

Youngsters 'survive' Battle of the Books

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Stacy Charlesvois stood on stage at the Costick Center Wednesday night, May 2, waiting for something that didn't come easily to the 240 middle school students gathered in the Dublin Gym — silence.

As Charlesvois boomed out Question 22, the roar died down, but only until she announced the correct answer. In the Farmington Community Library's 16th annual "Battle of the Books," the name of the game was clearly volume.

But the purpose, as always, was getting kids excited about reading. Student teams read 10 books, about which they answer two-part questions during the competition. Wednesday's final round culled the top teams from area middle schools O.E. Dunckel, East, Warner, Power, St. Fabian's, Hill-El, Our Lady of Sorrows, Steppingstone and Oakland International Academy.

And the winners? They were true Survivors.

From Our Lady of Sorrows, the "Survivors: Outread-Outanswer-Outlast" did just that, answering all but one of the 30 questions. Team members prepared well.

"Everybody was supposed to read all 10 books," said 7th grader Tim Nagrocki. "We wrote up questions for each book."

A lot of the questions were ones (coach Julie Norton) asked us," added 7th grader Kennice Farida.

Luke Nemes, a carrier for the Farmington Observer, said team members felt pretty good coming into the final competition. Like the other 50 teams, they earned a shot during semi-final rounds held at their school.

"We were just hopeful," he said.

They made it possible

Also on the team were Amanda Antczak and Charly Norton. The three girls participated on last year's 2nd place team.



Hopeful: The Magic Mind Readers (Ashley Buckley, Joanna Cibrario, Rachel Ciccone, Liana Maffe, Hillary Maty, Melanie Sabbagh) are hoping for a correct answer.

■ 'Between her homework and other activities, she does like to read.'

Laurie Williams
—parent

Children's librarian Meaghan Battle said without each school's media specialists, the program wouldn't be possible, since they set up the semi-final events.

At Dunckel alone, that involved 50 teams. She also expressed appreciation to the many volunteers who staff the final event.

During the beginning of the competition, Laurie Williams waited with other parents in the hallway as her daughter Jessie competed with the "Got Books" team from Power.

When Jessie, a 6th grader, first heard about the program, she wanted to get involved, Laurie said.

"Between her homework and other activities, she does like to read," she commented.

As did many of the other teams, Jessie's group split up the book list; she was responsible for reading and knowing three very well. But the girls — including Erin Matthys, Sarah Rollins, Andrea Smith, Allison Vial and Vera Vulaj — read all 10 books. Their coach, Karen Matthys, helped them drill each other with questions.

"It just seems like so much fun," Laurie commented. "She never saw it as work."

Rewarding

Battle, who was a first-timer

this year, echoed that sentiment after watching the entire competition.

"It's really rewarding to watch them because they've put a lot of work into it," she said. "It's said for us that only one team can get the highest number of points."

Taking runner-up honors this year was Dunckel's "Lost in Books" team; third place was a three-way tie among "Superstars" from Warner, "Clue" from Power and "Readers of the Lost Ark" from Power.

Dunckel's "Survivors" team won the costume contest, sponsored by the Friends of the Library.



Her final answer? Noor Toma writes down an answer for the M.O.B. Readers.

Yeah:
Tim
Nagrocki
and his
Survivors:
Outread,
Outanswer,
Outlast
team-mates
celebrate
a correct
answer.



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see it. This helps the relationship between children and policemen. I think it's a good thing."

Nearby, volunteer Shirley Stork handed police badges to youngsters.

"They sure do a bang up job at this function," Stork said. "This lets them feel comfortable with police officers and fire (department) people, it's having a police department that's community oriented. You sense it here."

Call him Bill

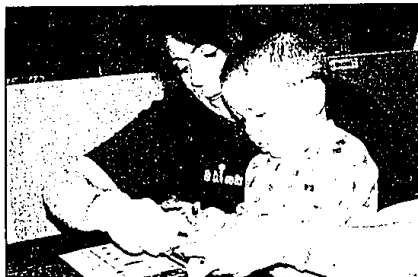
Farmington Hills Police Chief William Dwyer wouldn't have it any other way. In fact, in shaking the hands of young people such as 10-year-old Jay Zachos of Walled Lake, he likely introduced himself only as Bill.

"This is a real community event and something we're really proud of," said Dwyer. "We get to interact with the taxpayers of the city and the kids, and show them police officers truly are their friends."

Dwyer noted that every major federal agency (such as the FBI and Secret Service) were represented with displays and exhibits at the open house. But there was no particular theme to the afternoon, other than "reaching out to the community and letting them know we appreciate their support."

Making the rounds with the police chief was U.S. Congressman Joe Knollenberg and his chief of staff, Farmington Hills resident Paul Welday.

Knollenberg said he could not recall a larger turnout in Farmington Hills or anywhere else for such an event. "It really is a tribute to the chief, his people and the relationship with the community."



PHOTOS BY JULIE HENRICH

Official: Barb Martz fingerprints Tyler Lester.

"The first open house we came to, there were just a few kids out on the parking lot," said Welday, with 7-year-old son Nicholas. "We stayed half an hour. Now, you can make a whole day out of it."

First, however, they had to get there. That meant finding a parking spot and making a long walk, of up to a half-mile. Construction along Orchard Lake Road bogged down pedestrian and vehicular traffic; but Dwyer said police patrols worked the route to ensure the safety of walkers.

But, when they made their destination, there was plenty to see and do inside the FHPD police headquarters and grounds — which were ringed along the perimeter by the Fox 2 traffic helicopter and patrol cars from numerous southeast Michigan police departments.

How about the Seat Belt Convincer, where youngsters tried on for size just to see what a

three miles-per-hour crash might feel like. Of course, the kids were strapped in, and wore helmets. A small air bag snuck out of the steering wheel at the point of impact, to demonstrate what really happens in a car accident.

Hills police Officer Dave Newcomb assisted the participants, well, as much as he was called on to do. "They all know how to put it on."

Some youngsters and adults, too, stepped into a Farmington Hills Fire Truck, where Firefighter Tim Siegrist assisted visitors as each strapped on a self-contained breathing apparatus. The air tanks can provide 20-to-30 minutes of oxygen for use when battling a blaze.

Another popular showcase featured various K-9 unit police dogs, who demonstrated how they search vehicles for illegal drugs. Among the busy canines was a Novi police dog, Yukon. He jumped and scratched at potential hiding spots, such as the gas tank door or front bumper.

"If he finds the drugs, he gets a reward," said Dearborn Heights police Officer Keith Van Valkenburgh, announcing the K-9 show to the audience.

Children couldn't believe it when West Bloomfield Police Officer Larry Mifsud pointed out to them that his K-9 partner, Rocky, has a third nostril — actually a tiny hole at the bottom of his nose.

"It's a tiny gland," Mifsud explained. "It's the only dog I've ever seen with that."

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Dignity: Katie Barry and Stephanie Miller enjoy hot dogs.