

Lunch class helps kids taste foreign language



STAFF PHOTO BY BRIAN MITCHELL

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

Students across Farmington Public Schools are getting Spanish along with their soup and sandwich, through Lunchtime Languages.

The tuition-based elementary foreign language program, offered by Farmington's Community Education Department, is now available at 11 elementary in the district. Some openings remain available for the second 12-week session, which began Monday. Instructors bring a fast learning pace to the 30-minute sessions, incorporating word activity games such as Spanish Bingo.

"All the research points to children learning a foreign language better if they learn it before puberty," said Terry Leland, supervisor of Farmington Community School, where the community ed program is housed. "After puberty, all of the information is stored in a different part of the brain. Fluency is just easier for children."

And it's just plain fun for those Lanigan Elementary School second- and third-grade students who last week attended a lunch-and-language session taught by instructor Keyli Zehnder. All were given Spanish names by Senorita Zehnder.

"I like it," said Angela (pronounced An-hay-la) Selden, 7. "I can learn to speak a different language."

Eight-year-old Jillian "Julietta" Schroeder also signed up for the language program, instead of playing outside during recess. "Because I wanted to learn Spanish. I thought it might be fun."

According to Danielle "Dalia" Klavons, 8, she thought it might be neat to learn the same language her mother learned. Besides, the class is an excuse to play Spanish Bingo.

The latter game also is a bit with 7-year-old Ashley "Anna" Mercer, who admitted her mom enrolled her into Lunchtime Languages.

"She wanted me to learn other languages," Ashley said. "I love it. Especially the Bingo in Spanish."

During the session, Zehnder held up flash cards of different colors, animals and numbers. The pupils answered in Spanish. *Unos ... dos ... tres.*

"Can we count up to 50?" asked Danielle.

Before playing their favorite, Bingo, the teacher and students went over the Spanish terms for

day, date and month.

Zehnder said repetition and word games make the class interesting. As a result, children are more likely to remember what they learned.

"We start basically with things (from) ... your home environment," Zehnder said before the recent class. "They recite (in Spanish) colors, numbers, parts of your body, animals. And then we introduce a verb with new vocabulary and try to make them talk it."

Although the 4-year-old program has been successful, Leland said efforts to have elementary foreign language be adopted as part of the district curriculum so far have not.

She added that children in the program do not miss out on regular physical education instruction and that they pick up skills in areas such as geography, social studies and cultural awareness of foreign countries.

Those interested in signing up for Lunchtime Languages should contact Leland at (248) 489-3333. The cost for 12 weeks is \$64, and will be prorated for those who miss a portion of the second session.

"We will accept open enrollment for the first three weeks," Leland said.

3 percent pay hike for Hills officers

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills police officers will receive 3-percent annual raises — retroactive to July 1996 — in a new three-year agreement reached between the union and the city.

Farmington Hills City Council approved the pact at Monday's regular meeting. The two parties reached a tentative agreement Jan. 19. Police ratified the settlement Jan. 23.

With the agreement, the police and the city avoid arbitration. Police are not allowed to strike under state Act. 312. So, arbitration is used to settle contract impasses.

"The process is costly and considered a gamble for both parties."

"We were at the bargaining table for a long time," said Dana Whinnery, Hills Personnel director. "We traditionally have a very good relationship with the association and I don't believe there was a change in that this time. It just took

longer."

The contract mirrors one agreed to by the Hills police commanders in December. As with sergeants and lieutenants, officers view pensions as a major issue.

The pension multiplier increases from 2.50 to 2.65 for retirees under age 65 while for those 65 and older it goes up from 2.25 to 2.375. That number is used to multiply years worked to figure compensation during retirement, based on a percentage of the person's working pay.

As with command officers, the city removes the \$600 monthly cap on what it pays for retiree health insurance premiums. In exchange, the employee's pension contribution increases from 4.5 percent to 5 percent to help defray the cost.

The average commander's career is 20 years with department whereas an officer stays 10 years.

"Statistically, those people who start with the us also tend to retire with us," Whinnery said.

Handcuffs instead of handout for 2 men

One of two men looking for a handout is believed to have helped himself to a woman's handbag instead.

