



*'I'm sure you've read about our crisis in education. Well, this is our crisis, a crisis in attitude.'*

— Thomas Bleet

## Changing attitudes

### Educator works to instill self-esteem

By Lorraine McClellan  
staff writer

A Farmington Hills resident and retired educator says he is doing more teaching than he ever did since he started turning poor self images into those of self respect.

"Success is not based on good grades or IQ. Success is based on your belief that you can succeed, and you won't have that if you believe you don't deserve to succeed," said Thomas Bleet, who owns and operates Thomas L. Bleet & Associates in Southfield.

During Bleet's career in the Richmond Public School District, he was one of the youngest superintendents in Michigan's history and was voted "Most Outstanding Educator" by both the Michigan Education Association and Michigan Jaycees. He retired in 1979.

He credits those awards to his practicing what he preached as a teacher: principal and superintendent creating an I-can philosophy within both the faculty and the student body.

"There is no formal training for teachers to teach a positive attitude toward yourself, toward your life," Bleet said. "There's no required course that will give them some practical techniques so they can help turn some seemingly negative happenings into positive stepping stones for personal growth. If the kids get any of this at all they get it hit or miss."

WITH A staff of 15, Bleet carries his philosophy in lectures, seminars, workshops and classes throughout the state. He speaks to a wide range of people from corporation executives to welfare recipients.

The philosophy is his own, stemming from Norman Vincent Peale's "The Power of Positive Thinking" and including some of Norman Cousins' laugh therapy.

"Motivating the gifted is no different from motivating the child who has been labeled a disabled learner, or motivating the teacher to help motivate her students," Bleet said.

"You've got to move out of that comfort zone. You've got to take some risks. You've got to make some mistakes along the way and this is the big stumbling block — afraid of being embarrassed. When you have respect for yourself you'll know enough to know that mistakes are a part of growing and there is no reason to be embarrassed," Bleet said.

"Being afraid of standing up and giving a talk is all part of this, a poor self image. Given the proper energy in a classroom or the assembly line can change those negative attitudes into positive production."

Bleet advocates an act-enthusiastic-and-you'll-feel-enthusiastic stance, but is emphatic that he is not playing Pollyanna.

"This is not easy," he said. "This is, in the end, very hard hitting. We do some maybe silly things, with humor, with raising the energy level and working up enthusiasm to create a burning desire to achieve. But because so many of us are living within our comfort zone, that tiny circle that allows us to use only 10 percent of our potential, stepping out of that small comfort zone takes courage."

BLEET SAID he uses some psychology in his teachings, but "more street instinct based on experience. It comes in handy when I'm talking to inmates in Jackson Prison. I challenge them, so they challenge back and in that instance I better know what I'm doing."

Bleet said he kept a steady D-minus average and a chip on his shoulder all the way through his school days. Highland Park Junior College refused him entrance and he was asked to leave Michigan State University.

The turn-around came when he read "The Power of Positive Thinking," and then read it again and again.

"I called Dr. Peale on the phone, and he answered my call," Bleet said. "He is a very gracious man, 80 years old at least by now and still responds to personal calls. Today I consider him a good friend, and if I were a teacher today I'd make his book required reading for all of my classes."

When Bleet returned to college he graduated with a 3.8 average.

"I didn't get any smarter. I learned to believe in myself and my abilities. And I'm seeing the same success now with drug addicts, special ed kids, juvenile delinquents, the kids who can't make it that the Department of Social Services asks us to see," he said.

"I'm sure you've read about our crisis in education. Well this is our crisis, a crisis in attitude."

BLEET SINGLED out "fear" and "doubt" as the two attitudes most Americans suffer that keep them from succeeding in whatever they want to do.

"Fear of reaching out, fear of becoming a success, fear of trying something new, fear of stepping out of yourself, fear of facing an audience, that's the number-one problem," he said.

One suggestion for that is to "Get involved. Forget yourself for awhile, just become joyful about living. The more I try to concentrate on me the less able I am to see what's going on," he said.

As for delay, "How many times do I hear people say they are going to do this or that when the ideal time comes. When is that? And what is ideal?"

"The academicians and the politicians are famous for this one. They will form committees and analyze whatever it is to its death."

"Do it now," Bleet said. "Whatever it is, do it now, just make sure your ethics are in order so you will be happy and content when you get there."

## Speech and language

### 10 percent of the population need special help

By Lorraine McClellan  
staff writer

An estimated 22.6 million Americans, or about 10 percent of the population, suffer from some speech, language or hearing handicap.

Dulce Aronoff, chairwoman of the speech and language department for Farmington Public Schools, estimates that the number of children here with those problems is about the same as the national average.

"Most of us have learned so much by the time we're 3 or 4 years old. By that time we're walking, talking, understanding, and not many of us think twice about how amazingly easy that is, until we run across someone who doesn't," she said.

