

Enberg: Test 'mania' will not drive schools

BY SUZ BUCK
STAFF WRITER

Farmington School Board President Linda Enberg, usually low-key in her comments, was direct about achievement and the Michigan Educational Assessment Program test in the Farmington Public School District.

"Standards are higher today than they have ever been before," Enberg said at the recent Senior Adult Forum Breakfast. The annual breakfast was held at the Costick Activities Center.

She referenced "No Child Left Behind," a federal program that aims to improve schools. "Every school in the country will be assigned a pass or fail rating under this act," Enberg said.

The actual criteria for the rating is decided by the state. "You can imagine our surprise when we discovered 1,500 schools on the state failing list," Enberg said. "You can also imagine our surprise when we saw Arkansas and Wyoming had no schools on the state failing list. We know Michigan schools for years have scored well above the national average in math and reading while Arkansas and Wyoming have been below the national average. Michigan happens to have some of the most demanding educational standards. You can be proud of that."

According to Michigan standards, every school must improve their MEAP test each year in four categories, math, reading, science and social science.

"They also require similar improvements for subgroups or subpopulations like boys, girls, bilingual students and special education students in every test, every year."

"Michigan has tough criteria," Enberg said. "It was announced this summer that 10 of 2001 Michigan National Blue Ribbon Schools were placed on the failing school list in 2002, including our own Hillside Elementary."

IT'S 'BALONEY'

"What a bunch of baloney," Enberg said. "How can it be that a school is awarded

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Linda Enberg
school board president

National Blue Ribbon status one year which, by the way, requires a 50-page application and then the next year ends up on the failing school list? As you can see, something needs to be adjusted. Please don't get me wrong. Our schools need to improve and they are improving from the inside out."

These improvements will be measured by the standardized tests, the MEAP, but not solely driven by "test mania," which currently grips the state and the nation, Enberg said.

The message is this: We will not allow the magic and miracle of teaching and learning to be driven by a single test. Our community wants more than that. We refuse to lower our standards in the district in order to look better to the press. We remain unwavering in our commitment to insure that every child thrives under our watch and we will do the best for kids."

She quoted State School Superintendent Tom Walkins who said, "The real statue of liberty, the symbol of hope and opportunity in America, is not just in the New York harbor, it lies every day in the classrooms of our public schools."

Our community is rich because of your presence, Enberg told seniors. "You are role models. You provide us with spirit and energy."

She cited the importance of connecting with children. "Commitment in the child in your life at least one child in your family or neighborhood," Enberg said.

There's implications of the benefits for early childhood experiences like talking, reading, explaining and providing a supportive ear, she said.

sbuck@oecomm.com (248) 477-5450

O&E publisher of official Ice Festival guide

BY BRAD KADRICH
STAFF WRITER

The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers and the Plymouth International Ice Show Spectacular board have reached an agreement that makes the Observer the publisher of the official Ice Festival guide.

The guide, which will feature everything a reader needs to know about the annual ice show, will be published in early January. It will appear in Wayne County and selected Oakland County publications. The newspaper company pub-

lishes six newspapers in Wayne County and nine in Oakland County.

The guide will also be available on site. Though the total circulation of the guide is yet to be determined, total number of copies will be more than four times what was distributed last year.

The ice festival is scheduled for Jan. 17-20.

The agreement is for one year, with the Observer maintaining right of first refusal for the 2004 guide.

"The partnership with the Observer is a great one," said Mike Watts, of Watts Up Inc.,

who organizes the ice show.

"The Observer has a great reputation, a great distribution system and outstanding readership. We couldn't be more pleased."

The program will feature a full-color restaurant guide, including a comprehensive listing of area restaurants. It will also contain a Web site and promotional ads to help sponsors.

O&E officials think their newspaper group is the perfect vehicle for producing the official guide because both are very immersed in local community life.

"Our newspapers have the power to appeal to a very large, diverse audience," said Lisa Rudy, retail advertising manager for the Observer Newspapers. "The ice festival is one of the most identifiable features of the Plymouth community, and the Observer is proud to be their partner."

Anyone interested in advertising in the official 2003 Plymouth International Ice Show Spectacular Guide should call Lisa Kadrich, (734) 953-2168.

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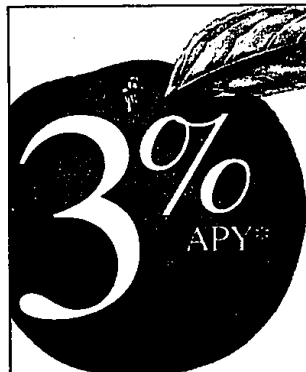
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MEMBER FDIC



Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard and Farmington Hills Police Chief William Dwyer (center) discuss Operation DASH for Devil's Night and Halloween in Farmington Hills.

HELICOPTERS

FROM PAGE A1

zone for parents. We haven't had any problems in the past."

Bouchard talked about the aviation unit and its effectiveness during a Tuesday press conference.

The two helicopters are well-equipped to assist ground units in locating missing children, detecting fires and cutting car chases.

Pilot Gary Boudreau said each helicopter is equipped with an infra-red lens that can detect a one-degree difference in temperature.

"We can't see through water or a building. But we can tell the difference between dogs, deer and people — no problem."

The FLIR unit (Forward Looking Infra Red) is especially useful at night in locating a person trying to hide beneath a car or a missing child that wandered off into the woods.

source of heat.

Along those same lines, the helicopters come with a Lo-Jack system to assist with stolen car recoveries, picking up a signal from a 15-mile radius.

A heavy-duty spotlight attached to the helicopter is capable of illuminating a football field from 500 feet in the sky.

Street mapping equipment provides the pilots with an exact location of every address in Oakland County. It also tells the pilot how long it will take to reach that destination point and how much fuel the trip will require.

Headquartered in Pontiac, the helicopters can reach any point in the county within six minutes, Boudreau said. They typically travel 70 mph at around 700 feet up but can reach speeds of 130 mph if necessary.

"More and more, aviation units are becoming a key component in public safety," Bouchard said. "Los Angeles County just added 12 helicopters to its fleet."

In Michigan, Warren and Detroit are the only other police departments with aviation units.

Staff writer Paul R. Pace contributed to this report.

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