

# Young inventor doesn't impress himself

**By Casey Hane**  
staff writer

Mark Porter thinks all the publicity is a bit much. His friends weren't too impressed either, the Farmington Hills fifth grader said.

A guest appearance on the local talk show Kelly & Co., plus other publicity, has brought attention to the Wooddale Elementary student who won a state contest for his invention — the portable toboggan.

His project was part of the national Invent America competition during the 1987-88 school year. The idea was planted when his parents bought a new, more compact car.

"I couldn't go to the sledding hill, because we couldn't fit the toboggan in the car," he explained.

"It's OK," Porter said about his state-level win, although he added that he liked it enough to do another project if given the chance.

Porter developed the idea, created written plans for his project, and put it together with his dad's help. Porter is a student in the Farmington schools DELTA gifted program, but students from throughout the district participated in the Invent America project, according to organizers.

"I think it would be nice to... kind of encourage kids to enter again this year," said Mark's mother, Margorie Porter. "I don't know how they ever decided what to submit. It would be difficult."

PORTER WILL receive a \$200 savings bond for his efforts; a \$250 grant will be given to his teacher; and a \$500 grant will go to Wooddale.

Invent America was launched nationally last year. It was brought to

**'I couldn't go to the sledding hill, because we couldn't fit the toboggan in the car' (so he invented a portable toboggan)**

— Mark Porter  
Wooddale fifth grader

Farmington by three DELTA coordinators: Mary Joyce Reader, Joan Armistead and Mary Ellen Tolwin, who work in learning center programs this year. Tolwin was Porter's teacher last year.

The three got a summer grant from the district in 1987 and spent their summer producing videos and teaching manuals for the project. They then held in-service training for interested teachers. Teachers from nine of 11 elementary schools and several from Farmington middle schools participated.

About 1,000 children were taught the Invent America strategies and about 225 submitted projects for the competition.

"That's how it came to be," said DELTA coordinator Joette Kuske. "It was a curriculum project motivated by teachers in the district. They did it tirelessly."

THE FARMINGTON model, designed by the three educators, has been shared with districts across the state. They have also spoken at a state gifted conference and have been invited to speak at the National Invent America Conference this year.

Kuske said the program was used

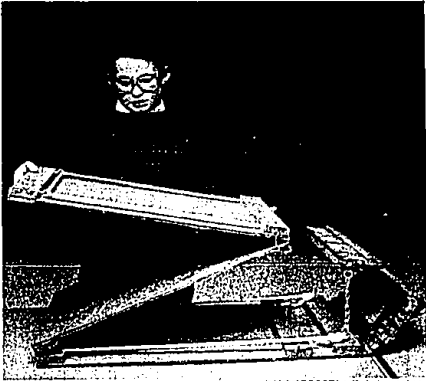
most effectively last year at Forest Elementary, where it was incorporated as part of the science curriculum for fourth graders.

"It was a unit they taught," she said. "They imbedded it. It's exactly the way it needs to be done."

Other schools use it in the social studies area. At Highmadow Common Campus, Invent America is being offered as an elective unit this year.

The Invent America program is designed to develop critical and creative thinking skills. It is administered by the non-profit United States Patent Model Foundation, which wants to encourage more innovation in this country.

Nine Invent America winners were named for the state of Michigan last spring, one for each grade level from kindergarten through grade eight. Porter was the state winner for the fourth grade.



Mark Porter, a Wooddale Elementary School student, shows off the folding toboggan he designed.

RANDY BORST/staff photographer

## Students celebrate clean life

A North Farmington choral group and 35 additional high school students from Farmington Public Schools will attend a rally this month to celebrate drug-free youth.

Part of the national Campaign for A Drug-free America, the Oct. 25 rally will be held at Cobo Hall in downtown Detroit.

The Northern Lights, a North Farmington choral group, and the other students representing all three high schools will attend the event, sponsored by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.

The rally will involve about 6,000 students age 12-15 and host celebrities including The Commodores, Tracy Spencer, Club Nouveau and others. A variety of well-known sports figures will also be in attendance.

Communities are being called upon nationwide to promote the effort by hosting town meetings, rallies and other events to promote drug use prevention.

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