

## CHAT ROOM



ELEANOR BLUM

## Alternative school serves at-risk students

Students who are pregnant or have a baby or are classified "at risk" have a place in Farmington where they can get extra help academically.

Dianne Duthie is the principal of the Farmington Alternative Academy. Its purpose is to help students who have fallen through the cracks, not just pregnant and parenting teens. Their mission is for each student to become an independent adult equipped for the world.

Students can stay in the program for up to two years while attending the Alternative Academy. Some students interested in a more-technical education can attend Oakland Technical Center.

### Family atmosphere

Family atmosphere, warmth and care could be used to describe this small alternative school. Duthie's caring about each student comes through as she explains the program. Ninety-nine percent of her students graduate from high school and 87 percent go on to college. "We expect great things from our students; we know they can achieve," she said.

Knowing there is such a caring place is important for many young people who don't benefit from a traditional high school setting. They need the extra attention and nurturing Duthie and her staff provide.

### Focused learning

James Redmond, superintendent of the Oakland Schools, calls it "focused learning."

Focusing on skills such as auto repair, cosmetology, managing a business, CD and video making, and working with corporations, such as Cisco Systems, to train students to be support specialists for computers is where Redmond believes emphasis needs to be placed.

In addition, students work with the GM Tech Academy in Pontiac so technical skills can be learned in the area of auto mechanics. Redmond believes students need an education that produces a salable skill. His commitment to the program shines through.

Every June at the Charles Vincent Center in Detroit, where I teach, Emily Hall speaks to our graduates, who are either pregnant or parenting teens. Hall attended the Charles Vincent Center in the mid 1960s. She says the support she received from staff and her mother helped her achieve her goals. Today, Hall is an attorney practicing in Detroit.

Shirley Hightower, principal at Charles Vincent Center, stresses that barriers can be removed so that students chances for success are greater than they'd be in a regular high school.

Smaller classes, a social worker, on-site registered nurses and child care is available as well as emphasis on personal academic achievement. For students with a special need, it's good knowing they can continue their education and prepare for life.

Eleanor Blum is a Farmington Hills resident who teaches pregnant and parenting teens at the Charles Vincent Center in Detroit.

## Pond memories revive history

By RUTH MOEHLMAN  
SPECIAL WRITER

In search of Cole's pond, much of the history of early 20th Century Farmington is revealed.

Pat Majdi in researching her family's history asked a family friend about Kris Port. Kris Port was an early Farmington Township small airport. There Majdi's grandfather, "Doc" Arthur and

Mrs. Erickson would meet with their friends, Dr. Don and Mrs. Campbell, and fly to Toledo or other city reachable by a short airplane ride.

Majdi was trying to find early pictures of Kris Port and asked friends. She got a letter from Peg Dwyre Davidson stating that she had no pictures.

Peg Davidson's uncle and her brother Tom had worked at Kris Port. Near the airport was a pond where Peg remembered children would skate. She called it Cole's Pond.

When boys wanted to play hockey, Peg's brothers and their friends, including John M. Clappison, would chase the girls.

At local historian Bob Siegmund's suggestion, a call was made to David Clappison who filled in some history about Cole's Pond where his late father skated with other youngsters.

David Clappison, a third generation Farmingtonian, has become the family historian. He would take his late father driving. One day, they stopped at a pond where John remembered he used to skate as a boy.

The pond was actually Coe's pond, owned by the Coe family who had one of the general stores in north Farmington. There were other popular skating locations. When David Clappison was growing up, he skated on a pond near what is today the sledding hill on Shawanese and Farmington Road.

The Clappisons can trace their history to Yorkshire, England. They migrated to Plymouth, Mass. in 1690. Clappison's grandfather was John Henry Clappison. His father was John Morton Clappison. John H. Clappison sold



shoes for the Menzie Shoe Co. around 1890. Boots were sold to the lumbermen in northern Michigan.

John H. Clappison would board a train in Detroit which would go past Ann Arbor. He told his family how wolves would run beside the train outside of Brighton. When he stopped selling boots around 1910, John H. Clappison settled on a ten acre farm on Greening and Thirteen Mile in Farmington Township.

### Apples to peanuts

It had an apple orchard and grape vines. There was also a small business selling peanuts from vending machines. J.H. Clappison would go to Novi and buy barrels of peanuts wholesale. The peanuts were roasted and put

in vending machines. The peanuts were purchased with Indian head pennies. The children in the family helped count the pennies. Sometimes, a two and a half dollar gold piece, which was the same size as the pennies, would be in the change. Then the children would get to keep the larges, putting the gold in their bank accounts at the Farmington State or the People's Bank of Farmington.

