

By the numbers

Grace under fire; district answers

Getting back to school on the right foot is important; Farmington school officials should be credited with trying to do that.

First, the district hosted several sessions for its new employees, to reinforce the district's goals and expectations. Then, there was a picnic lunch to ensure a "family" feeling for the staffers, aiming to get them together for a big kickoff of the school year.

Finally, when the big first day came, the district reacted swiftly and effectively to what could have been a difficult situation with parents at William Grace Elementary.

The problem was classroom overcrowding and it put a number of parents squarely in the face of the new principal at the school. Their youngsters were starting the year in classes with 31 and 29 students - instead of the district's elementary maximum of 26. The parents weren't too pleased. "It's not good for the kids," one parent told Principal Katy Hill,

as parents met near her office.

Hill listened to questions and complaints, and she promised to try to help.

That's just what she did, reporting to parents via letter later that day that, yes, the district's administrators agreed to hire a new teacher to relieve the crowded classrooms at Grace. Other schools are planning similar adjustments to meet enrollments needs that weren't projected.

A cynic might question the motives in two of these events: Is it possible the staffer luncheon was set up to help lobby staffers to vote for the bond issue vote on Sept. 16? Would the issue at Grace have been settled as swiftly if this newspaper's reporter had not been a witness to the parent uprising on the first day of school? We'll never know.

School parents should know, however, that district officials are showing a creativity and responsiveness that bodes well for the coming school year.

Fashion event lauds triumphs over cancer

They're scrappy fighters in their battle with cancer. And they desperately want to get on with their lives.

The young people who earn college scholarships through the Pediatric Cancer Survivors Scholarship Fund at Oakland County's William Beaumont Hospital can thank the Birmingham Downtown Merchants Association. Its annual Fall Spectacular benefits the fund.

The eighth annual showcase for the latest in fall fashions runs 6 to 10 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 24, in elegant tents behind Birmingham's Townsend Hotel. Guests will dine on hors d'oeuvres and desserts courtesy of Birmingham restaurants, silently bid on goods and services donated by local merchants, splurge in a live auction and enjoy a fashion show spotlighting the newest in clothing, eye wear and hairstyles. Jim Harper of WNIC-FM returns as master of ceremonies.

The evening holds artistic promise, with dozens of fragrant creations from Birmingham florists as well as antiques and fine art from downtown galleries. General admission tickets are \$45. Patrons tickets are \$125. For tickets, please call the Fall Spectacular Hotline: (248) 551-4560.

Last year's record crowd for the Fall Spectacular raised \$100,000 for cancer survivors in need of college tuition assistance - \$40,000 more than the year before. The Spectacular became the Pediatric Cancer Survivors Scholarship Fund's major donor in 1992. Since 1995, 14 \$1,000 scholarships have been awarded for up to four years. Three students have graduated; 20 are still in college.

Frequent hospital stays for chemotherapy and treatment of infections make it hard for young cancer patients to maintain sufficient grades for college admittance. Their medical needs prevent them from working to earn enough money to cover tuition. Their parents often are financially strapped because of medical bills. A scholarship can help them fulfill career dreams. Notes the American Cancer Society staff in Southfield: "When you look into the face of a cancer survivor, you see courage, determination, strength of character and an appreciation for life."

When the Birmingham Merchants Association approached Dr. Charles Main, Beaumont's chief of pediatric hematology/oncology, about teaming up in 1992, he recommended creating a Pediatric Cancer Survivors Scholarship Fund as the Fall Spectacular's beneficiary. He had the honor of awarding the first three scholarships in 1995. That year, the Beverly Hills resident told the audience that when he became a pediatric resident at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Pontiac in 1964, only 15 percent of children with cancer survived and there were no cures for childhood leukemia. Small strides since then have driven up the survival rate to 70 percent. One of



■ 'Even with the best insurance, there are an awful lot of expenses with a chronically ill child. Some parents have even gone into retirement funds.'

Dr. Charles Main
—helped found Pediatric Cancer Survivors Scholarship Fund

every 1,000 American teens alive today has survived cancer.

"Even with the best insurance, there are an awful lot of expenses with a chronically ill child," Main said. "Some parents have even gone into retirement funds."

This year, Main will award 20 scholarships. He called the outpouring of support generated by the Fall Spectacular "just like Christmas." The "vast majority of the patients and parents who I meet," he said, "are just wonderful, wonderful people."

Main said he had thought about a scholarship fund for years. Though he's thrilled when students who are academic standouts graduate, he's especially touched by the less-gifted students who graduate thanks in part to the scholarship. "Without that carrot in front of them," Main said, "they might not have had the incentive. But they proved to be self-sufficient and proud of themselves while making their parents proud of them. They also were proud to just be alive. They felt tremendous serendipity."

Restaurateurs Judi and Bill Roberts own 200 Merrill, Edison's and Streetside Seafood in Birmingham as well as Beverly Hills Grill. Judi says the Fall Spectacular "highlights all the good things that are part of Birmingham but also says we believe in the future of the young scholarship winners."

The focus is on fashion at the Fall Spectacular. But the real stars are the young cancer survivors who make it to college — thanks to the inspiration of Dr. Main, the generosity of Birmingham merchants and the support of Oakland residents.

