

How Farmington enjoys summer



Jeff Barany, 3, tackles the monkey bars as he enjoys the summer in Farmington.



Taking a snooze on a picnic table also adds to the relaxation.

Photos by
Bruce Roberts



Heather Wagar, 5, relaxes against a tree and enjoys a big lollipop.



Tim Carney, 8, tip toes in the water seeking some unknown but valuable treasure.



Danny Rouse, 9, cools off in a stream. It sure beats the classroom.

Farmington Junior eyed as OTI training center

By YVONNE B. DEVLIN

The former Farmington Junior High School building may be rented this fall as a training center for special education, according to Trustee Gary Lichtman of the Farmington Board of Education.

The building will house the programs for the Oakland Training Institute (OTI) which help the trainable mentally impaired, if the contract is approved by the board, says Lichtman.

"All costs of running the program will be reimbursed to the Farmington schools by Oakland County Schools. In addition to this, \$80,000 a year rental fee will be paid by Oakland," said Lichtman.

Special education students from Farmington, Southfield, Novi, Walled Lake, South Lyon and W. Bloomfield will be able to enroll in the program.

THE 8-YEAR CONTRACT, which was passed unanimously by the Oakland County School Board two weeks ago, will probably come before the Farmington Board at the July 6 meeting, Lichtman says.

OTI has been suffering from space problems since last November and the decentralization into a center program was seen as a possibility for expansion, he says.

Oakland County Schools have had four successful Vocational Education Centers for the country, according to Lichtman.

"For example, we contract with the district of Walled Lake. We build the building and pay all the costs and that program serves all the districts in southwest Oakland County," he said.

There are also five centers in Oakland County serving the severely mentally impaired. One is located in Farmington at the Cloverdale School and, according to Lichtman, serves seven districts.

One of the hazards of decentralization is that some people may be afraid to lose their jobs in the shuffle.

"The law says that these people must be the first ones hired by a local school district. They must be offered a contract and have the first right of return," said Lichtman.

OTI has expanded considerably since it first started out ten years ago in a converted bowling alley in Berkeley.

Young people of Oakland County needed a place to learn skills so that they could function in society, says Lichtman. They could only get so far in the local schools and there existed a void which had to be

filled," he said OTI soon became a model for the country, according to Lichtman.

"ABOUT FIVE YEARS ago there was a need to expand the facility and we built on to the bowling alley to the maximum," he said.

Soon more space was needed and OTI moved north to Pontiac and began serving youngsters from northern Oakland county, he says.

After special education became mandatory and the maximum age limit was increased from 21 to 25 the space problems increased more, he says.

"After the Oakland Board voted \$4 to go to decentralization, we started talking to local districts for renting of facilities," says Lichtman.

None of the local school districts were involved in the Oakland Board decision, according to Graham Lewis, director of special education for the Farmington School District.

"We would have been able to handle the program on an administrative basis but what we lacked was space, until Farmington Junior High closed," he said.

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