David Clappison recalled how his dad told him Grandpa would ask the children about the local banks. The People's State Bank had tall pillars and looked very solid. The building is still on Grand River. Unfortunately, the bank wasn't so solid and lost deposits during the Great Depression of the 1930s. That was before bank

deposits were federally insured.

Other Farmington stories David Clappison shared were picking blueberries in a local cemetery with his friend Steve Lichen. The berries were baked into pies and the boys received a pie for their efforts.

Another friend was Joseph Himelspank whose family had a dairy. There when the youngsters helped out, they were rewarded with dishes of ice cream. It was freshly made by Ted Smith, who was in charge of ice cream production for the dairy.

All this was discovered because looking for Cole's pond, we found Coe's pond and lots of interesting Farmington oral history.

Ruth Moehlman is a local historian and author.

## Musician brings joy to hospice residents



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL DEXLER

Piano Man: Musician Michael Krieger entertains residents of Hospice Home.

The woman inches her wheelchair across the room in the Farmington Hills Hospice Home to be closer to pianist Michael Krieger. Once she reaches the piano bench, she reaches out her hand.

Krieger holds her hand as he continues to play and sing the Johnny Mathis classic, "Unforgettable."

For the past four weeks, Krieger has found an appreciative audience at the Hospice Home. His repertoire of American popular music, from "It's a Wonderful World" to "Moon River," brings a sense of joy and relaxation to the residents of the Hospice of Michigan facility. Many of those at his concert last Thursday, April 12, are living with a terminal illness.



Clasp: A Hospice employee takes a moment to hold hands with a resident.

"I look forward to performing here," Krieger said. "Music seems to bring upliftment to people who are not able to enjoy other life activities."

Music is very soothing and it is a good way to be with people."

He also performs at local hospitals and nursing homes.

A musician, singer and composer for the past 10 years, Krieger plays electric keyboard, piano and guitar. Krieger grew up in Detroit and lived for several years in Los Angeles. He returned to the Detroit area and earned his living by giving concerts, playing piano in restaurants and being a music director for a local church.

He recently formed the company "Celebration Song" to offer the service of composing personalized songs for customers and recording them on CD for special occasions.

When Krieger performs at the Hospice Home, patients are brought to a central family room to hear him. If patients cannot be moved, he visits them in their rooms, bringing his guitar and a song.

"His ability to relate to the patients through his music is superb," said Hospice of Michigan volunteer Mary Birchman. "Patients feel he is playing just for them. He stirs many memories and has a most relaxing effect on our patients."

As Michael launches into a medley of "Take Me Out to the Ball Game," "The Band Played On" and "East Side, West Side," several residents and staff join in singing the familiar tunes.

Krieger will also be performing for the Charity Preview at Troy Marriott to benefit Hospice of Michigan on Tuesday, May 15, 5:30 p.m.

Tickets for that event, at \$75, are available on the Hospice of Michigan Web site, [www.hom.org](http://www.hom.org).

## Dance marathon seeks hoofers

People of all ages are invited to put their dancing shoes on Friday, May 4, as the City of Farmington Hills Special Services Department, the Mayor's Youth Council, Area Jaycees and Farmington Public Schools high school students host a Dance-a-Thon, reminiscent of the old dance marathons of the past.

### New addition

The Dance-a-Thon, a new addition to the Farmington Area's annual Festival of the Arts, will be held at the Costick Center, 28600 W. 11 Mile Road, Farmington Hills, from 7:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m.

Music for the evening will span decades, beginning with Raring '20s,

### FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS

and continuing with Big Band music up until the present. Throughout the evening featured dancers will perform the Polka, swing dance, break dancing and more.

Refreshments will be available for purchase throughout the night.

The public is invited to either watch or dance the night away. Admission is \$5 per person; funds will be used to support the Jaycees, Youth Council, and Farmington Community Arts Council.

Anyone wishing to be a Sponsored

Dancer may pick up a sponsor form at the Farmington Hills Special Services Department on 11 Mile Road, behind City Hall.

Sponsored Dancers are required to provide a minimum \$10 donation fee and will receive a Certificate of Achievement.

The Mayor's Youth Council encourages everyone to come out and support the youth of today, while dancing to the memories of yesterday.

For more information, call the Farmington Hills Special Services Department at (248) 473-9570.



Encore: Krieger's repertoire of old time favorites like Moon River and It's a Wonderful World bring joy and relaxation to the residents of the Hospice Home of Farmington Hills.