

Hills PD Kids Club hosts Halloween party

The Farmington Hills Police Department's Crime Prevention Kids Club Halloween Party features a magic show, raffle, refreshments and more Oct. 24 at the Costick Center, 28600 Eleven Mile.

Refreshments are served at 6:30 p.m. A magic show presented by Mr. Incognito follows at 7 p.m. The party is open to all school children in Kindergarten through fifth grade and their siblings. Kids must be accompanied by an adult.

Each child gets a goodie bag

and flashing safety light. Costumes are optional, but prizes will be awarded for first, second and third places. There will also be a raffle for Halloween Bessie Babies.

If you plan to attend, call Off. Bonnie Unruh by noon Tuesday at 473-9832, or by e-mail at bunruh@hills.mil.us. The club was formed to help promote crime prevention, improve police-community relations and reinforce good behavior and citizenship.

EERIE EVENTS

HALLOWEEN FUN FEST
Downtown Farmington's annual funfest begins at 11 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 27, with trick-or-treating throughout the downtown area until 1 p.m. There will also be activities such as a petting zoo, moonwalk and activities tent.

HAUNTED HIKE
Heritage Park in Farmington Hills hosts a spine-chilling, self-guided hike through the haunted hills and woodlands of Heritage Park 7:30-9:30 p.m. Friday, Oct. 26 or Saturday, Oct. 27. The cost is \$5 per person payable at the site. Not recommended for children 7 and under.

SPOOKTAKULAR XVI
The Farmington Community Band will perform its annual Halloween concert at 3 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 27, at the Costick Center in Farmington Hills. Call 489-3412.

HALLOWEEN LOCK-IN
Kids ages 11-15 can come to the Halloween All Night Lock-In Party on Friday night, Oct. 26, at the Costick Center in Farmington Hills. There will be a

haunted hike, ice skating, haunted movies, swimming and more. The cost is \$25 per person. Call 473-1841.

PUMPKIN CONTEST
Kids ages 9 and up may test their painting skills 7-8 p.m. Monday, Oct. 29, at the Farmington Branch Library. Contestants will have one hour to paint a jack-o'-lantern, which will be judged by age and ability. Seasonal refreshments will be available. For more information, call Stacy Charles at 474-7770.

SCARY STORIES
Thrill seekers (ages 10 and up) may join in an evening of fun with slightly scary excitement and spooky stories at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 30, at the Farmington Hills Library. Seasonal refreshments will be provided.

PARKEY'S HALLOWEEN
Parkey's Halloween Program is full of fun for kids. Kids ages 6-10 can attend Parkey's Pumpkin Carve from 1 to 2:30 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 27. The cost is \$10 per child. Call 473-1800 to register.

Award goes to top four teachers

By SUE BUCK
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The crowd of officials and leaders from both school and government thought they were coming to welcome new state School Superintendent Tom Watkins at O. E. Dunckel Middle School in Farmington Hills Thursday morning. Instead, they learned they were part of a good-natured, secretive plan to bestow the \$25,000 Milken Family Foundation Award on Steve Koponen, a Dunckel Middle School teacher. Koponen was among four teachers throughout Michigan so honored.

Farmington School Superintendent Bob Maxfield said he learned of the award almost a month ago but was sworn to secrecy by Jean Shene, executive assistant to Watkins. "Only Jim Myers and I knew," said Maxfield Thursday. "We cooked up this plan to have this assembly."

Myers is the new principal of Dunckel, where the assembly was held. Ben Wong, chief of staff for the Michigan Department of Education, relayed the truth Friday in a phone call. Watkins, who was appointed

April 30, spoke to the audience who welcomed him.

"We are here to celebrate and lift up teaching and learning, to celebrate the importance of our neighborhood public schools," Watkins said.

Philanthropist Mike Milken made the award presentation. It starts with the state department of education," Milken said of the award. "They spend a year looking for teachers who have made a significant contribution to the community, who have done something different and are risk takers."

Milken's philanthropic efforts represent a dramatic comeback and turnaround. He acquired the dubious and nationally-publicized reputation as the "junk bond king," after he pled guilty to charges that he amassed hundreds of millions of dollars through questionable financial dealings involving high-yield bonds, according to the Biography Resource Center.

Milken served 22 months in the early 1990s for securities fraud and other crimes at a minimum security work camp in Pleasanton, California. He paid \$600 million in fines to the government.

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non prepared to enter the media center where select dignitaries were waiting he still was in disbelief.

"You don't remember a lot of things," Koponen said. "I felt all my blood leave my head. You get that light-headed feeling. My knees were literally shaking. That only happens when I sit on my legs too long. My hands were shaking. Even now, it's somewhat of a blur."

He was offered the opportunity to make some personal announcements. "They asked if I wanted to call anybody," Koponen said. "It's sort of like, 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire.' I called my friend. I called my parents."

Koponen grew up in Westland. Jim Myers, now the principal at Dunckel Middle School, was the principal at John Glenn High School when Koponen attended.

"I student-taught at Farmington High School, where he was principal before he was principal here," Koponen said. "My first job was a split day at Farmington High and here, in 1993-1994," Koponen said. "After that first year, I was full-time here."

Koponen, 30 and single, is his building's mathematics department chairman and yearbook advisor. He was a member of the

2001 Michigan Association of Middle School Educators' Teaching Team of the Year. The team included teachers Jerry Morrissey and Ninetto Soares, also of Dunckel.

"I can't imagine doing this job without them," Koponen said. "We really do function as a unit and a team. That's part of what makes it fun."

Farmington School Superintendent Bob Maxfield described Koponen as an engaging teacher. "He is the kind of teacher who is a wonderful role model," Maxfield said. "He's a good connector. There is no child who goes to his class whom he can't teach. Parents will say what a privilege it is for their kids to be in his class."

Koponen's students were quick to praise their teacher:

■ Matt Vartanian, seventh grade, "He's really good. He mixes everyday life with his curriculum. We have field trips after school."

■ Tiffany Luse, seventh grade, "He's really cool. He teaches in a fun way and is never boring."

■ Tom Hubbard, eighth grade, "He deserves all the money he got. He's one of the best. He's the best teacher in the state."



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