

Welcome: National City Bank employee Eddie Katz-Silverstein and Kenbrook teacher Jeannine Hales are at the school bank every Thursday morning, without fail. They want students to learn about being responsible with money. Hales presented the idea for a student-run bank.



The bank's open: Kenbrook Elementary School fourth-grade tellers (from left) Adam Sucher, Jason Aleman and Michelle Budaj assist customers Sean Pickard (foreground, left) and Mitali Agarwal, both fourth-graders.

You can bank on it

Kenbrook elementary students learn the ins and outs of saving



Deposit this: During a morning banking session at Kenbrook, fourth-grade tellers Jake Stocker (left) and Michael Grinter process deposit for customer Geoffrey Cormier, a fourth-grader.

By TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER
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These particular bank accounts aren't all that big. But that doesn't matter at Kenbrook Elementary School, where students are operating their very own branch of National City Bank.

The main thing is for youngsters to learn how to make deposits, calculate interest and get into the habit of handling money responsibly, according to several teachers and parents.

"We have deposits from 73 cents to \$25," said parent Lynn Aleman, a certified public accountant whose fourth-grade son, Jason, is one of the branch tellers.

The Kenbrook "branch" is open 8:15 a.m. every Thursday in a hallway outside the fourth-grade economics class of teacher Jeannine Hales, who spearheaded the project.

Student tellers wait on student customers. For example, on one recent Thursday morning, fourth-graders Jason Aleman, Michelle Budaj, Michael Grinter, Jake Stocker and Adam Sucher processed new accounts for classmates such as Mitali Agarwal, who needed only \$5 to start his ledger.

Also, transactions are as close to what happens at actual banks as possible, right down to tellers thanking their customers. And tellers are interviewed for their jobs, too. Aleman said

a new crew of tellers is brought in every three weeks.

"It's working out very well," Hales said. "Kids are seeing how to... make decisions with their money. It's awareness, balancing a budget."

They also bring in deposit slips and write them down correctly in their ledger, Hales said, adding that about 40 students have opened accounts.

To add to the authenticity of the experience, on hand each week is bank employee Eddie Katz-Silverstein, known as "Miss Eddie" to the students.

"We open the account for them here," said Katz-Silverstein. "And then, it's like any other account." Katz-Silverstein said parents have been "wonderful, encouraging their kids to participate."

Helping out are parent volunteers Aleman, Julie Darin and Linda Sucher.

"I'm a CPA and I wanted to make sure kids got the experience of knowing money and how to handle it, (learn) responsibility," Aleman said.

Several of the student tellers said they're getting a lot of benefit out of the endeavor.

"I'm learning how to open accounts for other people and how to handle money," said Michelle Budaj.

The Kenbrook bank opened in January and will remain open until the end of the school year.

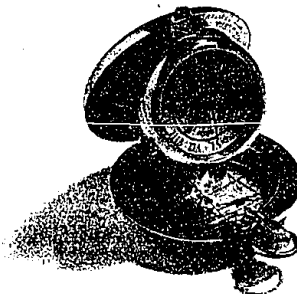
Hales said she is confident the school bank will continue during 1999-2000.

"It will be interesting to see how many kids continue going to the bank during the summer," said Katz-Silverstein.



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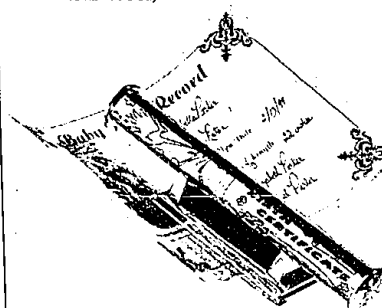
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SHOPPING HOURS • MON-SAT 10-9 • OPEN SUN AT NOON

Teen suicide is topic at all-day workshop for student journalists

By JUDITH DONER BERNES
SPECIAL WRITER

Student journalists from high school publications such as Rooper School's Tuna Talk and North Farmington's The Star will consider a difficult topic — teen suicide — at a student newspaper seminar Thursday in Royal Oak.

The all-day workshop, that will include a tour of the Common Ground Sanctuary shelter for troubled youth, is co-sponsored by The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers and Common Ground Sanctuary, the Oakland County agency serving people in crisis.

Co-sponsors hope the students will learn about the services and programs Common Ground Sanctuary offers teens who need help — and write about them.

They hope that through discussion the young journalists will learn to recognize someone who may be suicidal and what to do about it, and pass that information on to their fellow students.

And they hope a panel composed of students, educators, police and professional journalists can reach a common understanding of "How and When the Issue of Teen Suicide is Covered and Why."

Student journalists also will have an opportunity to learn about the newspaper business from Observer & Eccentric journalists, led by Phil Sherman, managing editor for The Eccentric Newspapers, and Oakland County Editor Tom Beyer.

Suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people ages 15-24, reports Tony Rothchild, CEO of Common Ground Sanctuary. "We find many kids don't know

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about the resources available," he says. The schools offer help, but what about the kids who don't like school or may not feel comfortable there. "It's all about finding the person the individual trusts. We're one more place."

Rothchild also comes at the issue from another perspective. He is a school board member in Lake Orion, a community that has experienced several teen suicides over the last couple of years. He saw first-hand the anguish and guilt of parents, students, schools and the community-at-large.

The rate of teens attempting suicide has been the same for many years, Rothchild says. "The difference is the success rate is a lot higher." He attributes that to the increased availability of guns.

Rothchild doesn't have strong feelings about media coverage of actual teen suicides.

"When it happens, it's all that's being talked about everywhere," he says. But he thinks that if students themselves have more information, they "have the potential for having

the biggest impact on thwarting suicide."

Debra Pascoe, a reporter who has covered teen suicide in the Lake Orion area, has high hopes for the seminar. "Student journalists can come up with even better stories than we can because they know what their peers are going through," she suggests.

"Sometimes, when you can face reality with some of your friends and in your student newspaper, it seems helpful," Baer says. "If you ignore it, it's not good. Despite what people have told me — 'You'll get copy cuts!' — I don't think that's true. You can't pretend it didn't happen."

Says Harriet Maza, advisor for the West Bloomfield High School news magazine, Spectrum, "I'm excited about the seminar. I will say there is always a sense of helplessness when something like a suicide happens. Usually a group of journalism students will come together and ask, 'What shall we do?'"

Having a conference where young journalists can gather with people who are more experienced — professionals or those who have dealt with it at their school — should prove helpful, Maza adds.

Some of the Oakland County high schools sending student journalists, their advisors, and in some cases principals, to participate in the seminar include: Clawson, Detroit Country Day, Ferndale, Marian, North Farmington, Rochester, Rooper, Southfield and West Bloomfield.

High schools in Oakland County can still register for the seminar, headquartered at the Royal Oak Women's Club, 404 S. Pleasant St. Call Cheryl Sugarman, CGS assistant director of development, at (248) 456-8158, Ext. 237.

select group made up of 16 voices, will also perform.

In past years, these concerts have sold out. Tickets for either performance are available from

any chorus member, from the Farmington Hills Department of Social Services or at the door. Call 788-6322.

Go places with the Community Chorus

The Farmington Community Chorus will present its 20th annual spring concert "Going Places" at 8 p.m. Friday, May 7, and Saturday, May 8, at Harrison High School in Farmington Hills.

Steven SeGraves is the director of the 80 voice choir and Susan Carr will provide the piano and keyboard accompaniment. The "Perfect Band," a