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Mass resignations at library point up rift

By Julie Brown
 staff writer

An investigation by the Farmington Observer into the resignation of seven professional Farmington library staffers reveals discontent within the system and growing concern among library patrons and public officials.

The resignation of librarian Jill Locke, a former Farmington Community Library staff member, brought the controversy to public attention after a number of patrons expressed concern. Locke worked as branch head for the Farmington Hills library and as children's coordinator for both the Farmington and Farmington Hills library branches. She had worked for 13 years at the library and resigned in February.

"The library is not really at liberty to discuss personnel matters," said Gordon Lewis, library director, when asked about Locke's resignation. "It's an internal personnel matter."

"It's just not appropriate to discuss personnel matters. It's just not an appropriate situation."

But former employees are willing to talk about how they perceive conditions at the two library branches.

Seven professional staff members have resigned from the library since last November, said Denise Albrecht, a former Farmington branch children's librarian and a resident of Farmington Hills.

Those who have either left or who have turned in resignations include Christine Abbott, Linda Madden, Mary Pinkerton, Sylvia Makowski, Barbara Cornell, and Locke and Albrecht. Albrecht turned in her resignation in December and finished work in January, primarily so she could be at home with her young son.

"That was my primary reason, plus the work atmosphere was not real comfortable," she said.

ADMINISTRATIVE PRESSURES made for difficulties at work.

"I loved being with the patrons. A lot of people were not getting along with the administration, and they still aren't," Albrecht said. Staff members were unhappy with the treatment Locke received.

'I enjoyed working with Jill. I think she was perhaps the best librarian I have known. I think it's a shame she was pushed out the way she was.'

— Linda Madden
 librarian

"What happened was they decided to give Jill a new position called Community Services Coordinator. This was never even in the organizational chart of employees prior to December."

"Her supervisory capacity was taken away from her. I don't know if any of the other staff even understood why that position was created."

Locke received bachelor's and master's degrees from Brigham Young University. The Michigan Library Association chose her as the 1977 recipient of the Letitia D. Fyan Award for her work. She also received an Alumni Distinguished Service Award from her alma mater in 1981.

Albrecht, who has known Locke since the early 1970s, began working at the library as a student assistant while an undergraduate at Central Michigan University.

She earned a bachelor's degree from Central Michigan and a master's degree in library science from the University of Michigan.

In 1978, Albrecht joined the staff as a librarian, the same year she began the master's program in Ann Arbor.

"She added a lot to the programs in children's services and she trained a lot of people," Albrecht said of her former colleague. "She really offered a lot, and she's had a lot of people who've benefited in her over the years."

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Linda Madden was another of the professional staff members who chose to resign. Madden worked as a children's librarian, first at the Farmington Hills branch and then briefly at the Farmington branch.

"After Jill left, I was transferred to the Farmington branch," said Madden, who finished work last Friday.

"I did not officially give a reason for my resignation," she said. Unhappiness with the treatment Locke received was a factor, however.

"I did not care to stay in the library any longer, after what had happened to Jill."

Madden plans to take a trip to Europe, and then intends to begin working at a part-time library job at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

Madden holds a bachelor's degree in art history and a master's degree in library science from the University of Michigan. She worked as a paraprofessional in the university's library while in graduate school and after completing her master's degree.

Her time with the Farmington li-

brary system wasn't without its rewards, Madden said.

"I really enjoyed my work, and I enjoyed the staff."

"It's an enormously busy library. I enjoyed it greatly. I enjoyed working with Jill. I think she was perhaps the best librarian I have known. She's a fine librarian, and I think it's a shame she was pushed out the way she was."

"The administration gets more for their money out of the staff than any where I've seen," Madden said. "The staff works very hard."

Madden decided to resign before finding another job. Her husband, however, is employed and her income is not essential. The couple is expecting a baby in October, but her pregnancy was not a factor in Madden's decision.

"I knew I would miss it, but I just felt I wanted to do something else. Frankly, I just didn't appreciate the way the staff was treated. I loved working with the children, but I do not think the staff was treated properly at all."

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Board study OK'd

By Steve Barnaby
 editor

Revitalization of Farmington's central business district will be in the hands of those who use it.

Merchants, consumers, residents and the city's historical lobby will be represented on a special committee soon to be appointed, according to City Manager Robert Deadman. Board members will work with city consultant Christopher Waczyn in formulating a recommendation for city council.

"We want people who will have the energy to do the work. We don't need people who just want to lend their name," said Deadman, in his report to city council on Monday.

The committee concept was born out of a meeting last month between council, planning commissioners and the economic development corporation. At that meeting Waczyn stressed the importance of the downtown business district keeping pace with retail trends in the area.

BUT ANY PLAN, he said, only would work if it had the endorsement of the various interests in the community.

Developing a marketing strategy and a merchant-assistance program will be the committee's two main goals, said Deadman.

In developing a marketing strategy the committee will look at:

- Evaluation of current and anticipated trends in Farmington.
- An analysis of existing functions and the competition.
- An analysis of existing activity mix and potential for change.
- Recommendation of the generalized retail/service mix.

