



Fifth-grader Michelle Spiaz turns her face away from the holy water that the Rev. Norbert Kendzierski shook onto her pet, Poko.

God's creatures

Owners take their prized pets for blessing

THEY DID St. Francis of Assisi proud.

Students at St. Fabian school in Farmington Hills remembered the saint on the feast day named in his honor Thursday with a Blessing of Animals ceremony.

Dogs, cats, birds and even fish were brought for the annual blessing, done by the Rev. Norbert Kendzierski. "We have heard stories of St. Francis' great love for all of God's creatures, especially the animals," he said. "So it is fitting that on this feast, we ask God to bless our pets."

With students and their parents touching the animals, the priest gave a blessing and sprinkled them with holy water.

Students without pets participated by singing and praying for the all-school prayer ceremony in the school gym.

Sisters from the St. Fabian convent felt especially blessed Thursday, because their 14-year-old poodle, Princess, nearly died last week and had been nursed back to health.

Princess got a double blessing.



Sister Mary holds the nuns' 14-year-old dog, Princess, as children reach up to touch the pooch.

O&E newspapers garner Press Association awards

The Farmington Observer, under former editor Bob Sklar, won second place for General Excellence among weekly newspapers with a circulation of 15,000 or more in the Michigan Press Association's Better Newspaper contest.

Judges cited the paper's graphics, pullout quotes, front-page photos and strong editorials.

Sklar was recently promoted to special sections editor for the Observer & Eccentric chain.

The East Grand Rapids Advance was judged the top newspaper for General Excellence in the class.

The awards were announced Monday in conjunction with National Newspaper Week, which began Sunday and runs through Oct. 13. This year, judges received a record number of entries from 137 newspapers across the state.

The Farmington Observer also won first place for use of color throughout the paper in the same circulation class. Judges cited good layout and production quality, and called the first-place award an "easy choice."

Front-page color photos by former photographer Randy Borsi, as well as photos in complimentary sections, contributed to the award. Borsi was recently promoted to graphics coordinator for the O&E chain.

Tom Baer, current Farmington Observer editor, won first place among all state weeklies for editorial writing for three pieces written while editing the Rochester Eccentric.

BAER'S WRITING style was called "gutsy" by judges, who said "the purpose of an editorial should be to make readers think, and for that you sometimes have to go out on a limb."

Judges added, "The willingness to go 'against the grain' makes for quality editorials." Baer's submission included editorials on a Rochester woman who had been denied membership in the Rochester Elk's club, a feud between a Rochester Hills councilman and a citizen, and a gag order issued by a Rochester judge in a murder trial.

Troy Eccentric photographer Jim Rider took both first- and second-place awards for weekly newspaper spot news pictures in the Better Newspaper Contest.

Rider's first-place award is a courtroom shot of convicted murderer Larry Raymond Beedle, who was found guilty of murdering his wife in Troy. Contest judges called the picture a "good expressive photo," saying, "It captures the emotion of the moment."

Rider's second-place award, published in the Rochester Eccentric, is a photo titled "Warm Embrace," and

shows family members consoling one another after a mobile home fire in Rochester Hills. Judges said that picture showed "lots of emotion" and "initiative."

THE TROY AND Rochester Eccentric papers picked up another MPA award as well.

The Suburban Life editor of both papers, Susan Steinmueller, won second place in the Lifestyle pages category for her Troy section, among weekly newspapers in the circulation class.

Steinmueller's submissions included a spread on fashion comparisons among concertgoers at three area events: the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, an Earl Kitch jazz concert and a concert by Bob Dylan. Another submission featured a child care package, which profiled moms at work and at home, and various kinds of day care facilities.

Judges complimented her section's layout and subject matter, and cited the "great" photos in the fashion concert spread and the "extensive" coverage in the child care issue. Photos were by Rider.

Three other Observer and Eccentric papers also won MPA awards.

Birmingham Eccentric Suburban Life editor, Rebecca Haynes, received the first-place award for Lifestyle section. Judges said her section had "quite simply the best photos and most touching stories."

Her submissions included a profile of Camp Oakland, an Oxford facility for wayward children, and the efforts of locals volunteering in camp activities. A photo story was shot by photographer Steve Cantrell. A second piece involved a package of stories on a 4-year-old girl receiving cranial-facial surgery by a local surgeon Haynes and photographer Dan Dean observed most of the six-hour surgery firsthand.

The Southfield Eccentric picked up two awards of its own. The paper took second place for best local news reporting for a series of articles on education, "School Spending: Bridging the Gap." The series also appeared in the other Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. Judges said they liked the comparison reporters made between the school districts of Southfield and Detroit.

The Southfield Eccentric also won second place in the same circulation class for best editorial page under editor Sandra Armbruster. Judges felt the paper's editorials were "easily readable" and liked the distinctive headlines above the letters to the editor, which, they said, made readers' opinions stand out.

A SALUTE TO THE STARS AND STRIPES

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Special ed program to move

A Farmington-based special education program for 120 trainable mentally and emotionally impaired students will be mainstreamed into other school buildings and the community next fall.

Currently housed at the Farmington Training Center in downtown Farmington, the program serves students aged 11-26 from throughout Oakland County.

School-age students will be moved to two classrooms, one at a middle school and the other at a high school, while a program for adult students from 18-26 years of age will likely be moved to leased space within the community, said special education director Jan Richards.

Neither the classroom sites nor the community location have been selected, she said.

"We want to look at a facility that's not a traditional school building," she said. "We will concentrate on more community involvement."

The change comes because of state and federal mandates which require districts to place special education students into general education classrooms, when possible. Richards said the district has attempted to do this all along.

The change will also better utilize school programs like the South Oakland Skills Center, which takes trainable special education students and puts them through a work training program at the Oakland Community College-Orchard Ridge Campus. Hudson's at 12 Oaks Mall and the Windermere Nursing Home.