

Surprise from page A1

phone about his visit and his honor.

"It was an exciting day," Howell said. "I've been away for some time. I'm happy that the school spirit and the vitality of the student body is just as it was when I left it."

Howell began teaching at Farmington High, taught at North Farmington High from 1961-1969 and retired from his central office position of director of community services and federal projects in 1987.

Howell was also impressed by the physical improvements to the building, which were facilitated by a bond millage.

"It was outstanding," said Rick Jones, principal of North Farmington High School of the announcement, adding the sizable gift will be presented over two or three years.

The donor

Lazar, a clinician and alumni of the class of 1965, has 30 years of experience in all aspects of medicine and pharmacology. He earned his M.D. from the University of Michigan and his Ph.D. from the University of Heidelberg. Trained in internal medicine, he blends his expertise with the world of pharmaceuticals.

He is the founding director of the Early Clinical Research Group at Pfizer Central Research and has been the manager of research teams responsible for development of many drugs prescribed today. He advises clients about scientific, clinical and regulatory hurdles.

Lazar spoke on "The Game of FDA Approval," using a board game scenario to highlight the challenges, frustrations and exhilaration of making a dream a reality.

"It was cool," said Farmington Schools Superintendent Bob Maxfield. "What a thrill for Don Howell to have one of his students say he was so influenced. It's pretty impressive."

The students' applause went on for a long time, Maxfield said. "It happened after the bell. They stayed. They were really touched



Class reunion: Attending the North Farmington Science Symposium were alums Bob Phair, Ph.D., Don Howell, retiree and Jeff Lazar, M.D., Ph.D.

by it."

Visit spawns idea

The idea for the Science/Technology Symposium came from a visit by Bob Phair, another presenter who stopped for a visit last October. Phair was in the first graduating class at NFHS in 1964. Howell was also Phair's teacher.

Impressed by what he saw, Phair wrote, "Thanks so much for a wonderful tour of my high school. I have been telling everyone who will listen that NFHS is the most exciting academic environment I have seen in 20 years. Teachers and students have every reason to be proud of an extraordinary place. How about a 'Sci-Tech Day' at North? I bet we could get a hand of Science/Engineering Alums to come back. It could be a fabulous event. I'd be pleased to do what I can."

Now working in the field of computational cell biology, Phair earned a bachelor of arts degree at MIT. He was the first NFHS student to earn a degree at MIT in 1968, majoring in electrical engineering and computer science.

During the Vietnam era, he worked for the Environmental Protection Agency and later for

the National Institutes of Health, where he began his life's work in computational biology. After earning a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan, he accepted a professor's position at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in the Department of Physiology and Biomedical Engineering where he worked for 17 years. In 1996, he founded Bioinformatics Services, which provides services to biologists around the globe.

The symposium also featured Dr. Kevin Deighton, class of 1976, medical director of the Livonia branch of Providence Medical Clinic. He's made four trips to Africa on his personal vacation time and one to Nepal sharing his medical services.

The fourth speaker was JoAnne McKenzie Temple, class of 1990, who works for Ford Motor Company and is a member of their scientific lab team. She's worked in a variety of departments there including Chemical Engineering, Engine Processes, Catalytic System Engineering and Core and Advanced Powertrain Engineering.

Jones said he wants to make the symposium annual, inviting other alumni.

One-year-out survey reveals grads' feelings

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The Farmington Public School district recently released a two-year comparison survey of graduates and found more working full time jobs, more working two part-time jobs and the majority going to school.

The 2000 graduates were polled in June 2001; 1999 graduates, in August 2000.

Though school officials thought polling the students in June would generate more responses, that didn't hold true.

There were 167 respondents out of 269 students in the 1999 class compared to 127 out of the 850 students in the 2000 class. All five high school groups were polled — Farmington, North Farmington and Harrison High Schools, the Farmington Alternative Academy, and Farmington Adult and Community Education.

"This (2000) class has lower self-described GPAs (grade point averages)," said Barbara Cherem, director of evaluation, assessment and special projects. Forty-five percent reported GPAs of 3.5 or higher, compared

to 49 percent in the 1999 class.

"To respond to the possibility that we would not significantly increase response rate, we did initiate a senior exit survey last spring," said Cherem. "We did get representative participation on that survey and have begun a repeat of this survey currently with all five high school groups."

More critical

Typically, she said, current students are more critical of their high school education than those who have graduated. Post-graduate experiences may give them more perspective, Cherem added.

The two-year comparison shows:

■ The opinions of the 127 participants are similar to those responding a year prior.

■ Significantly increased satisfaction in computer education and art.

■ Significantly increased satisfaction in technology education, social studies and assistance with math problems.

The Novi, Bloomfield and Livonia Schools also do similar studies, Cherem said.

With budget constraints, the Farmington Public School Dis-

trict will be evaluating all surveys with their usefulness. She couldn't readily say how much it costs to administer the one-year-out surveys.

"We need to use time efficiently," Cherem said. "We have over 70 surveys going right now."

A five-year-out survey is planned for this summer.

In open-ended questions, 2000 graduates said teachers impacted their lives the most. If they could change one thing about their high school experiences they said would have been more social and more involved in co-curricular activities, school athletics, sports and other school activities. They would also work harder and pay more attention to learning.

Looking back on their high school years, most said they think about friends first, then teachers.

What they would have liked to have learned but didn't while in high school were life management skills including money management/budget, study and job search skills, how to handle stress or time management, career development survival skills and a work ethic.



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