

Wood Creek student wins prize with essay

By Casey Hans
staff writer

ASUSPECTED tornado that whipped through Farmington Hills on a Friday afternoon last September made Nicole Martin realize how much she loved her family.

The fifth grader at Wood Creek Elementary — who says she "might want to be an author one day" — used the terrifying hour spent in a school hallway during the tornado warning as motivation for an essay called "What Makes a Family a Family."

Nicole's essay was one of 100 selected as national winners from 1,800 entries in the Scholastic News Essay Contest sponsored by MassMutual Insurance Co. She will receive a camera and photo album as her prize.

"Even when family members are apart, they should be thinking about one another," she wrote in her essay. "One day at school, I realized how important my family is to me."

THE SEPT. 14 storm with high winds, which officials called a "suspected tornado," caused damage less than two miles from the Farmington Hills elementary school.

The winds shattered windows and pulled doors from hinges at the Broadway Plaza at Middlebelt and 14 Mile. Wood Creek school is north of 12 Mile between Middlebelt and Iphigene roads.

Teacher Anna Crudgington, who encouraged Nicole to enter the writing contest, said it "was about the closest any of us had come" to experiencing a tornado, despite the many drills done at the school for both fire and tornado safety.

NICOLE RECALLED being in gym class at the time the tornado siren sounded in September.

"Everybody was scared," she said. "Some people were crying. We were crouched down, it was really uncomfortable."

She said her brother was in preschool, her father was at work and her mother was supposed to be at home — but was actually out driving around on an errand when the high winds hit. The family lives across town at 13 Mile and Drake.

The staff "was very proud of all



SHARON LAMIEUX STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

the kids" because the storm not only wreaked havoc with school schedules and frightened students, but caused delays in bus routing as well, Crudgington said. Although power was out to the school, auxiliary lighting was used during the crisis.

ALL OF the winning essays showed a common thread of "affectionate relationships" and had

themes showing that "the sum of the family outweighs the individual and that family values transcend material possessions," said Albert Solnit, professor emeritus and former director of the Yale Child Study Center, who judged the essays.

"Children overwhelmingly believe that 'loving and caring' and 'sticking together through good times and bad' are characteristics

of American families."

Wood Creek principal Barbara Novatis said "our staff was very much touched" by the essay, which was published in the school's November newsletter.

It also drew a lot of parent response.

"People had been talking about this (the tornado) for several months," she said.

The winner is . . . What Makes a Family a Family

By Nicole Martin
special writer

What makes a family a family? There are many things. To me the most important thing is people who care deeply about each other. Even when family members are apart, they should be thinking about one another. One day at school, I realized how important my family is to me.

My class was in the gym. We had just begun our half an hour with our physical education teacher Mrs. Perkins. All of a sudden, we heard a porreing sound. I was confused until we figured out it

was the tornado siren. We were told to crouch down and cover our heads with our hands. I was scared like everybody else, but not for myself. I was worried for my dad who was at work, my mom who was shopping and my little brother who was at preschool.

After about an hour all was clear. It was close to the end of the day, so we were sent home soon after we returned to our room.

When I reached home, I was overcome with joy. Everyone was safe. The power was out but the love in our house would last forever.

Wood Creek fifth grader Nicole Martin, the winner of a national essay contest, is shown with her teacher, Anna Crudgington. Nicole's essay was about the importance of family in light of a suspected tornado that hit the area in the fall.

Clarenceville secretaries expected to OK new pact

By Mario Chesney
staff writer

Nineteen secretaries of Clarenceville School District later this month are expected to ratify a two-year contract that took more than two years to negotiate.

If approved, the contract will give the secretaries a 9 percent pay hike in 1990-91 and a 6 percent pay hike in 1991-92, said Annette Schwab, president of the secretaries union.

The contract gives the secretaries a partial victory in their quest to join a bigger union in the district, the union representing such support personnel as custodians, maintenance workers, bus drivers and mechanics.

DURING NEGOTIATIONS, the secretaries found it difficult to join those workers who already had a contract, and thus settled for an interim contract which expires at the same time as the contract for the other support personnel, said Kenneth Pile, executive director of the 7-D Coordinating Council, the regional bargaining agent of the Michigan Education Association.

On July 1, 1992, when both contracts expire, the secretaries and the other support workers' union will bargain together and seek a joint contract, Pile said.

Bargaining began in September 1988 after the Clarenceville Board of Education approved the secretaries' application to join the Michigan Education Support Personnel Association.

The secretaries' independent contract had expired June 30.

But bargaining dragged on so long that, in a Dec. 20 letter to Superintendent Jerry Montecillo and the trustees, the Clarenceville Education Association urged settlement of the contract.

"The letter was written to put the heat on the administration to settle," said Jan Mills, president of the teachers' union. "We feel like we helped them hang in there."

Schwab, a counseling secretary at Clarenceville High, said it was "extremely helpful" to get the support of the CEA.

"It meant a great deal. Everyone was tired at the end. For the first year, we were on a merry-go-round and getting nowhere. It was a very stressful thing."

The easiest part of the whole negotiating process, Pile said, was getting the trustees' approval to join the support personnel union.

"We still had to negotiate with the district. Last February, we reached tentative agreement with the district but it was voted down by the support union."

"In order to cover the secretaries, the union would have had to modify their agreement. At that point, we realized we would not get an agreement the district found acceptable that the support workers would also find acceptable."

"So we went for the interim agreement. That's why it took so long."



Relaxing with a good book

Fourth-grade students (above) at the Highmeadow Campus in Farmington Hills brought in sleeping bags, pillows and bean bag chairs for a recent read-a-thon at the school to benefit the Salvation Army. Pledges were sought by each student for reading. They presented a check for \$1,104.39 to the Salvation Army. The event was organized by teachers Julie Bingham, Glory Oljace, Gaye Williams and Robin Del-Bianco.

BRIDAL FASHIONS

Large selection of bridal merchandise now at clearance prices. Make your selections from the respected names of Diamond, Bianchi, Priscilla, Alfred Angelo and more. Gowns for brides and bridesmaids as well as assorted headpieces.

While quantities last

Jacobson's