

# Career night

## Retiring school curriculum leader's legacy toasted, 'roasted'

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It was a night of Judy White look-alikes, good-natured barbs and flat-out affection for the woman who is soon retiring from Farmington Public Schools.

White, the district's assistant superintendent of instructional services for 15 years, was roasted and toasted during an emotion-packed retirement dinner party April 27 at Glen Oaks Country Club. Colleagues from throughout her career attended the uplifting festivities, as did several members of her family.

"Judy White is retiring, good times are about to begin," joked program emcee Richard Strauss, one of many curriculum development staffers attending the humor-tinged shindig.

In keeping with the tone of the occasion, guests watched parody videos where staffers teased White — seated in the front row — for her penchant for progressive initiatives such as high school block scheduling and brain-based learning.

For example, the three high school principals and central office administrator Jim Myers gathered for a "meeting" about brain-based learning, something touted by White because it demonstrates children learn many ways and on a number of levels. The administrators meet, armed with folders and binders of research. But when they remember that White is retiring, they scurry to drop the materials into the trash bin.

In another video, titled "Judy White This is Your Life," Harrison High School teacher Joyce Tomlinson portrays White, right down to mannerisms and vocal inflection. Several in attendance also said they couldn't get over how much Tomlinson looked like the guest of honor.

William Grace Elementary School Principal Mark Morawski represented all elementary school principals, presenting White with gifts. Some were gags, others were poignant. A kaleidoscope key chain, described by Morawski as "an instrument of vision."

Among those giving speeches was Farmington Education Association President Tom Chrzanowski. Like the others who spoke, Chrzanowski's tribute included humor and candor.

Walking a mile

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which combines all of the high schools," he said.

When Gaughan, the organizer, thought about a title, just saying what the event will be didn't cut it.

"District Talent Show is kind of wordy," he said.

So he came up with Farmington Extreme.

He sought the advice of Norman Logan, director of instrumental music at Farmington High School. "This was his brainchild to do something as a community project," Logan said. "It was a big draw last year."

Early on, Gaughan discussed his plans with state Rep. Andrew Raczowski (R-Farm-

## Drive from page A1

Red Cross for those who want them. The card reads that the donor "gave the gift of life as a tribute to you."

"So if they run out of ideas it's a neat gift to give," Neale added.

## Plenty of room

The ice arena's blood drive, sponsored by the city of Farmington Hills, will augment the January and August events held at the Farmington Hills Fire Department headquarters.

Neale said holding a drive on the southern edge of Farmington Hills will help bring in donors from a different part of the city, as well as from nearby communities such as Livonia. "We're always trying to branch out into different locations, because you get a different donor base."

Hills arena employee Beth Henderson, who coordinated Wednesday's event, said she came up with the idea to host a drive after having trouble finding a parking spot while donating in January at the Orchard



Heart and soul: Judy White, shown giving her "Teaching with Heart and Soul" speech to new teachers before the 2000-01 school year, is leaving Farmington Public Schools after 15 years. She was honored recently during a retirement dinner at Glen Oaks Country Club.

He said one of White's favorite expressions is "Before criticizing someone, walk a mile in his shoes. That way, if you are critical, you are a mile away and you have his shoes."

Before concluding his remarks, however, Chrzanowski grew serious. He emphasized White's role in the improvement of the relationship between the district and teacher's union over the past 15 years — most recently underscored in collaborative collective bargaining sessions.

"There's been no greater defender of teacher professionalism in our district," he said. "... Judy White is a person of great vision who developed the plan and got it done, time and time again."

The evening, of course, could not be complete without White reciprocating the words of love and respect.

"How do you end a 35-year

career? I haven't got a clue," White said. "But if you could dream how to end a 35-year career, this is how it would be. It would be with a roomful of friends. It doesn't get any better than this."

White then referred to her trademark teacher orientation workshop, "Teaching with Heart and Soul," which she presented to new teachers before the beginning of every school year.

"In 'Teaching with Heart and Soul,' they write at the end of

the journal what people would say at the end of their career," White said. "Well, it was said tonight."

## Thank you

She gave special thanks to the secretaries who made her life easier during the years, including her current assistant, Helen Hill. She thanked her "right-hand man," curriculum/staff development director Jerry Fouchey, and asked members of the instructional department to

stand up.

"Nowhere has there been a better group of people," White said to the department. "You guys have put up with a lot of change since I've been here. But we've bonded and truly been a team."

Former colleagues from White's previous district, Ypsilanti Public Schools, were toasted as were Farmington's current district leaders.

"I couldn't end my career with someone I love any more as a

superintendent and as a friend," said White, to Farmington Schools Superintendent Bob Maxfield. "You have taken the lid off of Judy White and, some days, he wanted the lid back on."

And, to the union's Chrzanowski and Zan Alley of the Michigan Education Association, White noted that "We started with our fists up, but ended with our hands together."

Before ending her comments, White talked about her future plans. In no particular order, those include traveling to Alaska, teaching classes at Eastern Michigan University, writing a book, serving her church and opening an education consulting firm, to be called Successful Journeys.

"I am still a teacher," White said, with emotion. "And I still desire to teach ... and support others in their quest for learning. And I will (strive to) bring every child in this country to a place where their skills are recognized."

## More kudos

Farmington's Maxfield and school board President Frank Reid also gave heartfelt thanks to White, who is retiring effective July 1.

"What she's done to help us be so successful is influence us dramatically, helping us rethink how we treat each other," said Maxfield, listing initiatives such as the launching of the Galileo Leadership Academy and elementary school study.

"You've always directly translated your personal growth into our growth as a district," added Reid, calling the retirement party a bittersweet experience.

Among former colleagues attending the program was Jim Hawkins, one-time superintendent in Ypsilanti schools.

"She's probably the best curriculum person I've worked with in my life," said Hawkins, among those who stepped up to the podium to honor White. "Next to God, she's the best thing for school districts and people."

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