

# Could school district's conflict resolution program have prevented teen's stabbing?

By TIM SMITH  
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Knowing how to act cool in confrontations, and how to resolve problems before they intensify, is one goal of the conflict resolution efforts going on in schools across the Farmington district.

And district official James Myers wonders whether the fate of a 16-year-old Farmington High School junior might have been altered had he taken a different approach during last Saturday morning's stabbing incident near Farmington-Nine Mile roads.

The student was stabbed once in the chest, sustaining serious injuries to his lung and heart.

Several other students, from Farmington High and the Farmington Alternative Academy, were also reportedly involved in the incident, which was provoked by name-calling and included mistaken iden-

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**James Myers**  
—School official

tity, said police reports.

"It's one of those things," said Myers, who earlier this year left his longtime position as Farmington High School principal to become executive director of K-12 instruction and student services. "This conflict resolution program that's entrenched in our schools is about how to approach these problems, and (about) what can happen when you handle things the wrong way."

"The potential is there for something to get out of hand."

Although the stabbing did not take place on school property, the incident also

underscored why the district is so adamant about having a tough code of conduct. "It's an example of why it's inappropriate to have things like a knife in school," Myers said.

The person who allegedly stabbed him with a butterfly knife — a 24-year-old Farmington Hills man paroled in August for a previous incident involving a knife, according to police — was subsequently arrested on the M-5 bridge over Farmington Road, with the help of Farmington Hills police.

William Marshall Ford was arraigned later last Saturday, Nov. 7, in 47th District Court, on one count of assault with intent to murder. Ford faces a hearing in 47th District Court at 8:30 a.m. Friday. Because of his criminal history, a request for bond was denied at the arraignment and he was sent to the Oakland County Jail.

According to police reports, the victim

and four other teenagers had opportunities to leave the confrontation before it turned tragic.

"When you think about the situation, we have a 16-year-old in the hospital for nothing," said Farmington Public Safety Director Gary Goss last week. "If, at any time, the parties (would have) walked away and let it go, nothing would have happened."

The victim was among five teens in a car near Farmington-Nine Mile when one of them yelled obscenities at Ford, one of two men walking alongside the road.

The name-caller yelled at Ford because she thought he was the same guy who earlier bout up another male friend — someone else who was riding in the car, not the eventual stabbing victim.

But when Ford approached the car, the girl realized she was targeting the wrong person. He "continued to be irate," police reports continued, despite an attempted apology from the girl, and then escaped the side of the car with his knife before he and the other man crossed Nine Mile to a gas station.

At that point, the car followed the two men, instead of leaving the area.

The victim was among several youths who got out of their vehicles to confront Ford. Ensuing was an angry verbal confrontation, laced with profanities, and a potential fight, police reports continued. But then, the knife was pulled and the teen was stabbed.

## Hills woman honored

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