on 12 Mile Road when a man entered through the west

entrance and ordered them to lay down on the floor.

One employee told police the man shouted, "Get down, I want the money."

He then told two of them to go into the walk-in cooler while he had the assistant manager empty three register drawers and open the safe.

Once given the money, believed to be around \$700, the masked bandit fled on foot through the west entrance.

He is described as a 5-foot-10 inches tall and around 190 pounds.

Employees weren't able to provide any more details about the suspect.

AGENDAS

Farmington Board of Education

7:30 p.m. Tuesday

Lewis Schulman Administration Building
489-8300

Agenda items include:

■ Board committee and representative appointments.

■ Appointment of Cloverdale supervisor.

■ Legislative report from Brian Whiston of Oakland Schools.

■ Special education update.

■ Approval of election work-

ers.

■ Award of district bids for music, computer, food.

■ MASH Board of Directors election.

Farmington Hills City Council

City Hall, 474-6115

7:30 p.m. Monday, Aug. 18

Agenda items include:

■ Proclamation and presentation to the North Farmington/West Bloomfield Cobras Baseball Team.

■ Presentation and progress report on the implementation of Advanced Life Support Services in the Farmington Hills Fire Department.

■ Public hearing on acceptance of Law Enforcement Block Grant from the U.S. Department of Justice.

■ Public hearing on rezoning request for north side of 12 Mile (30420 12 Mile), east of Orchard Lake from multiple family residential district to office service district.

■ Consider a request from High Meadow Acres Homeowners Association to remove from the table the association's rezoning

request for property east of Orchard Lake between 12 and 13 Mile from RA-2 to RA-1.

■ Consider request from Steven Schafer to consider multiple zoning for property east of Orchard Lake, between 12 and 13 Mile roads.

■ Consider appointments to economic development corporation.

■ Consider appointment to the 25th anniversary committee.

■ Consider approval of amendment to consent judgment for property at the northwest corner of Orchard Lake and 11 Mile Road.

■ Consider request to utilize city facilities for the Maccabi Games from the Jewish Community Center.



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