

## Beauty from page B1

nifer. If she can't be there, I can."

But when she's at an appearance, such as the early August Bowman autograph sessions, Hoemke isn't resigned to just "look pretty or wave."

"I asked, 'Could I do something?' So they had me taking tickets."

That's why Hoemke and her court are turning heads, for reasons unrelated to beauty.

"So few people volunteer, especially at their age," said Farmington City Manager Frank Lauhoff. "They are sincere and we appreciate that. They are great examples."

Wasvary emphasized that the Miss Farmington/Farmington Hills Scholarship Pageant is a good vehicle to open up people's eyes and minds — because contestants present their platforms, agendas they want to pursue in life. Being successful in a pageant gives them almost a free shot at the spotlight.

"I would like people to know about me as a person, and that adoption affects everybody's lives," Wasvary said. "It (adoption) really is a solution to a lot of today's problems. . . . Some people don't realize we're doing this to make the world a better place. Some people do it by striking. Some do it by pageants."

Teets, who overcame her fear of singing when she performed "Woman in Me" at the Vladimir's-hosted pageant, touts her experience, and the chance to serve over the next year as part of Hoemke's court. (A fourth member is Kelly Curtiss, 22, who won Miss Congeniality for Community Service.)

"The inner growth," said Teets, who works as a waitress at the Ram's Horn in Farmington, "it's something you have to experience in order to understand."

What all of the women understand is how different the Miss America system is from strut-

your-stuff pageants. The Miss America pageant line, as it is called, stresses total development of mind, body and soul. It helps build self-confidence, as well as how to handle responsibility and civic duty. All are attributes that should help them attain success in whatever field they enter.

"The Miss America line is a scholarship line," said Hoemke. "You have to be community oriented, unique, hard-working."

Teets welcomes the challenge. Her pageant platform was called "Confidence - Never Say Never."

"Any time anyone even makes a move to become in the public eye," Teets said, "(they) have more responsibility. . . . Whether you like it or not, you're a role model. When you're representing Farmington and Farmington Hills, you're representing the whole city. You definitely have a responsibility."

Hoemke said there isn't "a class that prepares you as well for being in the public eye" as the Miss America pageant line does.

"People have to be involved in the community for it to blossom and grow," she said. "You have to put in time and energy."

It is getting easier for the young women to get used to that spotlight, largely because they like the communities they represent.

"I feel more connected to the city of Farmington because I work here," Teets said. "I know so many people here. I do live in Livonia, but it's only two blocks from Farmington Hills."

According to Hoemke, "There are so many wonderful people in the community. There's an excellent educational system, wonderful places to go. . . . It's a safe environment for kids. I'm very proud to be from Farmington and Farmington Hills."

The feeling appears to be mutual.



1st runner-up: Pageant veteran Amanda Wasvary behind the register at Winkelman's in the Hills.

## Chat room from page B1

about everything from the home lives we came from to the one we are able to offer a child, from our philosophy about child rearing to our incomes. We were fingerprinted and clearance was required by the FBI and state and local law enforcement agencies. Then we waited, and waited.

Next in line for our assignment of a child, the Department of Immigration and Naturalization Services changed orphan officers and our papers were pulled from the embassy in Guatemala so the new officer could re-read them. We then became ineligible to adopt in Guatemala until about three months later when we enlisted the help of Senator Spencer

Abraham's office to get our papers returned to the embassy. We were back on track again.

Once the paperwork was stamped and submitted, the local adoption agency backed out while we dealt with the facilitator in Guatemala directly. In December, our contact in Guatemala called to say a baby girl, Maria Isabel, had just been born. He asked us to call him in two weeks for more details. We called in two weeks. We called almost daily for the next several weeks. He didn't return our calls. The reason we chose to adopt from Guatemala was because he offered fostering of the babies in private homes. Now he was so busy that he opened an orphanage. It was too

## Miss Farmington brings theatre to local schools

By TIM SMITH  
STAFF WRITER

Jennifer Hoemke had to be persistent to win the 1997 Miss Farmington/Farmington Hills Scholarship Pageant.

