

Read from page A1

trict's director of library services. "We believe a lot of things about reading, but it's a skill for almost everything they'll do."

"It enhances their imagination, their vocabulary. It helps them learn patterns, and rhyming. It just opens up a whole new world."

Much to do

Various activities based around reading during March help to do just that.

At Flanders, every time a student completes a book, he or she will write the title and name on a yellow paper strip. According to media specialist Anne Marie Kurzyniec, those strips will be joined into a long paper chain to hopefully connect all classes by the end of March.

"The theme is 'Reading Connects Us In A Wonderful Way,'" explained Kurzyniec.

Chances are, many of the books that will be included in the chain will be read during "Drop Everything and Read" segments, from 12:10-12:30 p.m. every day.

On Thursday, Flanders students in the second- and third-grade combination classroom taught by Wendy Blachford sat quietly at their desks, flipping through their book of the day.

"They can have uninterrupted time to cherish a good book," Blachford said. "To get involved in a story and to help them see the value in reading."

Elsewhere during the D.E.A.R. period at Flanders, fifth-grader Molly McAuley, 10, curled up in a chair reading one of the Book of the Week titles, Lesley Narko's "Yang the Youngest and His Tor-

rible Ear."

Molly, who wants to read enough titles to win an invitation to the author's assembly, said she was already on her third book in a little over a week.

"I usually don't read," she said. "But these are good books."

She and other students in the fourth-fifth combination class, taught by Pam Ellis and student teacher Angelita Williamson, are already completing books at an impressive clip. They've read enough since March 1 to put together a lengthy paper chain of yellow paper links.

Having a regular time to read undoubtedly is helping the students read more.

"It's nice because this gives us something to build on," said Kurzyniec about the daily reading sessions. "We really are encouraging students to read all the time. And we're using Dr. Seuss's birthday to focus on it."

On Dr. Seuss's birthday, Monday, March 1, all students were encouraged to turn off their television sets all day and - of course - read.

Kurzyniec said she went around the school on Friday, Feb. 27, reminding children about not watching TV. Several served up some interesting responses.

"One student pulled on my sweater and said, 'I'm sorry, but my dad has to watch sports every single day.' I said maybe he could read about the games the next day in the newspaper," Kurzyniec said. "Another said, 'I don't know if I can live without Rugrats.'"

Numerous other activities are scheduled at district schools.

Choice of low bid vexes union

BY TIM SMITH STAFF WRITER

Unionized electrical workers are miffed that they narrowly lost - to a non-union shop - a bid to install wiring at Farmington High School.

They are upset because they lost the job even though they believe they set the standards for excellence and have the best in the business.

But with many more jobs to be awarded under school improvement bonds, several members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers-Local 58 hope to get back to work in the district before too long.

The Farmington school board, during Tuesday night's meeting, awarded bids in the amount of \$2,541,090 for FHS work. One of those bids, for electrical work, was awarded to non-union low-bidder Ranger Contracting, Inc. (\$400,801) over union shop Metro Electric's \$402,030.

This first phase includes the addition of a science wing, made up of three labs and four classrooms; remodeling of four labs; remodeling and new mechanical systems for the west and north

wing of the building. Ground breaking is scheduled for 2:45 p.m. Tuesday.

Board members unanimously approved the bid package for all but the electrical bid. Trustee Jack Inch, a longtime advocate of labor, asked for a roll call vote for that contract and was the lone dissenter in the 6-1 vote to award RCI the work.

"Ho (Inch) has been consistently for labor and that's good," said Local 58 member and Farmington Hills resident Stan Spiwack following the decision. "Maybe he's interested in quality."

School board President Linda Enberg said that though the board is aware of the electrical union's commitment to excellence, "We also have an obligation to the taxpayers to take the lowest bid that does quality work. It is sometimes a fine line."

Bill McCarthy, senior project manager and vice president at McG/EEV Consultants and Construction Managers, emphasized that the jobs aren't awarded solely on the amount of bids.

"It's not the low bidder," McCarthy said after the meet-

ing. "It's the low qualified bidder. If the low bidder can do the work, then you proceed."

Jim Struble, president of RCI, which is located in Farmington Hills, defended the quality of work done by his company.

"RCI Electric is known for quality, craftsmanship and professionalism in our community and among our customers," Struble said Friday. "Our craftsmen are well trained, supervised and qualified for the work that we undertake."

Spiwack and other union members, both during and after the meeting, stressed to the board that the district will be paying union wages to non-union workers.

But, Local 58 routinely brings the best non-union electricians "into the fold, that leaves them with a shortage of people. And we're concerned about inspections," added Spiwack, who has two children attending the district.

According to a letter read to the board by Local 58 spokesman Gary Hellmer, a state licensed master electrician, there is another concern. The "enforce-

SCHOOLS

ment of laws has been lax at best. Schools fall under state inspection, with one inspector covering 66 school districts in Oakland and Macomb counties.

McCarthy confirmed that inspectors are "overwhelmed." He assured board members, however, that qualified local city officials would be doing the FHS inspection.

Hellmer also told the board he intends on being a watchdog, requesting certified payroll and daily construction reports to make sure RCI is doing the job correctly and paying the prevailing union wage, which is approximately \$25 per hour.

