

# Adults read Dick & Jane

By PATRICK TOUHEY

Ray Harkowitz (not his real name) has a well-guarded secret.

The 40-year-old father of two holds down a job, drives a car, provides for his family and deals with all the every day complications that everyone else does.

From all outward appearances, he's just another guy on the street.

But Harkowitz can't read. His children don't know it. His friends don't. And his employer certainly doesn't know.

Outside of his wife and his reading tutor, no one knows.

"If someone reaches adulthood without knowing how to read, they are pretty professional about hiding," said Carolyn Burns, reading coordinator for the Good Hope Literacy Council.

"They have to have a pretty good system worked out for giving people the impression they know how to read. It's just too embarrassing for them to admit."

Mrs. Burns manages a team of Laubach reading tutors in the Plymouth and Canton communities. Her organization offers one-to-one literacy tutoring to people 14 years of age and older.

THE LAUBACH READING method was first developed by Dr. Frank Laubach, a Methodist missionary. Although Mrs. Burns operates her tutoring through the Lutheran Church Women's Program, she points out that the program and the method is non-denominational.

The tutors volunteer their time and come from all walks of life. The only requirement is that they be willing to spend an hour a week for a year with their student.

"At the end of the year, the student should be reading at the fifth-grade level. But really each person is able to progress at his own speed," Mrs. Burns said.

While the Laubach program offers help to high school students as well as adults, Mrs. Burns said, the most difficult to reach and work with are the older illiterates.

"It's kind of like the Alcoholics Anonymous. The first step for the adult who can't read is to admit it to himself. By the time a person gets to me, he has already come to terms with the problem."

But before that first step can be taken, something has to happen to make the individual want to learn to read.

"For one of my students it was his three-year old daughter. He would make mistakes while reading children's stories to her and she would correct him."

Usually, though, the illiterate adult has a well-honed defense system to keep his secret from becoming known.

Mrs. Burns told of one 35-year-old man who had to keep turning down job promotions because he was terrified his boss would find out he couldn't read if he took on new responsibilities.

"IT'S AMAZING how well people can keep the charade up. Most of the time a spouse will front for them if they have to sign contracts or fill out applications."



Adults who cannot read or write often develop a sophisticated defense system to hide their disability, according to Carolyn Burns, reading coordinator for the Good Hope Literacy Council. (Staff photo by Gary Caskey)

Because literacy is such a sensitive issue, Mrs. Burns said, she and her tutors have to guarantee confidentiality. Only the individual, the tutor and Mrs. Burns know the person's identity.

"Privacy is absolutely essential. The man I'm working with would be very upset if his children knew he couldn't read," she said.

Contrary to what might be a popular stereotype, Mrs. Burns said, not all illiterates are school dropouts. She mentioned one man who had a high school diploma.

"It turns out that his teachers gave him all his tests orally. But he had his diploma, and it looked the same as everyone else's."

However, Mrs. Burns said she does not want to jump on the bandwagon and "point fingers" at the schools.

"I look at it simply. A person comes to me who can't read. I'm not interested in why. Frankly, I don't care. I have a recipe to help. That's all I need to worry about."

The course Mrs. Burns teaches uses three workbooks which the student can purchase for \$10.

By the time the student finishes the third book, he has gone through basic reading skills and worked on script-writing.

People interested in securing the services of a tutor or those who wish to become tutors can contact Mrs. Burns at 459-9639.

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## CITY OF FARMINGTON COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS (Summary)

A Regular Meeting of the Farmington City Council was called to order at 8:00 P.M. in the Farmington Municipal Building, 2340 Liberty Street, Farmington, Michigan, by Mayor Richard L. Tupper.

ROLL CALL: PRESENT: Councilmen Bennett, Buckler, Hartcock, Tupper, Vider.

ABSENT: None.

CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT: City Mgr. Deadman, Dir. Byrnes, Atty. Kelly, Clerk Viane.

Minutes of previous meetings were corrected and approved. Minutes of other boards were received and/or filed.

Council delayed appointment of a Resource Representative to the Oakland County Cultural Council to a later date.

A proclamation was issued designating September 3-4, 1978 as "Jerry Lewis Muscular Dystrophy Telethon Weekend".

Council tabled action regarding the Anderson Bill (Unclaimed Bottle Deposits).

Mayor Tupper called a half hour recess to enable the meeting to move to the Farmington Senior High School in order to accommodate the number of people attending the meeting. The meeting recommenced at 8:30 p.m. at the Farmington Senior High School Auditorium.

Mayor Tupper opened the Public Hearing regarding the site plan review of the proposed Housing for the Elderly in the Central Business District and reviewed the events that had occurred prior to this hearing.

City Mgr. Deadman explained the type of project that was being proposed. Mr. Frank Durey, Developer, Forest City Lumber Company, and Walter Coppen, Architect for the project, explained the construction of the project, the financing and procedures for leasing the apartments.

Questions and Comments were received from members of the audience for Council consideration.

Council accepted the recommendation of the Planning Commission and approved the Site Plan for the proposed housing for the Elderly in the Central Business District; and further granted a variance to allow the proposed building to exceed 55 ft. in height.

The following resolutions were adopted:

— Approving the appointment of Earl R. Billing as Director of Public Services effective August 21, 1978.

— Accepting the bid of Timmer Construction Company in the amount of \$600 for repairs to the City's Storm Water Retention Basin on Nine Mile Road.

— Accepting the bid of S&S Equipment Company in the amount of \$2,150 for (1) Trench Safety Box, plus \$100 for L&R Ring.

— Accepting the bid of Telford & Doolen, Inc. in the amount of \$380 for (1) Willie Asphelt Hot-Mix Patcher.

— Authorizing the City Manager and the City Clerk to sign the Oakland County Road Commission Contract for Urban Area Sign Upgrading.

— Authorizing an increase in the Fee Schedule for Water Taps.

Council tabled action regarding the purchase of Police Liability Insurance until the next regular meeting.

Council tabled action regarding the Selective Mutual Aid Agreement for Fire Protection between Farmington and Farmington Hills until the next regular meeting.

The following reports were received and filed:

— Financial Report Gen Fund 12 Mos. Ended June 30, 1978.

— Financial Report 4th District Cl. 12 Mos. ended 6-30-78.

— Building Department Annual Report.

— Public Safety Dept. Quarterly Report.

— Public Services Dept. Quarterly Report.

— Identification Committee Annual Report.

— Youth Assistance Quarterly Report.

Council voted unanimously to establish a Closed Session Meeting prior to the regular Council Meeting at 7:00 PM August 21, 1978 to review a Personnel matter.

Monthly bills were approved for payment.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:10 A.M.

RICHARD L. TUPPER, Mayor  
NEDRA VIANE, City Clerk

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