

Hills contingent goes to D.C.

BY JONI HUBBARD
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With the goal of bringing home a bigger piece of the federal budget pie and lobbying legislators, a contingent of six Farmington Hills City Council members and two staffers spent time in Washington, D.C., last week, at the National League of Cities convention.

At a cost to local taxpayers of about \$7,000, officials joined nearly 3,000 municipal government officials to talk about issues ranging from taxing e-commerce to keeping the federal government out of local government's business.

"We lobby our representatives in an effort to bring home more tax dollars and attend workshops to gain knowledge on upcoming national legislation that will impact our community."

City manager Steve Brock, who attended with assistant Teri Arbenowske, Mayor Nancy Bates, Council members Vicki Barnett, Cheryl Oliverio, Barry Brickner, Chris McRae and Jerry Ellis, said the trip was included in the council's 2000 travel budget.

"However many want to go,



Kathy Dornan

go," Brock said. "It's generally been three or four. More went this year because we had some first-timers."

While it wasn't Brickner's first visit to the nation's capitol, he'd never been to an NLC event. He's in his first council term, having been elected last fall.

"I thought it was very interesting," he said. "The big topic was e-commerce. The NLC is very concerned about the fact that sales and use taxes aren't being collected by e-businesses (the way they are for regular businesses)."

That's a concern locally because a portion of sales taxes in Michigan go toward funding schools.

"Right now, it's not a major burden," Brickner commented. "But the numbers are starting to mount up."

The Hills delegation met with Sen. Carl Levin and Rep. Joseph Knollenberg, who appear to have differing views on the topic. While Levin favored the tax, Knollenberg was more inclined to take a "wait and see" approach, Brickner said.

Both federal representatives liked an idea City Clerk Kathy Dornan asked council members to suggest: Lowering or eliminating postage on election-related materials.

Dornan said the idea came from many discussions with other city clerks about ways to encourage more people to vote.

"They (the state of Michigan) did reduce postage for election materials, if you comply with certain requirements," Dornan said. "We're trying to get that at Farmington Hills."

But that's only for materials sent out to voters from the clerk's office. Dornan thinks it would make life easier for absentee voters, especially senior citizens, if they could just pop their ballot in the mail without having to worry about buying a stamp.

"Maybe that will be one incentive, another way to get more people to vote," Dornan commented. "Plus, it costs us a lot of money to mail out. We send out tons of letters every day for voter registration in order to clean up our records."

Whether the idea has a chance at getting consideration in Congress remains to be seen. Dornan and Brickner are co-writing a letter, making the suggestion more formal.

They may have a head start. With both Levin, a Democrat, and Knollenberg, a Republican, already in favor of it, Brickner pointed out, "It's already got bipartisan support."

NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES CONVENTION



PHOTO BY LISA EDE, FARMINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Dazzling showcase: Members of the O.E. Dunkel Middle School choir perform "Cinematic," a medley of show tunes, during the recent reception to honor school district volunteers and business partners.

District toasts volunteers

BY TIM SMITH
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They rolled out the red carpet for Farmington Public Schools volunteers and business partners, considered vital to the success of the district.

Approximately 125 volunteers and business partners enjoyed the Tuesday, March 28, "Academy Award" themed reception, at the O.E. Dunkel Middle School cafeteria.

Each guest received a special "gift" from the district, namely a chocolate figurine - that of someone clutching a star, with the district's name inscribed at the bottom.

The guests followed a red runner to the cafeteria, which featured tables covered with black tablecloths and sparkly gold confetti. Life-size cardboard cutouts of actors and actresses from Academy Award-winning films such as the Wizard of Oz made it almost seem like a stroll down the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Once inside, they were made to feel like award winners.

"It's very gratifying," said Julie Devine, a parent who mostly volunteers at Farmington High School, although she played an active role helping publicize the recent first-annual school district 24-hour telethon.

Devine said the best part about being recognized "is there's an understanding that

our time is precious."

Several school officials talked about why the district wanted to toast the various volunteers and business partners.

"I said in my opening comments that, 'What you make possible for us in so many ways, we can't do by ourselves,'" said schools Superintendent Bob Maxfield. "And, in fact, the winner is you. All of you."

Several examples of volunteerism cited by Maxfield included: Junior Achievement programs; Winning Futures at Farmington High School; the Mobil gas stations that designate certain days as fund-raisers for schools; participants of Senior Adults Giving to Education; and those who spend time helping interview school principal candidates.

"If we had to pay for the kind of effort" exhibited by the volunteers and business partners, "we'd never be able to afford it," acknowledged school board Vice President Frank Reid.

Highlights of the reception included entertainment by the Harrison High School Jazz Band (directed by Mark Phillips) and O.E. Dunkel Middle School Choir, under the direction of Kathleen Seremet.

The choir performed "Cinematic," featuring songs from Oscar-winning movies, while a second group, the Girls Ensemble, also sang.

Creagh urges common sense parenting

By TIM SMITH
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When nationally acclaimed speaker Milton Creagh spoke at the Sober October breakfast, he implored adults in the room to start leading by example when it comes to sending the "don't use alcohol or drugs" message to children.

GRIP

Creagh continued the dialogue at Monday's GRIP 2000 program at the William Costick Activities Center. Approximately 125 parents and community members attended the meeting.

Among those in attendance was parent Cindi Helisek. She said Creagh "challenged parents" to re-assert their authority, that "children will appreciate you for being the authoritarian figure." As in October, Creagh emphasized the importance of parents doing the right thing in front of their kids.

Among things parents should think twice about: allowing their kids to leave North America for spring break; asking them to get them a beer from the refrigerator or a pack of cigarettes.

Although Helisek said she was "very impressed" with the talk, she said "he could have gone on for another 15 minutes and gotten more specific to our local community."

Creagh's presentation dealt with parents' role in keeping their children drug-free. He discussed common sense, down-to-earth ideas about effective parenting and will help parents begin to think of themselves as role models.

He also addressed high school students on April 5 and 6.

GRIP, Generation Responding to Issues and Problems, is co-sponsored by Farmington Public Schools and Farmington Families in Action. The program will be shown in coming weeks on the district's TV-10.

Harrison block plan shows 'team effort'

BY TIM SMITH
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Harrison High School administrators Tuesday, March 28 presented school board members with a glowing progress report about impending block scheduling, said Priscilla Brouillette, board president.

According to Brouillette, Harrison Principal Rande Horn openly thanked by name those parents who played an important role in helping the high school progress to the point where the block is all but ready to be implemented for the 2000-01 school year.

"He said it was a tremendous team effort," Brouillette said.

Students already are meeting with counselors to choose the electives they want to take for Tuesday morning blocks that will mirror the Student Managed Academic Resource Time and Student Enrichment Time programs at Farmington and North high schools, respectively.

"The committee is meeting to decide names for these things; it could be 'Hawk Time' or something like that," said Brouillette, referring to the enrichment block and Thursday morning late starts, the latter being periods for teacher planning.

For the late starts, students won't have to attend school until 9:30 a.m. Thursdays; school begins at 7:25 a.m. the other four days.

Brouillette said the late start, and any other scheduling tweaks needed to implement the block, should not adversely impact transportation, which the district will provide.

Brown delved into various details such as how faculty members already are preparing for the first month of the block scheduling era.

"I was impressed with how the staff has prepared for this," Brouillette said.

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