

Farmington Observer

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Susan Rosiek,
Publisher
(734) 953-2100
srosiek@oe.
homecomm.net



Hugh Gallagher,
Managing Editor
(734) 953-2149
hgallagher@oe.
homecomm.net



Jonetto Hubred,
Community Editor
(248) 477-5450
jhubred@oe.
homecomm.net



Sue Buck,
Reporter
(248) 477-5450
sbuck@oe.
homecomm.net



Paul Pace,
Reporter
(248) 477-5450
ppace@oe.
homecomm.net



Bill Bresler,
Photographer
(248) 477-5450
bbresler@oe.
homecomm.net



Dan O'Meara,
Sports Editor
(734) 953-2141
domeara@oe.
homecomm.net



Anna Lipar Leslie,
Ad Representative
(734) 953-2167
allipar@oe.
homecomm.net



Nikki Smith,
Home Delivery Manager
(734) 953-2242
custserv@oe.
homecomm.net



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Power students help seniors navigate cyberspace

BY SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER
sbuck@oe.homecomm.net

Grace Thornberg took a step into the technology age with the help of Power Middle School seventh graders Shanna Miles and Carly Todd.

The students visited Thornberg and other seniors, Mary Bennett and Russell Everett, recently at Baptist Manor located on Drake Road in Farmington. They are among 17 volunteers participating in a computer education program at the senior housing facility.

"When you click on that, it lets you into different things," Shanna explained, pointing to the screen. "If you click on something it will open the site up."

"In other words, it's a selection thing?" asked Thornberg, who was using a computer for the first time.

"Do you want it to be called that or something else?" Shanna asked.

"Call it what, honey?" Thorn-



Teacher Donald Hammond



STAFF PHOTOS BY BILL BRESLER

Tutorial: Students Shanna Miles and Carly Todd teach Grace Thornberg how to surf the web. Russell Everett and Mary Bennett await their turn at the keyboard.

berg asked as she learned what it means to name files.

For her and many seniors, common computer jargon and phrases are like a foreign language they're hearing for the first time. Thornberg remarked later that it took her time to understand and use the computer.

"It was slow for me," she said. "I had a hard time with the mouse."

By contrast, Mary Bennett acquired some computer knowledge when she worked for USA Today. "I got to do odd jobs," she said.

While Power Middle School teacher Sandy Vargo is on maternity leave, the students are using Sandy Vargo's Internet account, said Power Principal Don Hammond who spearheaded the project.

Even exchange

It all began with a holiday performance at the retirement community last year, he said. The computer project "was a way to get students in here first."

Hammond drives the students to Baptist Manor on their lunch hour.

He's sold on the relationship building experience, having piloted a similar program between Heritage Place in Lake Orion and Lake Orion Public Schools. "That garnered an a

1999 Success in Public Schools Award from the Michigan Education Association.

The computer students and seniors use was donated from the Power Middle School allotment.

"We hooked them up to Microsoft Network," Hammond said. "Baptist Manor installed a phone line in the computer room which also serves as a relaxation room."

Sarah Yagamen, who works for Baptist Manor, is the liaison. Theresa Schlotter, a Farmington Public Schools media specialist, ensured there was an MSN subscription and she allocated the computer, Hammond said.

Hammond made some changes in the way the computer operates, to accommodate seniors' needs. "I slowed down the mouse to make a trail for hand-eye coordination," he said.

A shadow is produced with a pattern which makes it easy to follow.

The exchange works both ways; seniors will visit Power Middle School two days in May.

"The explicit idea is to teach them technology," Hammond said, adding there are many other benefits less tangible.

"It reaches their lives and the students' lives," Hammond said. "With one computer we are able to establish a relationship with kids and seniors."

Hills police host annual MDA run

The Farmington Hills Police Department will host the 13th annual Cops for Kids 10K and 5K Run/Walk for MDA Saturday at 9 a.m. June 8, at the Oakland Community College - Orchard Ridge Campus in Farmington Hills.

Registration begins at 8 a.m. and includes a 10K race, a non-competitive 5K run/walk, and a free one-mile fun run for kids.

Cost per entry is \$20, which includes a t-shirt, food, and drinks. Registration forms may be obtained on the web at www.farmington-hills.mi.us or by calling Officer Brian Bastianelli at (248) 473-9615.

In the past 12 years, the Farmington Hills Police Department has raised over \$47,000 to benefit the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Chief William Dwyer said, "It is our hope that runners will support this worthy cause by participating in this charitable event."

Musicale hosts benefit concert

The Farmington Musicale will host a Jazz Cabaret Concert to benefit its annual scholarship competition at 7 p.m. on Saturday, May 11, at the Costick Center, 28600 West Eleven Mile Road, Farmington Hills.

Headlining the concert will be the Christi Grix Jazz Trio. She will perform a variety of music accompanied by drums and string bass.

The Oakland County Community Jazz Band, scholarship winners, vocalist Catherine Randall and alto saxophonist Drew DeOrie, and other talented members of the Farmington Musicale will also perform, accompanied by the OCC Jazz Band.

Tickets are \$20 and will include coffee, snacks and dessert. A cash bar will be available. There will be a silent auction and door prizes.

Call Susie Hensoldt at (248) 471-6017 for tickets.



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