



Helping classroom students

Teachers travel to learn about environment

By JUDY OWEN

FARMINGTON HILLS—Hartley Thornton has the kind of job that a lot of people would give their eye-teeth for.

The longtime Farmington Hills resident heads up the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) team at Haven Hill Educational Resources Environmental Education Center near Milford. From the lodge of Edsel Ford's former country retreat, Thornton can survey the 5,400-acre Highland Recreation Area with its lakes, streams and rolling woodlands.

He can walk the 17 miles of nature trails and photograph the numerous forms of wildlife to his heart's content.



HARTLEY THORNTON

THORNTON, whose background is in the natural sciences, has been with the DNR for 14 years. Before coming to Haven Hill a year ago, he was at Proud Lake Recreation Area.

Haven Hill is more than an area that has had little contact with land developers.

It is an environmental education center where the emphasis, understandably, is on natural resources and man's role in the intricately woven "web of life" of water, climate and weather, land use, minerals and plant and animal life.

"If you destroy any part of it, you can destroy it all," he said.

poses some provocative questions. "Michigan, the water wonderland," the presentation states as photographs of clear-running and littered streams flash on the screen. "In another 30 years we'll wonder where the water went."

Orientation is a must for any visitors to the center. Thornton told a group of Farmington secondary science teachers visiting the center Wednesday.

"This is a working program, not a museum," he said. "It's not to be used indoors. It's an outdoor program basically."

BEFORE A FIELD trip can be scheduled to the center, the teacher must have gone through the orientation program.

Thornton tells the teachers how they can reserve one of the five classrooms and equipment, then takes them on a tour to show how the center's equipment can be used.

Although budget cutbacks have forced the Farmington School District to end field trips, one of the 28 teachers who toured the facility said some of the projects can be adapted for use on school grounds.

The rooms are equipped with blackboards, testing kits, microscopes and games to interest students.

IN THE LAND USE room, students can learn to make a simple soil test with a lightweight kit.

"We have all sorts of games and gadgets to help them find out what's happening," he said. "They can learn by actually becoming a land developer."

A large drawing, mounted on a board and divided into six sections, hangs on one wall. Students can team up, take a section and "develop" the land. They can use the symbols for trailer parks, industry, subdivisions, apartments, farms and shopping centers.

"When you get it all together, you find out what really happens—the effects of the proposed development on the surrounding land."

THE CLIMATE room has a weather station where youngsters can use the various instruments to predict the weather. The mineral room has rock hammers, goggles, polishers and mineral testing kits—again, all designed to go outdoors.

In the life room, youngsters can view the life of a pond in a scaled-down version designed for an aquarium.

After work in the classrooms, the youngsters can move outside to walk the one-mile loop trail.

Pamphlets have been developed for each of the five resources and stops are designated along the trail where various points of interest are described.

OTHER BROCHURES which are available are geared to a seasonal emphasis on the sights around the nature center.

The center was built between 1924 and 1928 by Edsel Ford. For more than a decade, the Ford family and staff spent considerable time on the 2,000-acre estate. Ford created Haven Hill Lake by damming Cedar Creek.

The lodge was built from cedar logs brought from the Ford Company timber holdings in the Upper Peninsula.

Fireplaces and chimneys were made of Vermont stone. The wrought iron hardware used throughout the center was made in northern Michigan.

A large swimming pool, built by Ford, has been transformed into a pond.

There was also a clay tennis court, and toboggan run.

Utility lines serving the estate were

laid underground. The lodge still uses water piped from an installation developed by Ford.

A Model T engine and generator were installed to provide power for the water system in the event of electrical failure. That system remains intact.

WHEN THE SOUTHEASTERN Michigan Recreation Area program was established in 1962, the Ford land became a part of the Highland State

Recreation Area. When Ford died later that year, the state bought the property for \$207,380.

Opened as a conference center in 1968, the lodge served various groups interested in natural resource programs.

In 1972, the DNR began operating Haven Hill as a natural resource environmental center.

Thornton is continuing to develop new programs for the center.



Teachers do the walking so they can better instruct their students about the environment. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

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