

Author Kenneth Ethridge speaks to sixth graders at East Middle School during National Library Week.

Children's author meets students

By Amy Rauch
staff writer

A teenage boy works and saves money to buy his sister some aquarium fish for her birthday. Little does she know, the fish are carnivorous. The scene is an excerpt from "Violet, Purg, Bobble and Me," the latest children's novel by Kenneth Ethridge.

Ethridge, 39, visited all four Farmington middle schools last week as part of National Library Week.

Students at East Middle School giggled as he read portions of the book April 24.

"They (the books) seem interesting to me," said Sarah Guevara, a sixth grader.

"I liked him, I really did. He has universal appeal to this age group," said Judy Guertin, a sixth grade teacher at East. "He was rather clever with saying what kids say (in his books) without dating the book before it got into print."

Ethridge, a history teacher at Hazel Park High, said he gets many of his story ideas from real-life experiences.

HIS FIRST book, "Toothpick," published in 1985, centers around two students who have cystic fibrosis. The book is loosely based on Ethridge's students.

East students said the books were realistic in relating to their problems. "They're the regular problems that someone has," said Erin Williams, a sixth grader.

Classmate Lena DesJardins agreed. "Some of the things you read, you don't think they're possible. I think the book he read was funny."

Before coming to Hazel Park High two years ago, Ethridge spent 16 years teaching at Webb Junior High in Hazel Park. "That's where I really found out what kinds of things kids want to read and hear," he said.

He offered advice to East students who hope to pursue writing as a career. "If you have any aspirations to

be a writer, you need to read all that you can get your hands on."

Ethridge began writing articles and short stories in the early 1980s. Though he published material in both The Detroit News and the American Heritage Magazine, he never sold any of his short stories. But he decided to go ahead and write a novel anyway.

He now is working on three children's books: "The Teacher's Lounge," "One Sweet Dream" and "The Little Bird Drop."

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Candidate forum set

On Monday, May 14, the American Association of University Women-Farmington branch and the League of Women Voters-West Bloomfield/Farmington Area will co-sponsor a candidates night for those running for election to the Farmington Board of Education. It will be at 7:30 p.m. in the Farmington High media center, 32000 Shilawasee.

Nine names will appear on this

year's June 11 ballot for two four-year seats opening on the school board.

Candidates include: challengers Cathleen Webb, Allen Warner, Laura Myers, Kim Jaske, Robert Ranney, Sharon Rands, James Barnes, Richard DeVries, and incumbent R. Jack Inch.

Trustee Janice Rolnick, whose term expires in June, is not running again.

Technology workshop

The annual spring in-service for Farmington Public Schools' employees will focus on technology this year.

Scheduled for Friday, May 11, at Oakland Community College, the daylong event is training for all school staff, including teachers, transportation department employees, maintenance and operations employees and secretaries and central office personnel.

The keynote speaker will be futurist Harold Plummer.

Plummer will discuss the challenge of change and how "it is easier to move to a cemetery than to change the curriculum."

A total of 25 individual workshops will include a variety of topics.

Among these are: health issues, how to deal with stress, high tech teaching strategies, student motivation and avoiding liability. Some are designed for general attendance, while others focus on specific employee groups.

clarification

A story in last Monday's issue of the Farmington Observer incorrectly stated a Walled Lake School District committee plans to push for passage of a 1991 override of the Headlee Tax Limitation amendment. Instead, the committee is pushing for an override this year. The district has no plans to seek an override next year.

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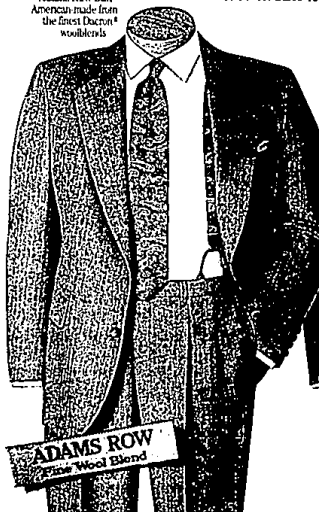
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