

CHAT ROOM



Joan Campbell

Trip to France 'magnifique' for Mercy girls

The halls of Mercy High School were bustling with excitement as the French language students exclaimed, "We're going!" A dream trip to "La France" became reality for 23 third- and fourth-year-level French students last month during spring recess.

As senior Jenny Chapp explained, "Going to Paris is not just a dream for me, it is a part of me that needs to be fulfilled." Outil It was going to be an "April in Paris."

Upon sign-up last spring, many students accepted the responsibility of part-time jobs in order to subsidize the trip costs. As Mercy principal Sister Regina Doelker and I discussed the trip planning, we agreed this was one of the most spirited groups ever from our school traveling abroad.

Four pre-departure meetings were held after school to help students travel with ease and integrate French culture "sans probleme." From the first meeting last November, Madame Lanne Braun, fellow French teacher and chaperone, and I felt bonded. The girls feasted on French delicacies at all the meetings while I gave instruction or, what to pack, French currency, obtaining a passport, reading a menu, code of conduct and, "bien sur," French

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Miss Farmington Jennifer Hoemke sings the national anthem at the South Farmington baseball kickoff on Saturday.

She's on the road to Miss Michigan



The reigning Miss Farmington/Hills has just reached the point in her almost yearlong reign where she can take a breather. But not for long.

Last week, Jennifer Hoemke was still a theater student at Wayne State University. But finals are done, and her role in the musical "Cabaret" at the Bonstelle Theatre is over. Now she can turn her full attention to the Miss Michigan pageant slated for the weekend of June 18-20 in Muskegon.

Of course the 24-year-old new college graduate with a degree in theater performance still has a busy schedule as her role as Miss Farmington/Hills 1997 moves into its two final months. There is an acting workshop planned with drama students at Harrison High School and her "Pop the Top" campaign to recycle soda can pull tabs to

donate to the Children's Hospital of Michigan children's kidney dialysis program.

Yesterday, she planned a day trip to Cedar Point amusement park in Sandusky, Ohio, with fellow theater students from WSU: "my summer vacation this year," she quipped. She's hoping she'll be headed to Atlantic City for the Miss America scholarship pageant in September, but that hinges on her success in Muskegon next month.

"The communities of Farmington and Farmington Hills deserve to have the state title again," she says.

Kelly Garver, Miss Farmington/Hills 1995, was the last local contestant to win the title of Miss Michigan in 1986. She was third runner-up to Miss America that year.

Keeping busy

Hoemke, the fair-skinned, red-headed only child of Grant and Gheri Hoemke, has had a whirlwind year.

And she would love to elevate her platform, the arts and organ donation awareness, to the state level.

"I've made sometimes as many as three public appearances in a day," she says. "I'm a big advocate of community service."

Parades, the local fishing derby, singing the national anthem at the Shrine Circus, acting as a celebrity server in local restaurant fund-raisers, and scores more community-oriented events have filled her plate for 10 months.

"When I make an appearance, I'm there to help support the project, not to wave and smile," she says. "I'll plant flowers, wash dishes. I'm not afraid to pitch in."

That's when she wasn't working on her bachelor's degree. Her final term she carried 19 credit hours and "tons of work at the Bonstelle." Last October, she played Nurse Kelly in "Harvey." For "Cabaret," she sang in the chorus

and understudied the female lead.

Her father, Grant, is an instrumental music instructor in Farmington elementary schools and conductor of the Birmingham Community Band. Her mother, Cheri, is school secretary at Lanigan Elementary, just behind the family's Farmington Hills home.

It wasn't until Hoemke was a junior at Farmington High School that she decided to pursue a career in theater. Her parents brought her to Toronto to see "Phantom of the Opera" and it made a lasting impression.

"We walked out of the theatre and I said 'That's what I want to do,'" she recalled.

Getting started

She promptly auditioned for the women's Madrigal chorus and was accepted. She went on to obtain lead roles in Farmington High School's

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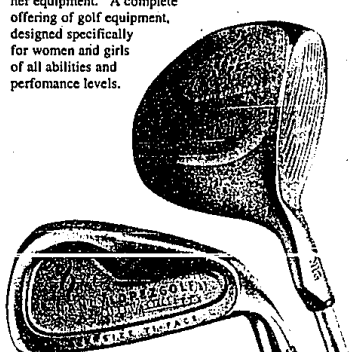
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