

El Nino melting winter fun

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

With no ice or snow, where are all the sledders, skaters and skiers to go?

Tough question and the culprit, El Nino, continues to blow hot air.

Unseasonably warm weather has left traditional Farmington area hot spots for winter fun barren. The outdoor skating rink in Shiawassee Park is merely a puddle in a parking lot; the sledding hill across the street resembles the backdrop for "Hoe Hw" with the holes of straw and fencing on its weary green slope.

Heritage Park's pond, a traditional place for skaters to frolic when frozen, is thawed and as still as a Sunday school class during prayer hour.

"I wonder why?" asked George Morrow rhetorically on Tuesday with temperatures in the 50s. He's the Hills parks maintenance director. "We had a film of maybe an inch of ice, but it's melted and it's just water. And, there is nothing on the trails."

Waiting for the cold

Ideally, the half-acre pond would be frozen 5 inches thick for families to skate on.

The accompanying 120-feet-by-80-foot rink for hockey players would already been flooded and glazed over by now. A sustained cold of 25 degrees for four to five days usually does the trick.

"Send the weather my way and I'll flood her," Morrow said.

That's the same response from the city of Farmington Public Services, which maintains the ice rink in Shiawassee Park.

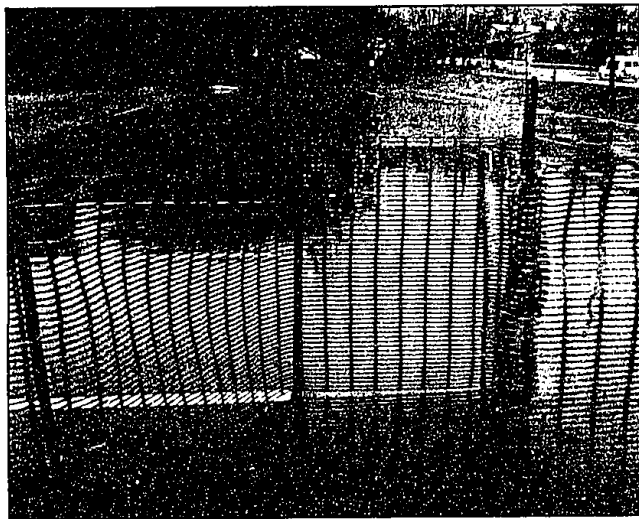
Farmington along with Farmington Hills and the Farmington Public Schools maintain the sledding hill.

Ironically, the season's first heavy snow hit when DPS staff were setting up the sled hill Nov. 15. That wasn't a sign of things to come as the popular site has gone largely unused since.

It's the longest Farmington DPS Director Kevin Gushman can remember both the hill and rink being out of commission simultaneously.

"We've had periods where there was little snow," Gushman said. "The temperatures were still cold enough where the ice rink could be used."

Linksters love it



STAFF PHOTO BY ELIZABETH CARPENTER

This is winter? Normally, there is an ice skating rink at Shiawassee Park during January, not just a puddle in a parking lot.

Winter sports enthusiasts might be left out in the warm, but golfers thrive in it.

Many area courses reported linksters taking a few unexpected January swings from the tee during the past weekend.

"We've had periods where there was little snow," Gushman said. "The temperatures were still cold enough where the ice rink could be used."

Of course, fairways needed to be open.

At the city-operated San Marino golf course, a recorded telephone message informs callers to ring

back in later March. Copper Creek golf course is also shut down for the winter. Copper Creek restaurant remains open.

"We're closed," said Paul Yuhn, Copper Creek restaurant dining room manager, "but we've had quite a few phone calls yesterday and today."

"They would be out there if (the golf course) was open."

Farmington city residents sought for combined youth committee

By TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

Farmington residents who want to help the city's youth are being sought to sign up for two vacancies on the Farmington-Farmington Hills Commission for Children, Youth and Families.

Assistant City Manager Bill Richards said the city has three slots on the commission, which it joined in November. One of those already belongs to Joan McGlinchey.

"The program obviously has a direct impact on Farmington's youth," Richards said Tuesday. "Previously (before November), the commission was only a Farmington Hills commission. But since it makes decisions that effect both Farmington and Farmington Hills, the thought was to have Farmington residents be able to have input."

The commission meets at 7:30 p.m. the first Thursday of each month. Sessions "usually" take place at the Farmington Hills City Hall, 31655 Eleven Mile Road, Richards said.

Anyone interested in the two positions is encouraged to call Farmington city offices, (248) 474-5500.

Meanwhile, Richards said individuals can always inquire about being considered for future openings on Farmington's other boards and commissions. That entails coming down to city hall, 23600 Liberty Street, and filling out an application.

Among the more prominent city boards and commissions are the Downtown Development Authority, planning commission and zoning board of appeals.

Additional panels include the beautification commission, commission on aging and historical commission.