"Yet being able to communicate is the one skill you are going to use more

than any other skill you will ever use in your entire life."

The most common problem is articulation. After that comes the inability to hear what is being said, understand that, then use it.

Aronoff oversees about 14 school teachers in the district who work to correct these problems. Some are assigned to specific classrooms, but most travel from school to school working with the youngsters who need help only a few hours a week.

"SUCCESS," Aronoff said, "is almost entirely dependent on motivation and homework. When a teacher is only there two hours a week, even if she or he is working on a one-to-one basis for an individual problem, our big successes are always the students who have the motivation to practice on their own."

Some teachers have a specialty, such as working with youngsters who are stuttering or the child with a cleft palate.

Disorders run the gamut, from the child who loses the letter S, and says "I thee thee rabbit," to the 5-year-old chattering child who keeps talking but can't be understood by even his or her parents.

"It's a great day when we find that S," Aronoff said. "It's an exciting time for everybody who knows that child, but the interim is so very frustrating."

"It's frustrating for the parents, the relatives, and the teachers sometimes, and I'm sure we can't imagine how frustrating for the child if you've never been there. These kids feel shut out, have days when they can't cope, give up, and sometimes act out that frustration in negative ways."

On the positive side, Aronoff told of one teacher working with an individual with an unusual speech problem who became frustrated with what seemed to her slow progress.

"She got a note from the child's doctor just last week complimenting her on how well she had done working with such an unusual and little-known disorder," Aronoff said.

THE TEACHER of the speech and language impaired is usually a member of a multidisciplinary team. He or she services students by providing special instruction to those in regular classrooms who have communication impairments and others who have physical, mental, emotional or learning impairment in addition to their speech, and/or language problems.

The instruction may include alternate or augmentative communications systems, such as sign language, symbols, picture boards or the use of computer-assisted devices.

"Little to no special equipment is used in the regular classrooms, but very elaborate equipment has been installed in some of our special classrooms," Aronoff said.

The teacher also provides consultation to the classroom teacher or any other educational personnel working with handicapped students.

The speech and language teacher is one of the few professionals who evaluates students for handicapping problems while at the same time serving in an instructional capacity.

Aronoff describes that teacher as "the communication specialist in the school district. The key responsibility of this teacher is assessment of speech, language and auditory behavior."

Communicative disorders are the nation's most prevalent handicaps.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Kathy Maczko, who designed the curriculum for teaching language concepts in Farmington Public Schools, heads one of many elementary

classes in the district for the 10 percent of the population with a speech or language problem.

## New Horizons breaks ground for larger quarters in Novi

New Horizons of Oakland County, a nonprofit corporation dedicated to the working lives of people with handicaps, has broken ground for its new facility in Novi.

Now in its 21st year of operation, New Horizons has four branches in various parts of Oakland County. Each day 500 people are participating in various New Horizons programs. A branch location was first opened in the Farmington area in 1967. Since then, as the numbers and needs of the clientele in the western part of the county have increased, it has already outgrown its quarters twice.

The current facility, in Farmington Hills, is strained to its limits in efforts to reduce the waiting list of handicapped persons desiring entrance to the program. The new center in Novi, which will replace the Farmington Hills facility, will more than double the branch's capacity, permitting New Horizons to serve up to 180 participants at a time.

NEW HORIZONS provides an opportunity for persons with disabilities, whether physical or mental, to discover and develop their vocational skills. Through a comprehensive program ranging from evaluation, through training, to placement, New Horizons helps its clients tap their hidden aptitudes and achieve their potential in the work place.

New Horizons interacts with both the public and private sectors. It is a link between the schools and government agencies on the one hand and private enterprise on the other. Frequently, the private businesses clients work with in their training eventually become their full-time employers.

The New Horizons program is fully accredited by Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities. With its headquarters in Pontiac, New Horizons is a member of the United Way of Pontiac-North Oakland, and is a Torch Drive agency of the United Foundation. It is funded through the fees it receives

from sponsoring agencies for its services, and through its sub-contracts with private businesses, government and foundation grants, and private contributions.

A capital fund drive is under way. A major portion of the financing has been arranged through a bond offering of the Novi Economic Development Corporation.

THE NOVI BRANCH is the first facility which New Horizons has been able to build to its own specifications, from the ground up. It will be used primarily to evaluate trainees' skills and to provide job training in a realistic work setting, under professional supervision.

The site is at 41108 Vincennes Court, in the Vincennes Industrial Park, off Meadowbrook Road north of Grand River.

Construction will be completed in the early fall.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Students get instructions in a class situation or take their lessons on an individual basis. Dulce Aronoff is a teacher, as well as chairwoman of the district's speech and language department.