Bob Sklar is managing editor of our Oakland County editions.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:
What did you learn your first week of school?



'I learned about vowels. It was a little hard.'

Kevin Miller



'I learned some new math but don't remember what it was called. It was easy.'

Cheryl Maus



'Time tables. I liked it because it was easy and fun.'

Jessica Davis



'Writing out numbers in standard and expanded form; it was confusing.'

Mike Oakleaf

We asked this question of fifth graders at Hillside Elementary School.

LETTERS

Do your part: 'yes, yes'

What a wonderful way to start off the fall in Farmington/Farmington Hills, 12,000 eager children are ready to learn and grow in our classrooms.

As registered voters and citizens, we adults should do our part by voting yes and yes on Tuesday, Sept. 16 for this very necessary bond issue.

Our older school facilities need some updates and we're the people that can make that happen. Both issues on the ballot need to be yes for the greatest investment you'll ever make, our children's future.

The Board of Education has been superb and prudent in listening to your concerns about technology and working within fund equity, and the regular budget to reduce the bond by nearly 17 million dollars.

Now we need to do our part and go the extra mile and vote yes/yes on Tuesday, Sept. 16.

See you at the polls!

Tina Jensen
Farmington Hills

Protect our reputation

The quality of education provided by Farmington Public Schools is important to everyone in the community, whether or not we have children attending the public schools at this time. We need to provide the opportunity for a first-class education for the students — today and tomorrow. Further, we need to protect the reputation of Farmington as a fine place to live, a reputation supported to a large extent by our public schools.

The new and upgraded facilities and improved resources that will be provided through passage of these bond issues are essential to enhancing our education programs as we move into the next century and to maintaining Farmington as a place where people choose to reside.

Please join me in supporting our public schools and our community on Sept. 16.

Helen Prutov
Farmington Hills

Curb those big trucks

When is enough, ENOUGH! How many people have to be killed before something is done?

1 - There is a need for law, "Big trucks can travel only 200 miles from its base" after two years. Time needed to do this.

2 - We need trains that will travel from Canada to Florida (24 to 36 hours) that provide car transportation, eats, sleeping and flat cars for big trucks. Some stops in between. Also east coast to west coast.

3 - We need a law immediately that big trucks can only travel 45 miles per hour and must stay to the right side of the highway

when at all possible.

Money for construction of new highways from now on should be used to promote railroads so they can better compete with the trucking industry. The less big trucks on highways the better.

Leslie Swanson
Farmington

Residents the greatest

It is with a great sense of humility that I accept the uncontested nomination for reelection as mayor of the City of Farmington Hills.

This vote of confidence has truly touched me as have the many kindnesses shown me by the residents as I have gone door-to-door in the last few months.

If re-elected, I pledge that in the next two years I will continue to be the "voice of the residents" and further expand citizen involvement and participation in the decisions made by city government that affect all our lives.

I will continue to walk the neighborhoods in the next few months and hope to talk to you at your doorstep, to get your views on the issues and programs that affect you.

Meanwhile, I hope that you can support two recreational issues on the Nov. 4, 1997, ballot — renewal of the parks and recreation millage and passage of the charter amendment that would protect Woodland Hills nature park from any future development.

Again, thank you residents of Farmington Hills. You are the greatest.

Aldo Vagnozzi, Mayor
City of Farmington Hills

Boycott China

It is time for all Americans to boycott goods made in China. A good amount of the goods that we buy from China are put into their army. China has the largest army in the world and we should stop supporting a communist government whose main target is to destroy the U.S.

There is big corporation investing in China with no regard for the United States. Money is their only goal. Wake up U.S. corporations and invest your money back in the U.S. This country is what made you all. Stop dealing with the communists.

Yopram Dervahanian
Farmington Hills

Opinions are to be shared: We welcome your ideas, as do your neighbors. That's why we offer this space on a weekly basis for opinions in your own words. We will help by editing for clarity. To assure authenticity, we ask that you sign your letter and provide a contact telephone number.

Letters should be mailed to: Editor, The Farmington Observer, 33411 Grand River, Farmington Michigan 48335. Or they can be faxed to 248-477-9722.

TURNING BACK THE PAGES

This week in history as reported in past editions of the Farmington Observer and the Farmington Enterprise.

40 YEARS AGO — SEPT. 5, 1957 (ENTERPRISE)
Farmington school officials expected a record-setting 6,000 students to show up for school on Sept. 5. Farmington Superintendent G. V. Harrison said about 5,300 students had been enrolled the first week of the previous year.

25 YEARS AGO — AUG. 30, 1972
A local Ford dealer's new 1972 cars had

clearance sale prices: A Mustang with automatic transmission, V-8 engine, whitewalls, power steering and brakes was \$2,890, while a two-door Galaxie 600 with automatic, power steering and brakes was \$3,195.

2 YEARS AGO — SEPT. 4, 1995

Nancy Bates' run for her second term on Farmington Hills City Council included her denials that she wasn't seeking a state office. "I hope to spend the rest of my days in Farmington Hills working on issues that affect children and families," Bates said.

Farmington Observer

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— Philip Power