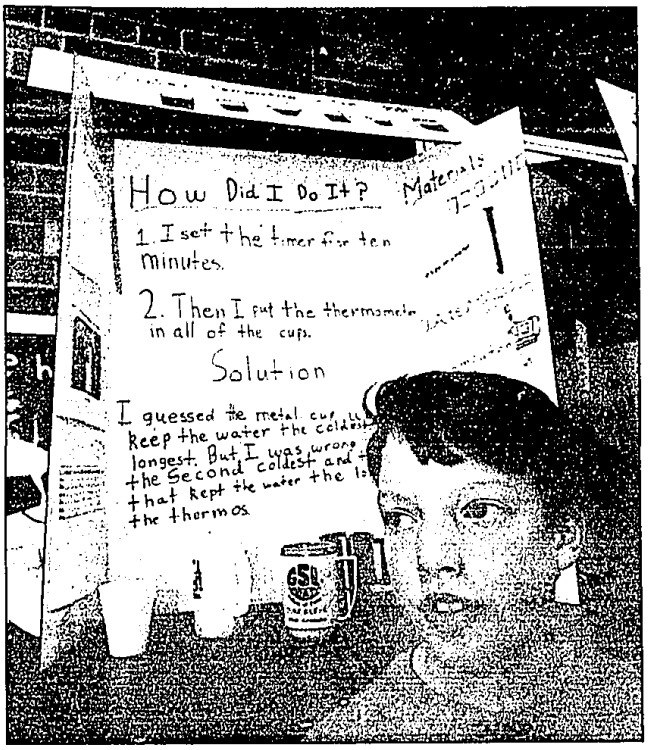
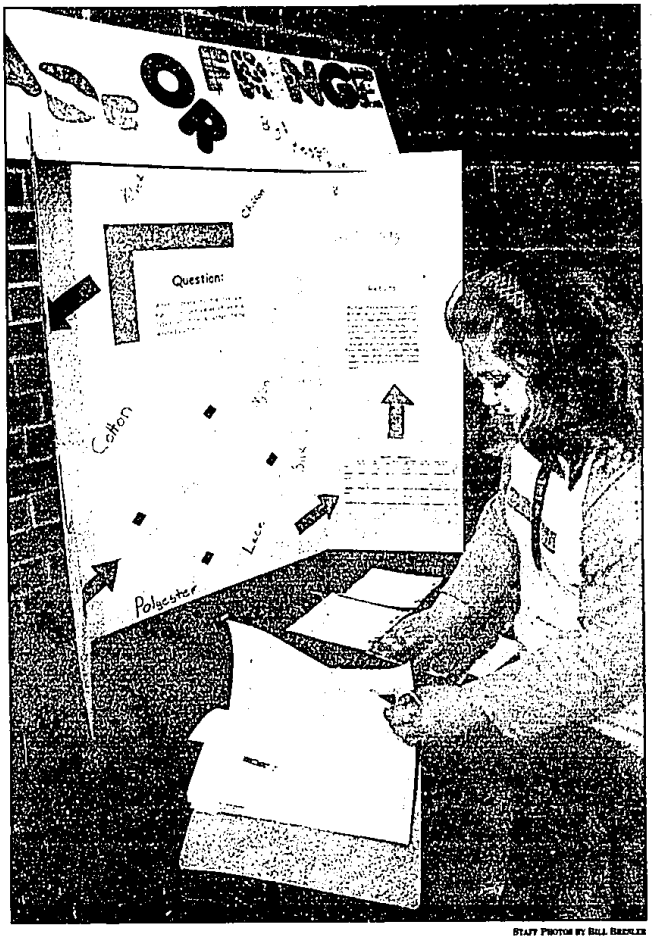


Quality: *Fourth grade student Michael Harwood did his project on the insulating qualities of different water containers.*



STAFF PHOTOS BY BILL BRESLER

Scientific: *Megan Rice studied textiles for her project "Fade or Fringe."*

Discovery

Grace students take on scientific role for fair

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER
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When William Grace Elementary School students began working on Science Fair projects about two months ago, third grader Paula Warren was convinced that flowers "really do drink water."

