

# Students find that running the county is not a snap job

By JANAN GHANNAM

With a bit of apprehension and a lot of curiosity, Oakland County high school students Tuesday took the roles of county commissioners and department heads during Oakland County Student Government Day.

As part of Michigan Week celebrations, the take-over of county offices was sponsored by Daniel T. Murphy, Oakland County executive.

"This was the first chance for students to participate in the operation of county government and by the comments of all those involved, it will probably become an tradition.

Mary Adams and Terry Everts of Marian High School in Birmingham hadn't realized that running a county was so involved.

"I learned that the county encompassed more departments than I had ever imagined," said Miss Adams.

Miss Everts, who was county clerk during the afternoon standing committee reports, said that running a county doesn't look easy but it is very interesting.

"This is a great chance for students to get a feeling of what the real world of

county governments is like," said Miss Everts.

Ever wonder what it's like being sheriff of the second largest county of Michigan? Cathy Palmer of Southfield-Lehrup High School, Karen Dietz of Rochester Adams High School and Mike Price of Berkley High School all got a chance to see what it's like to run a jail and were very impressed with the entire department.

"It was a little shocking to see the inmates in the jail," said Miss Dietz, "because I had a completely different impression of what prisoners are like. The people in the jail are just like you and me, they can be anyone."

Price was impressed by the jail's security system, saying it was much more elaborate and complex than he expected. He also toured the crime lab, the morgue where procedures of an autopsy were explained and the kitchen where jail trustees do all the cooking.

"They explained that the trustees are those inmates who receive special benefits because of good behavior," said Price.

Miss Dietz summed up the jail trip. "It's a nice place to visit but only for a short while."

Many students had the opportunity to see a court in session. For some, it was the first time.

Alan Mairinski of Farmington High School, Greg Norwick of St. Mary's Preparatory High School in Orchard Lake and Doug White of Detroit Country Day School in Beverly Hill sat in on a rape trial and a suit against a national organization.

"I thought we were just going to see a bunch of big shots walking around the courtroom," Miss Norwick, oped, "I am learning quite a lot today just watching the action in court."

Mairinski had an opportunity to "check out the courthouse security system."

"It's quite a complex and involved system, but you can be sure that the courthouse is very well guarded," he said.

Ellen Doetsch, a junior at the Academy of the Sacred Heart in Bloomfield, and Jeff Letzer, junior at the Detroit Country Day School, visited the Michigan Employment Security Commission office in Pontiac where they learned the procedures involved in guiding people in need of jobs.

Rufino S. Advusio, a CETA guidance counselor at the MESC office, told the students how he determines who gets what benefits.

Advusio said the decision is hard, and under the law you must believe what the applicant is telling you but that the end, it's usually the CETA worker that gets the migraines and ulcers.

Letzer said he gained a more clear-cut view of what the MESC is all about, having never walked into a MESC office before.

"I hope that I'll never have to either," said Letzer, "but it's good to know it's there if the time comes."

Lisa Lewkowicz and Greg Robertson of Claremontville High School both came out of student government day with a positive reaction toward county government.

"I think the present county officials are doing a decent job in running this county. Once you see all that there is involved you really can't criticize them," said Robertson.

Miss Lewkowicz said she is leaving with much more knowledge than she came with.

"Every citizen should get a chance to see just how their county is operated and who their county commissioners are," said Miss Lewkowicz.

During an afternoon caucus, Commissioners Patrick Nowak (R-Farmington Hills), Betty Fortino (D-Pontiac) and Hubert Price (D-Pontiac) were on hand to counsel students on the pros and cons of the proposals they had to debate.

Republican and Democratic students had definite views of what each party stood for and showed their solidarity during discussion and voting.

Maia Champin of Berkley High School represented the Democrats when the proposal to abolish the road commission arose.

Her colleague, Greg Gallopoulos, stood up for the Republicans on the same issue, asking the chairman of the board for the day, Tom Forbes of Oak Park High School, to cut discussion and just vote on the issue.



Rufino S. Advusio explains the MESC benefits to Ellen Doetsch. (Staff photo by Janam Ghannam)

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