

'Fibblestax' delights kids

In Devin Scillian's "Fibblestax" children's story, the characters Fibblestax and Carr wage a contest in front of the entire town to see who can best assign names to five things.

In the story, Fibblestax gives good names to things, while Carr thinks up "all the awful words in a careless, simple way."

Following is a comparison of how the two characters did during the contest, according to the story:

■ What are the drops of water that fall from the sky? Carr: "droog"; Fibblestax, "rain."

■ What are the crispy little squares we eat with soup and stew? Carr: "poonies"; Fibblestax, "crackers."

■ What is the very strange, dreamy feeling that makes you feel good when a friend is near? Carr: no answer; Fibblestax, "love."

Needless to say, Fibblestax words stirred much more positive reaction from the town's people than Carr's did.

Local Secretary of State office moves

The Farmington Hills Secretary of State branch office at 35076 Grand River will close at 5 p.m. Monday, March 22.

The office will reopen for business at 9 a.m. Friday, March 26 at a new location, 35572 Grand River.

Residents who must do business with the Secretary of State during the week the Farmington Hills office is closed may visit the following branches:

■ 19229 Newburg, Livonia. 248-476-6538.
■ 4301 Orchard Lake No. 185, West Bloomfield.

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248-476-6538.

■ 25263 Telegraph, Southfield. 248-476-6538.

Motorists who need to renew license plates may avoid a trip to a branch office by renewing by mail, or fax. Motorists who are eligible may also renew by touch-tone telephone or Internet.

Parking from page A1

behind Page's Food & Spirits - 22 spaces - would be two-hour slots, according to one of the recommendations being considered. The spaces are those closest to Page's, Goss said. (The recommendation does not apply to adjacent private parking, for the Farmington Observer, Fun with Plaster and other businesses.)

Among problems with the current setup, where patrons and employees can park for as long as they want, is the differing nature of various businesses, and their respective parking needs.

Some businesses have a quick turnaround of customers; others use parking for lengthy office visits and doctor's appointments.

Also, some employees want to park closest to the front door.

Goss said many of the choice parking spaces, nearest Pages and Mutual Financial, are gobbled up early in the morning. Truck deliveries exacerbate the crowded parking conditions.

"There are different demands on parking," Goss said.

One potential solution is for those employees and others expecting to park for several hours to consider using the city lot south of State Street. That lot now is usually fairly empty, he noted.

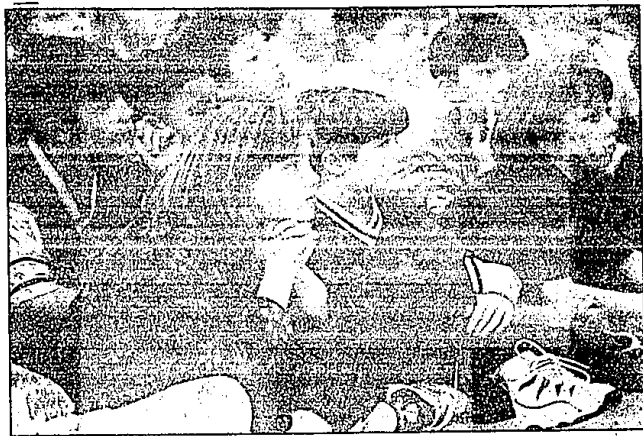
During the council meeting, Pasta Shop owner Roger Ratkowski said he is willing to cooperate with other businesses

about parking.

Ratkowski and another business owner complained about parking congestion in the lot during the lunch hour, according to Goss.

"I want to make my living here, and I want to work with my neighbors," Ratkowski said. "... I don't know why parking is such a doggone issue, other than there's not enough space and everybody wants to park as close to the door as you can."

Ratkowski was at the meeting to discuss his request for a permit, to again use the municipal lot for Monday night "Classic Car Cruises." Council members approved the request.



STAFF PHOTO BY ELIZABETH CARROLL

Creative: Gill Elementary School students listen closely to the story of "Fibblestax," as told by its creator, Devin Scillian. The Channel 4 news anchor recently visited Gill as part of March is Reading Month activities.

Read from page A1

Weinberg, via e-mail, after learning the news anchor did such school visits - including one recently at Avery Elementary in the Berkley district.

"In the book, Fibblestax had to square off in a war of words against a man named Carr, depicted as a red-faced man who sat on a hickory trunk... and gave terrible names to wonderful things like 'load' and 'snake' and 'skunk'."

Talking to youngsters about the genesis of the book, which Scillian wrote about six years ago, he said he "came up with this word, it sounded like 'fiddle sticks.' I then thought about how funny a word that was, and I thought about where words come from."

According to Scillian, who moved his family to Detroit about 3 1/2 years ago from Oklahoma, reading made a big impact on him when he was young, and he implored Gill students to get into the page-turning habit, too.

"The books I read when I was your age I still remember. That's because they meant a lot to me, even more than the television shows did," he said.

Still on his bookshelf is "My Side of the Mountain," his favorite childhood title.

"I read it to my son last year at home, a chapter every night," Scillian said.

'Kids have always been real important to me. Maybe it's because I have four of my own ... (But) a lot of my away-from-the-station work involves kids.'

Devin Scillian
—Newscaster

Fibblestax and Lord Stanley

Scillian's interests and talents are many. Of course, at the top of the list is his devotion to family life; he has a wife and four children, ages 3 to 10. Over the past several years, he's created a handful of unpublished children's books (featuring his own watercolor illustrations) and recently recorded a country-folk album called "Tulsa."

But it is writing creative gems such as "Fibblestax" and making a connection with children that makes Scillian tick, almost as much as he relishes choice news assignments - such as his 1997 trek with Detroit Red Wings Igor Larionov (his hockey hero), Slava Kozlov and Slava Fetisov to the players' Russian homeland, with Stanley Cup in tow.

"Kids have always been real important to me," said Scillian, after the students returned to

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