Students use class lessons to explore wild world of movie making

By RICHARD PEARL
STAFF WRITER

Lights, camera, action!

The traditional movie cry became commonplace last year for fourth-graders at Eagle Elementary School who, with guidance from teachers and help from high-school students, created and produced their own mystery story, using historic Warner Mansion as a backdrop.

But the kids weren't out to beat Steven Spielberg. Their video was visual proof of how they've learned to integrate what they've been taught both in regular classes and in Eagle's enrichment program into a single finished product.

And it shows how the Eagle Elementary School enrichment program has evolved since the early 1990s.

The video and several others produced annually by Eagle students via the school's unique Integrated Arts Program was shown last month in a special presentation during a Farmington Public Schools board meeting.

The presentation traced the

EAGLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

implementation and development by Eagle staff of a five-year gifted studies program mandated by the school board. That program resulted from an 18-month study, begun in 1989, of the school district's long-running Delta Gifted Department.

Once the domain solely of gifted youngsters, enrichment has evolved well beyond that, providing at least some extra instruction in vocal music, art and physical education to all students.

But the Integrated Arts Program at Eagle Elementary is an effort to bring together in a finished format - in this case, a visual arts program - what youngsters have learned in their various classroom and enrichment studies.

It was, as Pat Hanje, Delta resource person at Eagle put it, a program which the school's staff and principal felt "had to be above and beyond the basic goal of the district."

And once teachers and admin-

istrators saw the children's enthusiasm for it, "it became a labor of love," she said.

Of course, it wasn't quite that way in the beginning. When teachers first learned of the directive, said Hanje, many thought "This is really far-fetched" because no real benchmarks existed to guide them.

So the brainstorming and planning began, with classroom teachers talking with Hanje, art consultant Susan Drucker, physical education consultant Chip Bridges and, later, with Sheri Jaffurs, music consultant.

The determined teachers became adept at squeezing time out of their daily schedules - "We even use our lunch hour very creatively," said Hanje - and also stayed after school or met during summer vacations.

The first year, said Hanje, "the part that was missing was the part of having the children understand why and how all of it works together ... We needed to

bring together a final product."

What evolved were videotaped creations, with the children writing scripts, creating sets and acting, with high school video students gaining training by assisting them in the actual production.

They learned not only to

employ what they'd learned in creating a finished product, but

how to "be a problem solver, a team member," said Hanje.

The latest creation, "House of Secrets," even draws on what the fourth-graders learned in history in the third grade.

Now the teachers want to

spread the program to all students. But, with limited time and staff, it's very difficult, said Hanje.

"We have more enthusiasm, but less time," she told the school board.



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FHS assistant principal finalist

Birmingham Seaholm High School students could know who their new principal is by next month, and it could be a Farmington School District employee.

Birmingham officials are calling back five of the eight finalists interviewed by a team of students, administrators, teachers and parents last month.

Superintendent John Hoeftler and deputy superintendent Ron Miller will conduct interviews of the final candidates Jan. 13 and Jan. 14.

The finalists are:

■ John Barrett, assistant principal, Farmington High School.

■ Bruce Brotzman, high school principal, Robinson, Ill.

■ George Fornero, principal, West Bloomfield High School.

■ Terry Piper, high school principal, Rochester, N.Y.

■ John Schuster, interim principal, Seaholm High School.

Hoeftler is expected to make a final recommendation to the Birmingham School Board at its Feb. 3 meeting. A starting date for the new principal has not been finalized.

The Seaholm principal seat went up for grabs after longtime Seaholm principal Helene Mills announced her retirement this

summer. Search consultant Bill Attea helped school district officials screen the 38 candidates who applied for the position and whittled down the list based on qualifications to 13.

Miller and Bob Voss, assistant superintendent of personnel, conducted telephone interviews of the 13 candidates and invited eight to the school district for team interviews. The team interview panel made its recommendation of the final five to the school district after the New Year.

-Sally Tano

Veteran mountain climber offers insight



River in Farmington.

Viesturs will show slides and share experiences, triumphs and disappointments from his ongoing endeavor to climb all 14 of the world's 8,000-meter peaks

without the aid of bottled oxygen.

For more information, call 477-8116.

News at WDIV

Regent Ducas of Farmington Hills was recently named assistant news director at WDIV-TV, Channel 4 in Detroit.

Ducas came from WTVJ-TV in Miami and has been the recipient of the prestigious Dupont Award and a regional Emmy Award.

Chamber luncheon

The Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce will hold its monthly membership

luncheon from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 29, at the Holiday Inn at 10 Mile and Grand River in Farmington Hills.

Meet Economic Development Coordinator Teri Arbenowicz and introduce your business with a 60-second commercial and share concerns and compliments about doing business in Farmington and Farmington Hills.

The cost for the luncheon is \$15 before Jan. 26. Menu includes tossed salad, Chicken Parmesan with pasta and vegetable and dessert.

Call 474-3440 to reserve a seat.