



Chat  
Room

Eleanor  
Blum

## Special ed gets a boost with MI-Access

Changes in the assessment of special education funding have brought Michigan in line with federal and state requirements and ensure accountability.

MI-Access, Michigan's Alternate Assessment Program and the approval of the Michigan Assessment System (MEAS), have enabled the state to move toward compliance.

With this accountability in place, I wanted to find out from those knowledgeable with special education — what are their thoughts regarding special needs in youngsters?

Patricia Brumback, director of special education for Farmington Schools, is new to our district, and we are so fortunate to have her enthusiasm and valued experience. She sees that the biggest challenge in special education is balancing resources with needs for support. This same idea of not enough funding came up with Terri Bennett, a former special education teacher with the Pontiac schools, who lives in Canton. Terri says, "Special students are very needy, and balance must be there between what general education and special education are funded. Unlimited funds are not there. The federal government needs to step up to the plate and increase funding."

Diane Dunaskiss, member of the Wayne State University Board of Governors and a former Lake Orion special education teacher, believes "balancing quality services with limited resources is the number one issue with special-needs students."

Dunaskiss goes on to say that "special education costs more money because of the additional services given to students." More youngsters are coming in with severe handicaps because of medical advances. These children can participate in a school setting, where previously they would not have been able. Because of the increase in students, costs go up. More money is needed.

Including special-needs youngsters in the general education classroom is the goal of all three experts. Brumback says that many students, who used to be allowed only in some general education classes such as art, music, etc., have proven to be more capable than anyone could have imagined. She likes to have special-needs students helped by regular education students in the same classroom. A sort of "buddy system" that is inclusive.

Bennett states strongly that youngsters with special needs require daily living skills so they can be independent. She says that "teachers and administrators need to think out of the box, and we need educators who are willing to take risks."

With the MI-Access and the Michigan Assessment System, the state will better determine how special education students are progressing and the areas needing improvement.

Eleanor Blum is a resident of Farmington Hills



Princess Madiha, a longtime teacher of Middle Eastern dance, presents Karima, Leyali, Selena, Jessica and Nadia.

PHOTOS BY BILL BRASLER | OBSERVER

## Dance of Princess Madiha hosts dance benefit for St. Jude's

BY GWYNNE M. IRVIN  
CORRESPONDENT

Through many of life's triumphs and tragedies, children have been the link to bringing people together.

They are an inspiration for the poor of heart, a source hope for a better tomorrow and the very reason one woman has dedicated her life's work to helping others in need.

It is time again to celebrate health, life and good dance in the name of Princess Madiha's Annual Middle Eastern Dance Benefit on Saturday, Nov. 9, at the Farmington Hills Manor. Festivities begin at 9 a.m. with a dance seminar followed by a dinner and dance performance at 7 p.m.

More than 11 years ago, Princess Madiha Bishara began her fund-raising efforts to benefit the children of St. Jude's Hospital. Since 1990, she has been raising money for St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital of Memphis, Tenn.

St. Jude's has helped more than

13,000 critically ill children from across the U.S. and more than 53 foreign countries. At St. Jude's, no child is ever turned away regardless of lack of insurance.

For Bishara of Farmington Hills, that is reason enough to press on with her efforts, breaking ethnic barriers and encouraging celebration of diversity, good health and saving another child's life. The fingerprint of her advocacy for St. Jude's began from her home, from her heart and touches families across the globe.

For every \$35 raised, two new wigs are purchased for children suffering from leukemia. The children directly benefit from 80 percent of the money; the other 20 percent goes toward more research.

Throughout the years, Bishara alone has raised more than \$100,000 through her sponsorship



Karima is one of the dancers who will help raise funds for leukemia research.

efforts. Bishara has reasons for starting the benefit, one of which is pure gratitude. Bishara also believes that it is a sin to not reach out and help others in need. In her mind every effort, every dollar, begins to add up

to something.

A dance lesson from Bishara is more than just understanding how to feel the music with your body's inner best, but how your ears hear it and interpret that sound into dance. It is more than rhythm and movement.

Her style and technique require dexterity and dedication. Her students learn a little bit more about themselves every day.

The dance workshop also includes Pilate instruction by Donna Duke, director of Habibi Dancers. Yasmine will teach jazz and cane technique, while Aida Al Adawi from San Francisco will teach folklore technique with veils and zills.

The dance seminar is open to all levels of dance students. Class registration begins at 8 a.m. The workshop is \$60 at the door for the day-long instruction.

Tickets for the dinner show are \$55 at the door. Doors open at 7 p.m. The ticket price includes a Middle

PLEASE SEE DANCERS, C6

## Farmington Hills woman shows passion for pets

BY PAUL R. PACE  
STAFF WRITER

To say Marie Skladd of Farmington Hills cares about pets is a major understatement.

Spearheading a volunteer organization years ago that helps put neglected and stray animals in loving homes, she has worked with hundreds of volunteers and Pet Supplies Plus, which hosts adoptions through the company's stores.

But Skladd, executive director of Michigan Animal Adoption Network, didn't stop there. Another aspect of her volunteer work is offering pet owners who can't afford the basic medical needs for their pets free shot clinics.

With many people facing layoffs and downsizing, sometimes taking proper care of the family pet becomes a problem, Skladd said.

Last year alone, she was able to provide more than 3,000 free shots for needy pets.

Now Skladd is looking for ways to raise money for this unique service such as having a "Dog Bowl" football game fund-raiser from noon-2 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 16, at the Pet Supplies Plus at 5348 Dixie Highway in Waterford.

Participants can make a donation to the Michigan Animal Adoption Network and pick up a Thanksgiving dinner bag for their dog or cat. In the game, dog owners will have a chance to show off their dogs' "football" catching and retrieval skills.

First prize is a \$100 Pet Supplies Plus gift certificate, and there will be other prizes. Proceeds benefit the free shot clinics in metro Detroit.

While some vets offer vaccinations and their time free of charge for the clinics, it can't always be counted on, Skladd said.

Total cost for the vaccinations was about \$7,000 above the donations collected by the group at its

shot clinics last year, Skladd said. She said the Michigan Animal Adoption Network is an umbrella organization comprised of three operations: The Animal Care Network, the Adopt-A-Pet program, and the Lost and Found Network.

Skladd spoke passionately about the hard work volunteers put in for the Animal Care Network. Dozens of them spend each weekend in low-income areas in suburban Wayne and Oakland counties to provide relief for pets who spend most of the lives outdoors.

She tries to focus on helping the animal survive with sometimes neglectful dog owners who use their pets as security.

"We try to partner with the owner," Skladd said of providing care to the dog.

She said volunteers will check on up to 150 dogs a week, 52 weeks a year.



Marie Skladd, Peaches (available for adoption) and her own dogs, Barney and Brandy.

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