

National Public Works Week celebrates DPW

BY PAUL H. PACE
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Just imagine what would happen if the city didn't have a Department of Public Works. Think about it: well-maintained streets, trees that are trimmed, roads that get salted and plowed, road signs that are readable and beautiful city landscaping are all part of the DPW's job that most people probably take for granted.

To show gratitude for the contributions public workers make behind the scenes, a week is set aside in their honor.

The American Public Works Association proclaims the third week in May as National Public Works Week to recognize the people who devote their professional time and energy to public works, making communities safe and enjoyable.

Dave Edwards, a Farmington Hills DPW crew leader, is one of the 21 crew people and three supervisors that helps make the city run smoothly and look good. In fact, he's been with the Hills DPW nearly 28 years.

He started with the department after his Army service, where he was stationed in Germany with the Honest John Rocket Field Artillery Battery, building nuclear rockets.

Off the bat he was hired as a heavy equipment operator, mowing road graders and street sweepers.

Edwards said looking back, he never imagined he would be in

this business.

"I figured I would be behind a desk pushing a pencil," he said.

Would he change anything? Not at all, he quickly answered. "I don't regret at all the decision I made."

Back in the '70s, the city had more dirt than paved roads, he pointed out.

Despite doing the job for nearly 30 years, Edwards admitted he still hasn't discovered a way to outsmart Michigan's often extreme weather conditions.

"You have to have the proper equipment," he said. "You get in and out of trucks, go from hot to cold, you get sick a lot. I still haven't got it right. You just learn to bear with (the elements)."

Edwards, who is married to Louise and has two adult sons, said he likes his job because of the satisfaction he gets from it.

"I feel good about what I did," he said of a job well done. "Knowing I did a good job, at the end of the day I feel pretty good, you get good with the equipment."

Dealing with Mother Nature's uncertainty is all part of the work as well. Despite helping keep the city's roadways clear when snow or ice hits the streets, Edwards said the job of clearing roads is a little different every time he heads out, and, he shared, there's a fine art to spreading the salt.

"When I first started here there were three guys here with lots of experience," the crew leader said. "They showed me



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL HRESLER

On the job: Dave Edwards is a Farmington Hills DPW crew leader.

the way."

Learning on the job was simply part of the job, he said.

The DPW back then was just an empty field with an old house on it. Today, a huge warehouse houses dozens of specialty machines from graders to backhoes to trucks that suck out congested sewer drains.

Edwards said he also runs the community work program with the police department where people pick up trash as their community service requirement.

"We do about 18 Saturdays a year," he said of that job. He's been coordinating it for 10 years and said he's never really had a problem with anyone.

Despite the fact he's nearing retirement age, Edwards doesn't plan to rush into it. He collects baseballs with Hall of Famers' signatures and Hockey cards and enjoys visiting trade shows.

And, he's quick to point out that the department gets far more compliments than complaints from residents.

Community fills empty bowls at FHS event

BY SUE BUCK
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More money was raised for the May 8 Empty Bowls project this year in Farmington with the additional participation by Highmeadow Elementary students.

"We made at least \$2,000," said organizer Julie Devine. Last year \$1,200 was raised.

Assisting Devine were Farmington art teachers Gail Piepenburg, Sarah Rozdilski and Nina Weiss. Empty Bowls, which began as an international project to fight hunger, has become an annual event.

Farmington High School art students served a symbolic, simple meal of soup and bread to guests in the school cafeteria located at 32000 Shawwassee.

"I've been coming here two years," said Annabelle Gable, a Farmington resident. "It's a wonderful activity. It's nice to be a part of it."

Guests chose a ceramic bowl, handmade by a student, to keep as a reminder that there are always empty bowls in the world.

Many parents bought the bowls their children made. "I can put soup in it," said Juwan Teamer, a Highmeadow first grader. "It was easy to make."

Juwan's sister, Jenai, mother, Angela, and father, John, also

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attended the event.

"I enjoy helping out in the community," Angela said.

FHS students assisted the younger children April 17 and 18 with making clay bowls used for the event. FHS students also used their "SMART" sessions during the school day to make bowls.

Proceeds will be used to restock the food pantries of the Farmington Farmington Hills Neighborhood House and the Farmington Salvation Army Community Center.

The evening also featured a musical performance, as well as the year-end FHS Art Exhibit and juried competition.

Rob Easterday, a Farmington High School senior and president of the art club, called Empty Bowls "unbelievable."

"It helps those who are less fortunate," Easterday said. "It helps the community get involved."

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