He will use the Michigan Freedom of Information Act "to guarantee compliance (by RCI) with prevailing wage and electrical licensing laws."

"I'll be out here looking (at) who's on the job," Hellmer said.

Spiwack, meanwhile, said he is worried that the quality "won't be there" for a school his children "are going to be attending" in the future.

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together," she said, "but I also understand the equity issue."

The principal said the continuing interest in the lottery, which started in March 1989, indicates that residents value having educational options for their children. Other district "choice" programs include those at Gill Year Round School and at the Alameda and Fairview early childhood centers.

"Just psychologically, people like the idea of choice," Reams said.

Schools of choice also help ease crowding at neighborhood schools, and cut the need for disruptive redistricting, she added.

Disaster from page A1

Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands.

Abler refers to it as "my third disaster." It was the third time FEMA had called her for help.

"I was there first," she said. "Carl came in November. We met, and a little over a year later, we were married. It was almost like it was destined to be."

Theresa believes fate played a role. She had a very dear friend, named Marilyn who lost her life to cancer about the same time she met Becker in the aftermath of Hurricane Marilyn.

The couple discovered in many ways they had lived parallel lives, including that both were

artists who enjoyed painting.

They were married in Farmington in 1996. The program for their wedding featured a map showing a dotted line from New Jersey to St. Croix and a second dotted line from Farmington to St. Croix, embellished with a heart. They wrote "Hurricane Marilyn brought two people to the island. Without her presence in our life, we could not be here."

Theresa just recently returned to Farmington Hills from ice storm duty in Vermont. Carl is still in Albany, N.Y., helping that area recover from the ravages of winter storms. Ten New York counties were hard hit by ice storms, severe snowfalls, long-term power outages, high winds and flooding in January.

Recovery operations continue.

"FEMA depends on its reservists in times of disaster just as the armed forces call on their reservists in times of crises," said Barbara Russell, the federal coordinating officer for the New York disaster.

Becker gained his organizational expertise when he worked

in the industrial mill supply business. That background also inspires his art.

He is working in the logistics section at the disaster field office, coordinating the flow of equipment for the field office and the aid centers set up throughout the disaster area.

Both agree it can be difficult to be married - newlyweds still - and away from each other for such long periods of time.

"I'm on the road 10 out of 12 months," said Carl. "The breaks I get in between are few and far apart."

They try to visit each other whenever possible and have worked together on occasion since they tied the knot.

"We worked in Hamtramck and Detroit together after the tornadoes last summer and in Chicago for flooding," he said.

They've been known to visit each other at disaster sites when one is working and the other is off duty.

Carl also passes leisure time painting. "I take my paintings with me," he said. "I'm working on a series capturing the Industrial Revolution. I'm on my 32nd painting."

He has shown his work in the New York Federal Building and has a Web page, <http://www.painted-inc.com/PaulHiggins>.

"It's difficult work, but it's wonderful to be out helping people," said Theresa. "You go into communities. You get attached. But it's always good to be back in Farmington."

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Arthritis Today
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WARNINGS CAN BE DANGEROUS TO YOUR HEALTH

When you pick up your arthritis medications at the pharmacy, you receive not only the drug, but an information sheet on it. The intent is to bring to your attention the possible side effects of the medicine, and to inform you on interactions that may occur between your prescription, other medicines and common foods. However, the manufacturer has another objective to prevent a lawsuit if the medicine causes you an untoward effect. Therefore the information on side effects includes not only common ones, but rare and possibly as yet unreported toxic reactions.

In arthritis medications, the best example is with the category of salicylate drugs. If you take any form of salicylates, you are warned that the drug can cause bleeding and/or stomach ulcers. Such an effect is possible with aspirin, but unlikely with salicylates such as salicylate.

If you do not check this point with your physician, you risk alarm and tension if you are scheduled for an operation. You may develop stomach pain and, based on what you read in the drug information sheet, stop an arthritis drug you need.

A physician training and ongoing education requirements keep him aware of what previous warnings in medication have proved to be an error, and what new findings reveal side effects not previously recognized. Drug information bulletins often do not keep us up-to-date.

"I CAN COPE"
Cancer Patient Program

St. Mary Hospital Livonia presents the American Cancer Society's "I Can Cope" program for cancer patients, their family and friends as follows:

Tuesdays, March 17 - April 21 (6 weeks)
6:30 - 8:30 p.m.
St. Mary Hospital
West Addition Conference Room B

"I Can Cope" is a free program for cancer patients, their family and friends. The course is designed to help newly diagnosed patients learn how to take an active role in their treatment and recovery. If you would like to learn more about cancer, its causes, prevention, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation, management of side effects, adjustment to changes in body image, exercise and proper nutrition, community resources and new potentials as a person with cancer, then "I Can Cope" is for you.

Presentations will be made by a team of health care professionals, including an oncologist, radiation oncologist, nurse, social worker, dietitian and pharmacist as well as other community resource professionals.

There is no charge for the program.
Registration is required by March 10.
For more information or to register, please call (734) 655-2922 or 1-800-494-1650.

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