Paula set out to prove her hypothesis by adding blue, green, red and yellow food coloring to four tubes of water and then placing white carnations into the colored liquid.

The youngster discovered that her hypothesis was correct because the carnations changed their color. For those who last week visited the first-ever Science Fair at William Grace, they saw for themselves – because the carnations were available for perusal.

Meanwhile, Paula's wasn't the only project on display. There were 14 other students who voluntarily participated, said Principal Kayleen Hill. All of the youngsters attend grades 3-5, but their projects were done at home.

■ 'It was really fun. I was able to go through all of the steps and get results.'

Megan Rice
—Fourth grader

"We gave them a format to follow and I think they have done a wonderful job," Hill said. "They created a hypothesis and considered a problem."

Hill said feedback has been positive among other students, who maybe will want to join the fun next year.

"We had a lot of kids who embraced this," Hill said. "... We hope to see this double (in participation) next year."

Another interesting exhibit was assembled by fourth-grader Michael Harwood. He wanted to determine which container kept water the coldest. He worked with a glass, stainless steel, Styrofoam, plastic and paper.

"He thought it would be the stainless steel, but he found out his hypothesis was wrong," said Michael's mom, Cindy Harwood, noting that a plastic thermos took the honors. "But they were told that's fine. This is science."

Megan Rice, a fourth grader, showed the difference repeated launderings make to squares of fabric. She kept one set of seven unwashed fabric squares and compared those to a second set, which underwent 20 washings.

Pink silk shrank and became wrinkled while green velvet frayed and changed colors. The fabric that was least affected by washings was leopard skin, Megan revealed.

"It was really fun," Megan said. "I was able to go through all of the steps and get results."

Coordinating the effort were Hill, parent Mike Leads and teachers Denise Gundle-White and Fay Stone.

Planning commission eyes changes for city cell towers

BY TRACEY BIRKENHAUER
STAFF WRITER

The Farmington Planning Commission took a step toward changing the rules for placement of cellular towers.

At its April 10 meeting, the commission recommended an ordinance amendment for cellular towers and antennas that would eliminate the 20-foot sideyard setback in industrial parks and add a 25-foot setback for towers near single-family zoning.

It would also require landscaping to screen from view the tower bases and equipment buildings used near single-family zones.

The proposed amendment must be approved by the city council.

Currently, cellular towers must have a minimum 20-foot setback in industrial parks, which is more restrictive for sideyard setbacks than other industrial structures, according to City Attorney John Donohue.

He said factories can be built at the side lot line, but a tower or its base cannot under the current ordinance.

"What we're trying to do is be more consistent with zoning ordinances as they apply to industrial districts in which towers can be located," Donohue said. "Towers are allowed in industrial districts, which require no sideyard setback, but they do have a minimum frontyard and rearyard setback."

Donohue said this change, if approved by the council, shouldn't affect Farmington residents much. The community currently houses only one tower, installed by AT&T at the Department of Public Works on Nine Mile Road.

The tower houses antennas of several cellular companies. Nextel Communications plans to add another antenna, which would be best placed on the sideyard, Donohue said. With the current ordinance, they couldn't do this.

"One of the ideas is to try to keep as many companies on a tower as we can, so they don't need more towers," said City Manager Frank Lauhoff. "One of the companies needs to expand its equipment at the base, and since the original ordinance's 20-foot setback rule may have prevented this, the company may have been forced to ask for another tower."

Farmington has no pending applications for more towers. The current tower is on property leased from the city.

"After the 1996 telecommunications law changes, cities are now required to find space for cell towers," Lauhoff said. "I think this change makes a lot of sense. It makes cell towers conform to the district. And it offers more protection to residential districts. It makes it more equitable."

Donohue agreed.

"Farmington has been very strict," Donohue said. "If we restrict them (cellular towers) further, it might not be reasonable."