

Community Corner

This week's question:

Why do you think it's important to vote in school elections?

We asked this question Monday at the Farmington Training Center in downtown Farmington.



"It's real important . . . to pick the candidates who will do best for the school system."
— Bill Liba
Precinct 1 voter



"Our schools are very important. Even though our children are out . . . our tax dollars at work."
— Donna Thomas
Precinct 1 voter



"Because these are the people who run our schools."
— Sharon Davis
Precinct 1 voter



"Because I'm a retired teacher."
— Jeanne Marshall
Precinct 1 voter



"Because I want a change in the school board. I was (voter) number 387. I think it's (the turnout) pathetic."
— Linda Christen
Precinct 1 voter



"These are the people controlling our children's future. I've been unhappy with the quality of education."
— Jack Christen
Precinct 1 voter

Local debaters bring home trophy

By Lorraine McElish
Staff writer

Farmington High's debate team came home from the West Oakland League tournament with a trophy for placing third in the field.

"Not bad. It's a high-powered league with 13 schools. That's a good win," said debate coach Lloyd Smith. The team of 12 had been in three debates a week for three weeks leading up to the win, which made for a "pretty dedicated team" Smith said. But with so many debates throughout the year, and only one subject for the September-to-June year, "You have to watch so you just don't get tired of it. That could happen. That has happened," said Eric Crawford, vice president of the school's Debate Club.

Subject for this year was, "Should the federal government devise a plan to reduce overcrowding in prisons and jails?" Crawford and Mark Mitchell, speaking for the club, both took the affirmative side of the debate, a side they say is easier to handle than the negative.

"There are a lot of trips to the library and a lot of research to be

'I like the research, the technicalities, the rules of the game, learning how important it is just using a certain word.'

— Mark Mitchell
debate club member

done for both sides," Mitchell said. "But the affirmative side gets to make up the plan of action. The negative team has to counter everything that's said. The negatives just have to be better armed to handle whatever is coming."

THOUGH ALL of the members of the winning team were Farmington High students, they represent all three schools because there is only one debate team in the city.

Smith is now in his 49th year of teaching. He was employed as an elementary school teacher in Quincy, Mich., before coming to Farmington Public Schools as a music and band teacher.

"I retired in 1980 but just didn't

know how to quit," he said. "The debate coach works with the top-quality kids, the kids with a little more zip. This is an after-school extracurricular activity so I work with motivated students, but if I can get in there and motivate just a little more — well, that's why I do this," he said.

Often, Smith works with his debaters on a one-to-one basis and keeps in touch with phone calls.

"He doesn't call to bug us," Crawford was quick to say. "He calls to make sure we know what's going on or to lend a helping hand."

What the two students have learned from Smith is that facts are more important than emotions,

which sometimes happens. And that so many facts are gathered that there has been times when a debater has changed his or her mind on a subject from one side of the debate to the other.

"That's OK, just so he doesn't do it in the middle of a tournament," Mitchell said.

BOTH STUDENTS believe being on the debate team helped them be accepted into the college of their choice. Crawford has been accepted into U.S. Military Academy. Mitchell has been accepted into the U. S. Air Force Academy.

Crawford said he enjoyed the tournaments because of the people he met.

"First of all, you get a lot closer to the people on your team, its like a team sport, and then we meet debaters from all different backgrounds from all different schools," he said.

Mitchell said, "I've always like challenges and especially the battle of wits in the debates. I like the research, the technicalities, the rules of the game, learning how important it is just using a certain word."



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Eric Crawford (seated) and Mark Mitchell show off the trophy their debate team won in the end-of-the-season tournament sponsored by the West Oakland League. The trophy is on display in a Farmington High showcase.

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Ex-whiz kid to speak at Country Day

Steven Ballmer, senior vice president of Microsoft Corp., maker of software for personal computers, will return to his alma mater, Detroit Country Day School, to be this year's graduation speaker.

The graduation ceremonies will be held at 8 p.m. today at Adat Shalom Synagogue, 29901 Middlebelt, Farmington Hills.

A 1973 graduate of Country Day, Ballmer joined Mi-

crosoft in its infancy in 1980 after earning his bachelor's degree at Harvard and attending Stanford Graduate School of Business. He heads the corporation's Software Systems Group.

During his high school years at Country Day, Ballmer was a summa cum laude honor student and a whiz kid in the math department.

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