

A6(F)

# Bus driver: Don't ban radios

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BY SUE DUCK  
STAFF WRITER  
sduck@oe.home.com.net

Banning radios on school buses is not the answer, according to one Farmington Public School District bus driver.

Students are actually quieter when they are listening to the radio, said bus driver Liz Rudberg, a Farmington Hills resident.

"Barring radios is not logical," Rudberg said. "I don't think a lot of parents would support a complete ban."

A driver with the district for 14 years, Rudberg drives Therese Norris' children in the afternoon. Norris wants bus drivers to turn off their radios completely because parents have no control over what is heard while their children are riding the bus.

"She never came to me," Rudberg said. "I've driven her children for the last three years. A lot of times you don't even hear the radio but the beat."

When her supervisors told all drivers about Norris' concerns,



STAFF PHOTO BY DEB ENGLISH  
**Drivers like Liz Rudberg don't agree with the radio ban championed by Therese Norris (above).**

Rudberg stopped listening to WDRQ-93.1 FM and switched to Magic Radio 105.1, which features Jim Harper and the Morning Crew.

Some drivers had asked if they could continue to listen to War of the Sexes, a morning brain teas-

er and trivia show on WDRQ and a favorite of secondary level students. It was given an OK, but drivers were told to switch to another station after that show ends, Rudberg said.

Rudberg didn't have a problem switching off WDRQ, after she heard a song on MTV and was struck by the lyrics.

"I was appalled at what the song was saying," Rudberg said. "A lot of drivers were listening to WDRQ. I stopped immediately. I can't apologize enough. It was an unfortunate mistake."

Sometimes substitute drivers are so intent at looking at maps they may not pay close enough attention to what's on the radio, she said.

Students are on the bus anywhere from a few minutes to an hour, and Rudberg notices a difference in behavior when the radio is on.

"There's less fights and less vandalism," Rudberg said. "It keeps them from being bored."

foul language. Kids admonish other kids to be quiet so they can listen to the radio, she said.

It all comes down to communication. "You would be surprised how many people don't know their bus drivers," she said. "It just takes a simple hello."

Rudberg and her husband have two children, ages 6 and 4. She comes from a family of bus drivers with experience in the Farmington School District. Jamie Ryan, her mother, has been a driver for almost 18 years. Her mother-in-law, Kathleen Rudberg, is a retired driver and dispatcher, who was employed 10 years. Della Connors, her sister-in-law, has been a driver about six years.

"Try as they might, parents can't keep children in a bubble," Rudberg said. "We live in a world where children will be exposed to things. I can't shelter my kids 24 hours a day."

"That doesn't mean she is tolerant of improper language or anything inappropriate on the bus," he said in a letter to parents.

"You have to have some responsibility," Rudberg said.

daughter told a driver she wasn't allowed to listen to rock-and-roll, the radio stayed on.

"They're taught respect and courtesy for others in school," Ewald said, referring to Hillside's recent honors as a state and national school of excellence. "It's a Blue Ribbon School. Can't we have Blue Ribbon buses?"

Her concern, like that of other parents, is that everyone's discretion in terms of what's appropriate for children is different. "There really should be some kind of a standard. I think it would be best if they didn't have music at all."

**Seeking comment**  
Maxfield intends to approach elementary school principals about the issue, but said he has never noticed a problem when he occasionally rides district buses.

"Over time, they (bus drivers) have received considerable support from students and parents for using the radio to create a comfortable environment on the bus," he said in a letter to parents.

According to Maxfield, an informal poll could have been conducted by either obtaining a parent list from her school or interviewing the parents who come to bus stops.

"In that case, we would have certainly asked the driver not to use the radio during that run," he said.

Norris chose not to poll parents whose children ride the same school bus. "The majority is not always correct," she said.

Sue Kin who represents Farmington bus drivers declined comment on the radio issue, deferring to Zan Alley, the Uniserv director for the Farmington Michigan Education Association.

"This isn't a union issue so I don't have an opinion," Alley said, adding the union would look at any policy if proposed.

Some drivers use the radio as a reward system for good behavior, said Farmington Transportation Director Bill Tousley. "It's child control," Tousley said. "If they behave they can listen to the radio, as long as it's not offensive."

Drivers can't turn the radio low for their own use, because the speakers are in back of the bus, Tousley said.

Getting the word out

Norris has shared her concerns with PTA newsletter editors and now invites any interested parent to contact her with their concerns and hopefully include copies of their correspondence to school administrators. Her e-mail is MattNorrisFamily@aol.com.

Norris has climbed the ladder of school administration with her concern, beginning with transportation superintendent Bill Tousley, Cheryl Cannon, who is assistant superintendent of business, finance, and operations, School Board Member Frank Reid, and finally Maxfield.

Norris' complaints to Cannon about material on WDRQ-93.1 FM were successful.

"I have monitored the songs being played while my children are on the bus," Norris said. "Many of the songs have lyrics about sex. One song repeatedly described a sexual act with the girl next door. Another song has sexual healing. I need sexual healing as his lyrics."

Cannon concluded in a Jan. 31, 2001, letter, "Based upon your letter, I did listen to 93.1 FM over the weekend and agree that this station should not be played. We have, therefore, instructed drivers not to play this, or similar stations."

Norris also complained about terrorist information and commentary presented on National Public Radio.

## RECREATION NEWS

The following is a list of recreational activities offered through the city of Farmington Hills. For information about any of these events, call (248) 473-1800:

**FRIDAY NIGHT MADNESS**  
Kids ages 6-12 can enjoy an evening of swimming, movies, food and organized games from 7 to 11 p.m. Friday, Dec. 21 at the Costick Activities Center in Farmington Hills.

Registration is required by 4:30 p.m. the day of the program.

The cost is \$10 per person.

**MEN'S BASKETBALL**  
Team registration for men's Sunday night league basketball is now open. Games start Jan. 6.

For more information call 473-1800.

**WINTER/SPRING PROGRAMS**  
Winter/Spring program registration for residents begins Tuesday, Dec. 18.

**OPEN GYM**  
The William Costick Activities Center gym, on 11 Mile between Middlebelt and Inkster, is offering adult basketball 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Sundays, adult volleyball 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Sundays and teen basketball 1-3 p.m. Sunday. Cost for residents 17 and younger is \$2, and \$4 for non-residents; and \$3 for residents 18 and older, \$5 for non-residents.

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