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Exchange from page A1

exchange student at Mercy. Channel 4 anchorman Steve Garagiola and his wife, Carol, got involved with the program four years ago when their daughter Katie, a Mercy student at the time, hosted a student from Santa Ethnea school. Although Katie is now in college, she keeps in touch with her South American friend and even visited her in Argentina for 10 days during spring break. The Garagiolas stayed involved with the program because they enjoy the company of the students. "They're just the cutest kids," Garagiola said. "I really got a kick out of them." In fact, it was Garagiola and his wife who

arranged the students' trip to Channel 4 and the radio station. Remembering his own teenage years, Garagiola is awestruck by the skills these girls possess and their courage in visiting a foreign country. "I think back to when I was 17 years old and it seems like I was barely competent to cross the street," he said. Despite four years of exchanges between the two schools, this year's girls were uniformly apprehensive about what the general attitude of Americans might be. They suspected it would be "selfish and cold," said Maria Lucrecia "Mary" Bernabe. Mariana "Maita" Torreguitar thought she would "know every-

body but (not be) close to anybody." However, experience taught them the opposite. "I think (Americans) are quite warm," Mary said. Mercy Principal Sister Regina Marie Doelker was pleased to have the exchange students in the high school and happy to present them with certificates on Friday to remember their stay. The girls then whipped out cameras to take their pictures with Sister Regina and her secretary. As for the American slang they learned, the girls will be importing the following back to Argentina: "20 bucks," "cool," "okay-dokey," "what's up," "cute" and "oops."

Lilley from page A1

But nothing is finalized as to whether he's going to be replaced or is still involved. Lilley, a lifelong Farmington resident who enthusiastically accepted the festival reins at an Oct. 11, 2000 press conference, is a co-partner with Farmington's Benchmark Outfitters. He could not be reached for comment. According to Stark, the festival board is "looking at several options," but wants to make a final decision quickly. "By the first of the week something firm should be in place." With the 2001 Founders Festival only five months away, Stark stressed the importance of getting any leadership change done "as soon as possible because time is critical." Committee chairs are in place and are starting to do work in preparation for the three-day event, set to take place July 19-21. Meanwhile, Stark confirmed Suzanne Lichtman is considered a leading candidate for the position. "We've talked to other people." On Thursday, Lichtman said it was "probable" she would be appointed festival administrator. "Nothing's official yet," Lichtman said.

About returning the Founders Festival to a hometown event embraced by the community rather than a regional one, which is the direction the festival board and Lilley were taking, Lichtman said "I would honor that... It is my understanding that is what they'd want to do." Stark also said the board will continue taking the festival down the same path regardless of who is at the helm. "There's nothing that's going to change," Stark said. "If we have to make a realignment of people it will be purely to... they're going to drive the ship in the same direction we're headed." Apparently, Lilley's changing schedule would not allow as much time for the festival position as he hoped to when appointed last October to take over from Mike and Sandra Watts of Watts Up, Inc. His charge was to help return the festival to being a local event rather than a regional one. "When the offer came forward, I was apprehensive," said Lilley during the press conference announcing his appointment. "But you can only talk about changing something for so long and then you actually have to

step forward and do it." During the two-year Watts tenure, the festival changed its name and date and attempted to become more of a regional drawing card. But much criticism followed those changes, as did dwindling attendance and unhappiness among merchants, crafters and civic groups over a new fee structure. Watts was hired by the festival board in early 1999, with direction to make the event a financially self-sustaining one. For a number of years, the main reason the festival was kept afloat was due to the efforts of the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce, particularly Jody Soronen. The chamber underwrote cost overruns. Stark said Watts remains under contract to continue as a part-time consultant for the 2001 festival, to enable for a smooth transition. "We didn't anticipate this problem, but we'll deal with it," Stark added. "It helps that we've got great committee chairs in place... But we want this to be a decision that will last." The hotline for festival information and volunteers will remain intact, at (248) 470-FEST.

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