



In character: This sequence shows just how animated North Farmington High School "Forensics Team" president Gretchen Pitluk gets during her rendition of "The Frog Who Wanted To Be A Singer," a children's book written by Linda Goss.

Telling a story

North forensics students grab kids with words and gestures



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BARBER

Seuss on the loose: North forensics team member Jon Lenze performs "The Lorax" by Dr. Seuss for students at William Grace Elementary.

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER
tsmith@oea.homecomm.net

Usually, when members of North Farmington High School's "Forensics Team" perform, it is at a competition, with the notion of winning a trophy or other accolades.

But four members of the after-school team found out that there is no better prize than the kind of positive audience reaction that goes with telling stories to elementary school children.

Wednesday, as part of March is Reading Month, North students Kathy Bockli, Andrea Coleman, Jon Lenze and Gretchen Pitluk (president of the team) toured Wooddale, William Grace and Forest elementaries, in the Farmington district. They did some pretty creative and expressive storytelling, serving up their memorized interpretations of works by Dr. Seuss and other children's authors.

"I love doing it," said Gretchen. "It's a lot of fun. I like to see the expressions on their faces. When you do a competition, it's not the same."

Gretchen read "The Frog Who Wanted To Be A Singer," by Linda Goss.

Like the other team members, she pranced around the raised steps of the William Grace media center as if it were a regular stage, using attention-grabbing storytelling techniques such as physical characterizations and voice changes.

Following is just one example:

■ 'I love doing it. It's a lot of fun. I like to see the expressions on their faces. When you do a competition, it's not the same.'

Gretchen Pitluk
—Team president

"When the frog comes home he's feeling mighty frus-trated!" said Gretchen. She then let out a "Whew" and grabbed the back of her head at the same time for extra dramatic emphasis.

During Jon Lenze's rendition of Seuss' "The Lorax," his wide range of vocal characterizations might have made Rich Little or Dana Carvey proud.

He augmented his vocal dexterity with that of the physical variety: wrinkling his nose, changing his facial expression, continuously crouching and jumping from one side of the steps to the other.

"I like acting," Jon said later, likening the storytelling to a dramatic performance. "I treat (this) just like a performance. Just go out there and have fun."

At William Grace, second- and third-graders enjoyed versions of Verna Aardema's "Why Mosquitoes Buzz In People's Ears" and Patricia Lee Gauche's "Christina-Katerina," performed by Kathy and Andrea, respectively.

The team is coached by North teacher Mark Wilson and student teacher Lisa Anastasio.



Getting into the stories: William Grace students enjoy the forensics team's spirited performance.

According to Wilson, the storytelling tour hopefully will pay dividends for the older students and their younger audience members.

"We're really hoping this encourages kids to see how much enjoyment they get out of reading books," Wilson said.

Senate hears cities' pain, restores 'promised' state revenue increases

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER
tsmith@oea.homecomm.net

When Frank Lauhoff found out Gov. John Engler recommended slicing the increase of Farmington's state revenue share from a promised 8 percent to 2.5 percent, he almost blew a gasket.

"It appears the governor has forgotten what the needs of the cities are," said Lauhoff, after saying something much stronger during an interview Wednesday. "And it's the cities who make up the state."

Lauhoff just got off the telephone with state Sen. William Bullard, R-Milford, whose 16th District includes Farmington and Farmington Hills.

"This is just hitting the fan today," Lauhoff said. "People want good services. You can't keep reducing revenues and expect things to be maintained."

The reason for Lauhoff's dismay was Engler's recent recom-

mendation to slash by \$37.7 million, state revenue appropriations to cities and townships.

In December, all of the municipalities were promised a revenue sharing increase of 8 percent. Farmington and Farmington Hills would have received increases of \$91,892 and \$586,492, respectively, under that plan.

■ Farmington, at the 2.5 percent level, would have received only \$28,441 more, upping the total to \$1,177,096, under the 8 percent plan. Farmington's share would have totaled \$1,240,546.

■ The Farmington Hills increase would have been reduced to 3.9 percent, with the city receiving only \$279,576 more — for a total of \$7,360,729.

"They changed the formula and they haven't even paid anything yet," Lauhoff said.

Bullard and other senators apparently headed the angry reaction of their constituents. On

Friday, the Senate voted to restore the \$37.7 million, said Farmington clerk/treasurer Patsy Cantrell, who attended a meeting in Lansing that day.

The measure now moves to the state House, with Engler still holding veto power.

"I would imagine many, many communities made their feelings known about losing revenue sharing," said Cantrell, noting that the state is trying to revamp a complicated system.

Revenue sharing, under its existing format, is fueled by many sources, including sales and business taxes.

Because cities rely on state revenue, significant reductions could result in future millage increases or impact services, Lauhoff said.

Farmington's total general fund budget for 1998-99 is about \$6 million.

Arts from page A1

The chorus is directed by Steve SeGraves, assistant director and accompanist is Susan Carr. The chorus meets for practice at 7 p.m. every Tuesday at the Costick Center.

The first of the three concerts scheduled for the chorus will be at 8 p.m. May 7 and 8 at Harrison High School. Tickets for "Going Places" are \$10 at the door, \$8 in advance and \$6 for seniors and students. Call Kathy Hall for tickets at 471-4516.

During the festival the chorus will have an open rehearsal night at 7 p.m. Tuesday, April 27 at the Costick Center. "Everyone is welcome to come up and listen," Woollard said.

Embroiders' Guild of America
Members of the guild, which is

a chapter of a national organization, want to pass on their artistic skills to the younger generation.

"We want them to appreciate needlework as artwork," said president Judy Griffin.

On way they plan to do that is during the arts festival when they will teach students — who will be brought to the festival — a basic stitch. "They will make a bookmark with their initials," Griffin said. "Needlework has a history to it and it is a craft."

The 15-year-old chapter has 45 members who meet at 9:30 a.m. the first Wednesday of the month at Faith Covenant Church at 14 Mile and Drake.

While social interaction certainly plays a role, the guild meets for a specific purpose: to learn and exchange skills, tech-

niques and styles.

"We have programs — lectures, slides presentations, classes," Griffin said. "We cover types of embroidery. Sometimes we have special classes when a nationally known teacher comes in."

The guild also has community projects, such as making chemo caps for patients at Botsford General Hospital, as well as premie caps and items for the Warner Mansion.

New members are welcome to join the guild. And new members are not required to be proficient in needlework — described as anything that involves a needle with an eye in it, Griffin said.

For more information, call Griffin at (248) 788-1073.

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