The 23-year-old Farmington Hills resident now hopes to take that admirable characteristic and achieve something else. She wants to take a theatre arts workshop she designed into the Farmington school district this year.

That program is titled "Creativity, Achievement & Teamwork," or CAT, incorporating song and dance while emphasizing those concepts. It is affiliated with the Cultural Advocacy Through Theatre Technique platform that helped her win a \$1,000 scholarship. The award is helping Hoemke attend Wayne State University, but she also is working at Winkelman's to earn tuition money.

She has already been given the go-ahead to take her CAT program to Lanigan Elementary School, the building she attended as a youngster (when it was known as Larkshire).

"I'm negotiating with every school," said Hoemke, who wants to make appearances at the elementary, middle and high school levels. "It enhances all different forms of skills."

At elementary schools, Hoemke presents "game-playing sessions" to enable pupils to grasp the concepts of dedication and determination. "I want to help pique their interest and show them it's fun, to get them involved."

Hoemke, whose father, Grant Hoemke, is a band director in the school district (her mother, Sheri, is a Lanigan secretary), said she'll present her program differently in the middle and high schools, performing on stage herself.

much for him to handle, and his former tender handling of prospective parents had gone downhill.

In January, 1997 we received a package in the mail from Florida. Enclosed were half a dozen color photos of a newborn girl with a shock of thick black hair and a beautiful smile. A card said "congratulations on your adoption." We were flabbergasted. The baby was Maria Isabel. It was the child our facilitator in Guatemala had mentioned. Who sent these photos, we wondered? We contacted the person through her return address and discovered that she was an employee of American Airlines and an escort for the Guatemalan agency. She assured us that this was our

baby, but it was to be another week or so before we spoke to our people in Guatemala and had this confirmed. This was indeed our daughter.

More photos came a month later from a family in Gibraltar who were also in the process of finalizing the adoption of their second child from Guatemala. A few weeks later, Dennis and Diane Driscoll, who have become dear friends, brought more photos and a video from their trip down to see their baby boy. We were equally distraught at the orphanage conditions and thrilled to see our daughter moving and smiling.

The agency we hired in Rochester, Family Adoption Consultants, did a wonderful job of not only filing the appropriate paperwork but also easing our anxiety. Our social worker there, Pat Hannah, an adoptive mother of two teenage daughters, is expert in her field and has been instrumental in bringing many families together.

In May we were invited to the home of another couple who have become friends, Shanda and Randy Trent, who also recently adopted two children from Guatemala, to collect more photos and see more video. It strengthened our resolve to get our baby home instantly when questions were raised about Maria Isabel's health. We were ready to walk there and pick her up if need be by this point. Final medical clearance and visa issuance took forever.

We again enlisted Senator Abraham's office. In one day the matter was resolved. A date was set in June for the Guatemalan facilitator to bring her to us. It was postponed. Finally, he suggested we meet him half way.

We flew to Orlando at 2 p.m. on June 29, 1997. He was to meet us there at 5 p.m. His plane was delayed. As soon as they cleared customs and immigration, Mark and I met him and our daughter at the gate.

It was magical. It was also rushed. Mark had to run to the other end of the airport to hold the plane. After completing the paperwork, I ran to meet him. We were the last to board the plane. After Mark's breathless explanation of why the airlines had to hold the plane for his wife and new daughter, Northwest Airlines gave us first class seats for the return home. We had two hours to sit with our daughter, Maya Maria Isabella Gallo, for the first time.

Like the birth process, all of the tears and pain, the waiting and frustration, are forgotten the moment your child is placed in your arms. It is no different with an adopted child. We stared in wonder at this beautiful baby the whole trip home.

Throughout the process we met so many wonderful people who helped make our family possible. From the friends and strangers who attended and supported our benefit concert to help raise some of the funds required, to the other families of adopted children who helped support us during the tedious wait.

Maya is home now and we still stare at her! She is a blessing and the joy of our lives. We are thankful to all of our friends, new and old, and those we never met, who made our family possible.

Barbara Cripps, her husband Mark Gallo, and their daughter Maya live in Farmington Hills.



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