In outlining a program to assist local merchants, the committee will examine:

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Dressing up

Jennifer Bailey models her new Easter bonnet. Jennifer and her classmates at the First Step Day Care Center made the bonnets Tuesday,

with just a little help from their teachers. Please see story, Page 3A.

TANDY DORST/staff photographer

Teen pursues fight against drunk driving

By Joanne Maliszewski
 staff writer

Mike Blisorek knows it's going to take time to change students' attitudes about drinking and driving. But before the Farmington High School senior graduates in June he's hoping to lay the foundation for change among his fellow students.

For the past month or so, Blisorek has been trying to organize a chapter of SADD (Students Against Drunk Driving) at Farmington High.

And it hasn't been easy.

"In Farmington High School peer pressure toward drinking is really high," said Blisorek. "This is the first time opposition has been proposed."

Much of the "popular crowd is laughing at it and blowing it off," he added. But Blisorek seems undaunted about some student resistance to the formation of a SADD chapter.

About a week ago, about 300 juniors and seniors attended the school's first

SADD assembly. Blisorek borrowed a film about SADD, in which founder Bob Anastas talks to students, from the Oakland County Health Department.

"We had a half-way decent turnout for that," Blisorek said, adding he hopes this week's assembly for sophomores and freshmen draws even more students.

It is with the sophomores and freshmen that Blisorek hopes to lay the foundation for changing attitudes toward drinking and driving. The juniors and seniors, he said, are a bit harder to change because their attitudes are pretty much established.

BLISOREK ACKNOWLEDGES he's taken on a heavy task, but he is not alone in his attempt to form the SADD chapter. Besides the help and support of school administrators and school counselor Bob Leckobich, Blisorek already has his officers for the chapter.

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Student history buffs dominate competition

By Joanne Maliszewski
 staff writer

Student history buffs in the Farmington School District did so well at a recent Eastern Michigan University history competition that other participating schools wanted the rules changed.

But judges involved with the university's annual history day competition could find no unethical behavior to account for Farmington's success so the rules will remain unchanged when next year's competition rolls around.

Approximately 300 students from 30 high schools throughout the state competed in Ypsilanti. Farmington's students this year captured nine of the university's 15 available awards.

"We did exceptionally well this year," said Ray Voss, coordinator of Farmington's gifted program.

Farmington students, in fact, captured all four of the \$750 scholarships awarded in the university's history competition.

Scholarships went to North Farmington seniors Mike LaGuardia and Scott Thill in the American history competi-

tion and Mark Aune in the world history competition.

Eric Wein, a Harrison High School senior, also received a scholarship in the American history division. Also taking honors in the senior division of the American history competition was Mark Dillman of North Farmington with an honorable mention.

In the junior division of the competition, Laura Banerjee of North Farmington took fourth place in the American history category. In the world history junior division, Dave Murley and John Didovic of North Farmington took

first and third place respectively.

All winners other than those who received scholarships were given history books, Voss said.

Ironically though, Voss said, the book recipients actually left the competition with more in hand because only one of the four scholarship winners plans to attend Eastern University.

ALTHOUGH FARMINGTON STUDENTS have always done well in the history competition, Voss said, this year's exceptional placement can in part be attributed to some of the stu-

dents taking an advanced placement history course. The course is a college-level class, he said, which allows students to get a taste of college material and college testing.

"That came in handy when taking the computerized exam at the competition," Voss said.

Perhaps another reason Farmington ranked so high this year is because students from the Grosse Ile school district, who usually do exceptionally well were not at the competition, he said.

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oral quarrel

How do you feel about library controversy?

Since November of last year, seven key personnel have resigned their positions with the Farmington library system. The former employees claim that morale among their colleagues is on the decline.

Library director Gordon Lewis says the library is just readjusting to a new reorganization plan implemented recently.

Today's Oral Quarrel question is:

How do you feel about the recent resignations and reorganization? How do you think they have affected the service?

To answer this question, call us at 477-5493. You'll have until 1 p.m. on Friday to respond. To see how your neighbors feel about this issue, look in Monday's edition of the Farmington Observer.

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Police probe Corvette theft

West Bloomfield and Farmington Hills police are investigating the theft and possible arrest of a 1983 Corvette valued at \$25,000.

The silver car was stolen from the back lot of Joe Caudery Chevrolet on Orchard Lake Road in West Bloomfield between 9 and 10 p.m. March 27.

The burned-out car was recovered by Farmington Hills Police on Bridle Path Lane about 4 p.m. March 28, Inspector Bill Spencer said.

West Bloomfield Police have no suspects in the theft of the car.

Farmington Hills Police have questioned a 10-year-old girl who said she saw two white men running from the

burning car. The girl said the men got into a gray, mid-size car and drove off.

Other witnesses have been questioned, Spencer said. The fire appears to have been deliberately set, Farmington Hills arson investigators said. They discovered a cloth-covered brick believed to have been soaked with a flammable liquid, and ignited.

Damage to the car was set at \$25,000, Spencer said. If charges are filed against any suspects, West Bloomfield will charge for the stealing of the auto, and Farmington Hills will charge for possession of a stolen auto and arson, Spencer said.