

'Somewhat traditional'

But this teacher is 'firm, demanding and fun'

(Editor's Note: This is the third of three stories about teachers who have been honored as Farmington Public Schools' teachers of the year.)

BY TIM SMITH
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Susan Schultz apparently knows when to push her students and when to pat them on the back. Whatever approach needs to be taken to get the most out of them, the 30-year Harrison High School math teacher is up to the challenge.

Others notice, enough for Schultz to be selected Farmington Public Schools' High School Teacher of the Year. Schultz received her award during the Tuesday, March 28, school board meeting.

"I'm very happy for her," said Harrison Principal Rando Horn. "She's just one of those kinds of people who does a great job with kids. She's like a surrogate mother to some of them."

One morning last week, Schultz, who serves as chair of Harrison's math department, downplayed her award.

"The most fun part about it is the fact I've heard from so many of my ex-students," Schultz said. "It's fun to keep in touch with all of the kids."

One of those former students wrote a heartfelt letter of nomi-

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Kathy Meganck-Folske
—Harrison teacher who nominated Schultz

TEACHER OF THE YEAR

nation that indicated the special kind of bond the teacher has shared with students ever since 1970. That year, Harrison opened and Schultz was a "rookie" math teacher.

The student, Jodie Barringer, a Harrison grad from the mid-1990s, wrote about how it was Schultz who gave her a big dose of self-confidence in her mathematics abilities.

"Her letter told the story of how when she came to Harrison, she was certified as learning disabled," Schultz explained. "And I had recommended her to be an honor (student in math) her sophomore year. ... Her letter was about this math class being



STAFF PHOTO BY TARA BRZDZIK

A favorite: Susan Schultz teaches math at Harrison High School. She taught the district's first advanced placement class in 1974. She was nominated for a Teacher of the Year award, not only by colleagues, but also by former students.

the first time someone had recognized she had ability beyond her learning disability."

Last year, Barringer graduated number one in engineering from Western Michigan University.

Schultz describes her teaching style as "somewhat traditional, firm and demanding and fun."

Two of her current students in her algebra class would not dispute the assessment, particularly the last part.

"It's fun in an educational way," said sophomore Patrick B. ttah. "She'll joke around with us, but in a serious way. ... She's my favorite teacher."

Another sophomore, Mike Schild, also likes Schultz, but for a different reason. "She took me from an E to an A student," he said.

The success enjoyed by students in Schultz's class is not just a recent phenomenon. She

taught the district's first advanced placement course in 1974. Since then, more than 95 percent of her students who took the AP calculus test received college credit.

"We respect her knowledge, her love for learning and teaching, her commitment, her drive, her perseverance and her dedication," wrote Harrison teacher Kathy Meganck-Folske, who nominated Schultz for the award.

The district teachers of the year were entered in the Newsweek-WDIV Outstanding Teacher Awards program coordinated in part by Oakland Schools. Besides Schultz, honored Farmington teachers include William Grace Elementary's Vitas Underdy and East Middle School's Mary Ellen Thompson, who won the district's elementary and middle school awards, respectively.

Animation and fun help bridge the gap between kids and senior adults

BY TRACEY BIRKENHAUER
STAFF WRITER

Bridging generation gaps, about 13 children and 10 seniors gathered at the Costick Activities Center for an animation education, lunch and a road trip to see "Fantasia 2000" March 24.

Since the children had a half-day of school, Farmington Hills Youth and Family Services program director Todd Lips found it a ripe opportunity for some inter-generational fun, mixing up the after-school program with the senior program. He and colleague Nancy Coumoundouros, the recently recruited cultural arts director, designed the educationally entertaining afternoon.

"We just thought it would be good to get our seniors interacting with the children," Lips said. "A couple of us had seen 'Fantasia' (the revamped Disney movie) and thought it was perfect because it has arts and music."

Adding a cartoon workshop made it even more perfect. "This gave us the ability to coordinate efforts," Coumoundouros said. "Statistics show that if you get middle and high school students involved in arts programs, they have higher grades and self-esteem. Arts aren't just an enhancement, they are a vital part of life."

"This way, the children - and the seniors - can gain an appreciation for what goes into the cartooning process before they even go see 'Fantasia,'" Lips said.

While the children were asking "where's the pizza?" and "when do we see the movie?" as they entered the Costick Center, soon they were enthralled by a hands-on cartooning session. The children and seniors found themselves side-by-side at rectangular tables, drawing creatures from Eye-Guy to Perma.

Cartoonist Neal Levin has taught several workshops in Farmington schools, demonstrating basic drawing techniques. "It's a skill children might not know they're able to do," Levin said.

With a newly found confidence in drawing, Levin's students are encouraged to develop their own skills.

"It's something most kids are already interested in. I just mainly spark their interest," Levin said. "They can see results right away and they find that encouraging."

Levin is used to teaching chil-

dren, but the seniors added an exciting, new dynamic.

Irene and Norbert Slawski of Farmington Hills brought their two grandchildren, Caitlin and Kyle Parent, 10 and 7, respectively.

"He came to my house before," Caitlin proudly said of Levin, who attended one of her birthday parties.

An avid sketch artist, Caitlin drew each of Levin's prescribed characters with ease. Her grand-

parents, on the hand, struggled a bit. Attempting to draw Eye-Guy, Irene Slawski whispered, "Art was not my subject."

While the children's pencils - and erasers - shook wildly, the seniors tended to be slower and more meticulous.

Soon, the seniors took a cue from the children and forgot their inhibitions. They attempted challenging pictures with surprising results. Irene Slawski even completed a few characters.

By the end of the session, 12-year-old Alex Butkovich's paper was filled with lively characters. The Power Middle School student usually goes to the ice rink after school, but she came to the Costick Center for the special event. She was glad she did.

"Even though the cartoons look hard, they're easier than you think. They're just basic shapes."

Therein lies the program's success.



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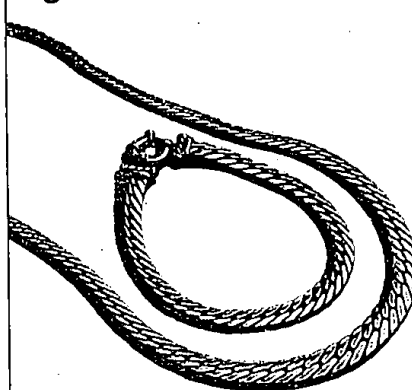
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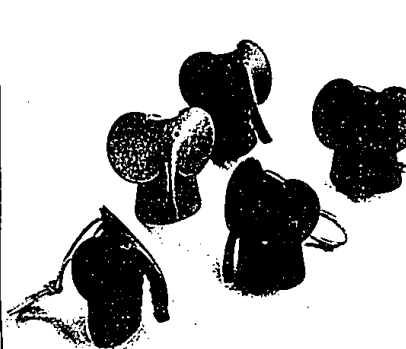
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