Farmington Hills police didn't offer the pair charity, arresting the Royal Oak males, ages 43 and 36, on unrelated charges Monday. Officers later found the woman's purse inside a Dumpster on Orchard Lake Road.

At 3:30 p.m., two men entered Orchard United Methodist Church on Farmington and 14 Mile asking for shelter. After getting some referrals, the men left in a vehicle driven by a woman. The church worker noticed her purse and pager were missing and phoned police.

Police stopped a vehicle matching the description at Nardin Park Church on 11 Mile and Middlebelt.

Police questioned the woman driving the vehicle, who said she did stop in a parking lot on the way. She said she pulled into the lot at the request of the passenger, an older man she'd met a few days earlier at the bus station.

The other passenger was a younger man, whom the driver said was her boyfriend and needed a place to stay.

An officer took the woman to retrace the path to the dumpster, where the purse was found. At Nardin Park, the pastor said a man called the church between 2:30 and 3 p.m., asking for \$75 to stay in a motel. The pastor offered \$25 and told him to come by around 4 p.m.

One of the men — who claimed he didn't know about the stolen purse — was arrested after officers found two crack pipes and a marijuana cigarette on him.

The older man had nine Farmer Jack gift certificates with him and a notebook detailing various churches and money received from each. Police arrested the other man on two outstanding warrants out of Plymouth.

Parks public hearing set

The Farmington Hills Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on the proposed Parks & Recreation Master Plan at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 19, in the city council chambers at the Farmington City Hall.

Copies of the proposed plan are now available for public inspection at the following locations:

- City Clerks Office, Farmington Hills City Hall, 31555 Eleven Mile Road.

- Planning Department, Farmington Hills City Hall, 31555 Eleven Mile Road.

- Special Services Offices, 31555 Eleven Mile Road.

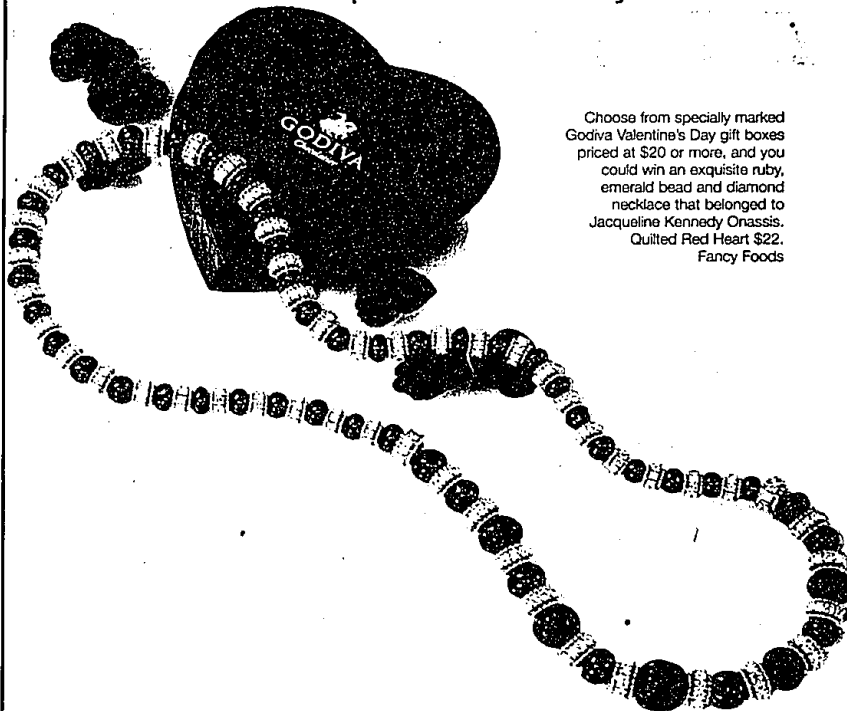
- Farmington Community Libraries, Farmington Hills Branch, 32737 W. Twelve Mile Road, Farmington Branch, 23500 Liberty.

This Parks & Recreation Master Plan is updated every five years so that the Special Services Department can maintain its eligibility for grants from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

The general public is invited to make public comments at the Feb. 19 hearing.

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