

District challenged by No Child Left Behind

BY HEATHER NEEDHAM STAFF WRITER

Implementing the requirements of the No Child Left Behind act was listed as the biggest challenge of the new year by Farmington Public Schools Superintendent Bob Maxfield.

"The No Child Left Behind act will call attention to public education in some new ways," Maxfield said. "Its emphasis on test scores will be more important than ever - at least in some parts of the state."

The act requires annual testing of all public schools students in grades 1 through 12, among other things. While the act is well intentioned, some students may still be left behind, Maxfield said.

"Some kids will have trouble," he said. "But you have to applaud Congress' intent - the gaps between the lowest and highest achieving students are unacceptable."

Overall, Farmington students tend to do pretty well on standardized tests such as the MEAP - but there is always room for improvement, according to Maxfield.

Potential budget woes loom in Farmington and other Michigan school districts because of a possible \$1.2 billion state budget shortfall.

In the Farmington district, like many other districts, school officials are bracing

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themselves for the worst. A recent edition of "Update," a newsletter sent by the district to residents stated:

"Increases in the cost of retirement and health insurance coupled with no increase in revenue paints a very pessimistic picture. At best, if the district receives no increase in per-pupil aid and a slight decline in categorical revenue from the state, the district will experience around a \$6 million shortfall in 2003-2004."

"The district's financial health requires that the district continue to be vigilant in balancing the budget annually while still maintaining the quality instruction of children deserve."

"Financially, it will be a rough year - but that's reflective of the community," Maxfield said.

hneedham@eehome.com.net (248) 477-5450

COUPLE

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the world run by people who are deaf.

The Frohlieps, who met through a deaf Madonna professor, have been married seven years.

They own and operate Communication Works of the Deaf Inc., 24180 Hathaway in Farmington Hills.

"I wear all the hats of the business," Gregory said. Deborah handles public relations and recruiting. Many employees work out of their homes.

"I have the (closed) captioners set up so that they get up out of their own beds in the morning and caption out of their homes," Gregory said.

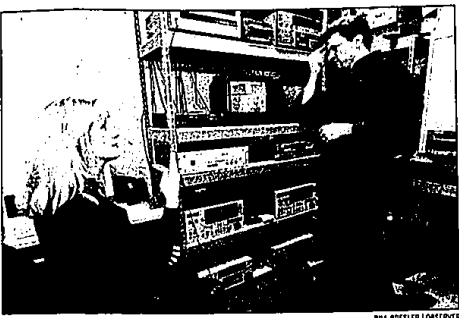
A REWARDING CHALLENGE

One of his employees is Sue Parrish of Livonia, who is in charge of providing live closed captioning for Fox 2's morning news.

"I love the job," she said. "It's always a challenge." Closed captioners like Parrish are trained the same way as court reporters. Getting a degree is very difficult because of the level of technical skill required of students. To graduate, students must be able to type a certain number of words per minute.

They use typewriter-like machines where shorthand-based keystrokes are translated into words, phrases and sentences.

"It's a lot like playing chords on a piano," she said.



Gregory and Deborah Frohliep run a business that provides closed-captioning to video.

DEB GRESLER | OBSERVER

POLITICALLY INCORRECT

When it comes to labels, the political correct ones are not always correct. Gregory, like many others who cannot hear, said he prefers to be called "deaf" rather than "hearing impaired." This is because "hearing impaired" implies negativity.

Gregory described the deaf and hard-of-hearing population of the United States - which numbers 28 million - as being like a minority group with its own culture. Across the nation and metro Detroit, there are deaf theater groups, interpreted stage productions, deaf newsletters and more.

Then, of course, there is the deaf language itself, which is, Deborah said, more akin to French and Spanish than to English.

In spoken English, people will say, "Cute dog." But in Spanish, French, German and ASL the equivalent phrase would be "dog, cute."

Apparently, people can never be too young to learn ASL. The Frohlieps' two children are becoming bilingual.

Their daughter, Rachel Anja, 4, began signing when she was 7 months old. Her brother, Luke, 5 months, will begin learning ASL soon, too. Deborah said that babies try

No job too large or too small for Hills business

For Farmington Hills-based Communication Works of the Deaf Inc., no job is too big or too small. Its clients include Fox 2, governments, military, corporations, churches and private individuals.

Communication Works provides captioning for Fox News broadcasts and even closed captioning for wedding and graduation videos.

In late 2001, the company became the first deaf-owned captioning company to pass the Captioning Media

Program's national captioning test. Upon doing so, it was added to the U.S. Department of Education's approved captioning vendor list.

Owner Gregory Frohliep, a Sturgis native, has worked with police departments to teach them how to communicate with deaf citizens, served on the Flint Michigan School for the Deaf's steering committee and is a member of the Michigan Small Business Association.

Even though she is fluent in ASL, communication sometimes still breaks down between her and Gregory. Sign language is a second language to her, which means sometimes, regular spoken English syntax or sentence structure prevails in her mind. This can cause misunderstandings with her spouse. "That's the time when we get into fights," she said.

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