

Farmington Observer

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Twenty-five cents

Winter storm attacks area with gusto

By Julie Brown
staff writer

Area residents may have thought Old Man Winter had left town, but they were wrong.

The winter storm that hit earlier this week dumped 5.4 inches of snow on the Detroit area.

"All of that fell between Sunday evening and up to about 7 Monday morning, and then it changed over to rain," said Lena Bailey, meteorological technician for the National Weather Service at Detroit Metropolitan Airport.

The temperature rose to 50 degrees early Monday evening, from a low of 24 degrees early Monday morning.

The wintry weather kept road crews in Farmington and Farmington Hills busy.

"It was terrible," said Tom Blasell, director of public services for Farmington Hills. "It came down very quickly."

Farmington Hills had 11 pieces of road equipment out and also hired an independent contractor, "just to supplement our own crews," Blasell said.

"We had anticipated it and it was just a question of when. We had every piece of equipment on the road we could get. As a result, we were able to plow nearly all of our subdivision streets." Most subdivision streets were plowed by rush hour Tuesday morning.

"We put all of our crews on 16-hour shifts," Blasell said. Crews began working at 4 a.m. Monday; those workers went home at 8 p.m., while others started work at 8 a.m. Monday and worked until midnight.

Farmington Hills road crews began work again at 4 a.m. Tuesday. "They're all getting tired," Blasell said. In addition to road crews, garage staffers were needed to keep the equipment in running order.

THE SNOW that fell was wet and heavy, making it more difficult to move.

"It's much harder on the equipment, too, because you're pushing that much extra weight," Blasell said. "You're working the equipment that much harder."



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Motorists did their best Monday on Grand River when the winter's worst storm dumped at least five inches of snow on the area, making three of the thoroughfare's five lanes impassable.

"The snow was very heavy and it was difficult to move off the roads," said Earl Billing, director of public services for the city of Farmington. Farmington crews worked from 1 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Monday clearing the roads.

Five pieces of road equipment were used. In addition to keeping road crews working, the weather also kept area police officers busy. "Traffic was a real problem," said

Frank Lauboff, director of the Farmington Department of Public Safety. "The majority of our problems were traffic complications."

TRAFFIC problems in Farmington included cars running off the road and

cars getting stuck in the snow. Four property-damage auto accidents were reported to Lauboff's department Monday.

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Foreign language study back in fashion

No sweat for tots

School program spawns debate

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

By now Tatsu Kato is back in his Japanese homeland. But chances are his stay in America will be more than a distant memory.

Just to be on the safe side though, Tatsu's preschool classmates last week bid goodbye to their 5-year-old friend with a surprise party and a boxful of American memorabilia (baseball cards, a Detroit Tigers T-shirt and miniature E.T. doll) to preserve his memories.

Up until less than a week ago, Tatsu was one of 20 children — of Chinese, Indian, Japanese and Armenian backgrounds — involved in the Farmington Schools new preschool bilingual program at the Fairview and Alameda centers.

"Although Tatsu doesn't converse much, he gets his message across," said Barbara Humphries, Tatsu's preschool teacher.

And getting the message across with as much English as possible is the idea behind the bilingual program introduced into the Farmington schools last September with the help of a state grant.

"We try to capitalize on the high learning abilities preschoolers have," said Donald Howell, Farmington's director of community services and federal projects.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Tatsu Kato, (left) a Japanese student in the district's new preschool bilingual program, and Alycia Pettier share photographic memories of their months together at Fairview Early Childhood Center.

"They haven't had their language so firmly formed that they are inflexible. With preschool youngsters, you don't have a very large vocabulary even with our own English-speaking youngsters."

Rather than segregating the non-English speaking children in a separate class, school officials decided "it would

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By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

If the Farmington School Board agrees, foreign languages will become a part of the middle school curriculum next year.

But that possibility is making some parents and educators unhappy. They object to less time being set aside for art and music and to Spanish being the only language offered.

Responding to guidelines in national educational reports such as A Nation At Risk, the district's curriculum committee, comprised of three school trustees and district administrators, have been studying the introduction of languages into middle schools.

"This proposal seeks to further expand the opportunity for Farmington Public School students to experience foreign language instruction. It is felt that this expanded foreign language opportunity will better prepare our students who take advantage of this for today's and tomorrow's world," administrators indicated in their proposal.

THE PROPOSAL calls for offering one year of Spanish as an elective class in eighth grade. To make this possible, the district's language orientation class, currently an eighth grade elective, will become a required class for seventh graders.

The proposal also includes adding a fifth year of Spanish in the high schools.

"I think there is something difficult for this country to understand and that's how small the world is. We are so ethnocentric, in my opinion."

—Janice Rolnick
school trustee

Besides complaints about adding yet another academic class to the middle school curriculum, some parents and educators oppose the proposed cut into seventh grade art and music needed to make room during a school day for the language orientation class.

If the school board agrees, seventh grade art and music would be switched from the current 20 weeks for each class down to 13 weeks so language orientation can be included for 13 weeks.

LANGUAGE orientation is an introduction to French, Spanish, German and Latin. Class material includes beginning vocabulary, foods, geography, expressions and cultural background.

The curriculum committee plans to meet again before offering a recommendation to the school board.

While many of the parents and teachers who attended two recent curricu-

lum committee meetings disagreed on the proposal, two committee members, Helen Putow and James Abernethy, made it clear that, at least in its current form, they cannot endorse the proposal.

Putow and Abernethy said this week they would support the proposal only if the seventh grade language orientation class was an elective and not a requirement, as suggested by Susan Rennels, school board vice president.

"I HAVE NO difficulty with that if it's possible to schedule it," said Lynn Nutter, assistant superintendent of instruction.

But many parents and teachers attending this week's curriculum committee meetings voiced opposition to cutting the number of weeks offered for seventh grade music and art to make room for language orientation.

An East Middle School art teacher told committee members she is concerned about reducing the number of weeks for art.

"Some kids aren't ready emotionally for academics all day long," she said, adding students need art and music as a release from academic pressure.

Ellen Wallace, another middle school teacher, agreed.

"Most kids have a very successful and pleasant experience, at least in art," Wallace said. "They have a seven period day. They don't need any more pressure."

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oral quarrel

How do you rate the sister cities?

Rand McNally has rated Pittsburgh as the nation's best place to live. Yuba City, Calif., was ranked last on the "livability" scale. Detroit was ranked 89th in the survey.

Today's Oral Quarrel question is: How would you rank Farmington and Farmington Hills on a "livability" scale? Would you rather live in Farmington or Farmington Hills, and, if so, why?

To answer this question, call 477-5498 before 1 p.m. Friday. Look in Monday's paper to see how your neighbors responded to this issue.

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IN TODAY'S ISSUE

Businessman says he was wronged

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

The owner of a Farmington Hills insurance agency who took out an insurance policy on one of the firm's now-deceased independent-sales contractors denies he canceled a two-year contract with the salesman because the salesman was homosexual and diagnosed as having AIDS.

"The notice (of cancellation) was sent before I found out he had AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome)," said Howard Camden of the Advanced Underwriters Insurance

Agency Inc. who is being sued for job discrimination.

Salesman Tim Trueman, 32, died Feb. 24 of Legionnaires' disease, a respiratory infection. Following the termination of his contract with Camden's firm in April 1984, Trueman sued for job discrimination.

Trueman's suit, most of which is in arbitration, claims Camden canceled his two-year contract, after only four months on the job, because he determined Trueman was a homosexual and had AIDS.

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