

A class city

Students learn to run own mini-government

By Casey Hane
staff writer

Some of the worst crimes include swearing, name-calling, tipping over chairs and pushing others on the playground.

But in Trudy Danley's third grade classroom at Longacre Elementary, being found guilty of those crimes means judgment by your peers and paying a fine. It's all part of Danley's civic unit which teaches kids about city government, the court system, civic pride and teamwork.

It goes one step beyond role-playing, and brings in real life problems the kids face in their school day.

"I think people would be amazed to see how capable kids are," Danley said. "They can handle it all, and they do it well."

This year, Danley's students named their city "Mini Detroit," and have elected a mayor and city council and hired police officers, a local judge, city manager, and other typical city employees.

For example, in a student court held each week, student police officers turn in their ticket books and students who have pleaded not guilty to the charges go to trial. Witnesses testify, and defendants get a chance to tell their story as well. A jury of the student's peers determines whether he or she is guilty, or not.

"It's their choice whether they want to plead guilty and pay the fine or go to trial," Danley added. The laws used in the court are actual school rules.

DANLEY BEGAN her social studies program about 15 years ago, after formulating and refining the idea through her master's thesis. Since then, she has made whatever adjustments are needed in her second and third grade classrooms. Each "city" has been different over the years, and apparently the learning experience is memorable.

"Former students come back and speak enthusiastically about it and the jobs they held," she said, "so we know it works."

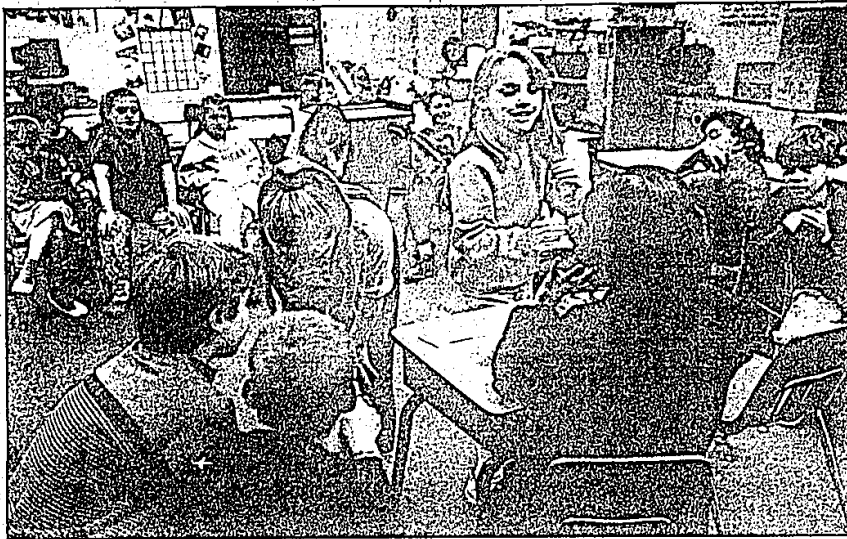
She kicks it off each year in November on election day, so students learn about that process. They, she said, they understand how to apply the concept to their own city.

Students learn not only about city government, but how to solve problems like a real city council would, and deal with things like public speaking skills. As an added bonus, students also participate in a separate "Mini-Society" program which teaches them about things like running a business. There, they learn about checking accounts, business loans and sometimes bankruptcy.

THOUGH MOST of the program is conducted in the classroom, Danley said she sometimes takes students outside. For example, the owners of Colonial Car Wash on Nine Mile allow the students to come in and participate in all aspects of their business from washing cars to greeting customers.

A member of a Farmington social studies study committee, Danley said the Farmington school district is trying to introduce similar teaching methods in social studies across the district. She said she expects such programs to be introduced in many of the schools next year.

Longacre principal Bill Smith said he is pleased with the real life approach in the program. "I really think it's a good instructional format," he said. "To me, that's the way education is supposed to be."



Longacre Elementary School teacher Trudy Danley (above) sets up the mock courtroom so that students can learn about city governments and mini societies. Matt Willer (left) sits on the witness stand, giving his defense, as judge Nicole Bugello listens to testimony.



As a fellow student admits to his "crime" on the stand, Emily Michalak (left) and Lisa Gratton laugh.

Staff photos by
Sharon LeMieux

police/fire calls

Listed below are some of the Farmington-area police incidents, fire calls and court calls reported during the past week:

REPORTED ABDUCTION

A 22-year-old Novi man told police he was abducted, but unharmed, by two unidentified men as he stopped to buy a soda at a gas station in Farmington Hills about 2 a.m. Sunday, according to a Farmington Hills police report.

The man stopped at a Mobil station, 37310 Grand River, and parked to one side of the station when two men approached him and forced him into the back seat of his car.

The men, who talked among themselves but not to the Novi man, drove around the Evergreen and I-696 area and finally dropped the man off on Evergreen, south of Schoolcraft about 4 a.m. The men took the car, which was valued at \$2,000. The man said the pair never used a weapon.

ARMED ROBBERY

A total of \$326 in cash was stolen from a Farmington gas station during an armed robbery April 12.

According to a Farmington Department of Public Safety report, the incident occurred at about 9 p.m. Sunday at the Mobil gas station at Grand River and Drake roads. A woman approached the cashier, asking her for change for \$1. When the cashier opened the drawer, the woman put her hand in a pocket and demanded cash "or I'll shoot."

The cashier handed over money, and the woman left on foot.

INDECENT EXPOSURE

An unidentified youth reportedly exposed himself to a 24-year-old woman on Cora Saturday after she left her house when she heard someone hit her car, according to a Farmington Hills police report.

Several youths banging on the door of a nearby house and asking if anyone was home. When the youths saw the woman, they swore at her and threatened to break into her house. One of the youths then exposed himself to the woman, according to the report.

The youths were last seen walking eastbound on Nine Mile. They told the woman they would be back and would break into her house.

MAN CONVICTED

A 31-year-old Farmington Hills man was sentenced to 101 months in prison following his conviction on firearms charges, according to U.S. Attorney Stephen Markman.

Martin Allan Cook was sentenced before U.S. District Judge Robert DeMascio April 9 on his conviction for possession of an unregistered firearm and use of a firearm during a drug trafficking crime.

On June 15, 1990, Livonia and Southfield police found and seized more than 751 grams of marijuana and a shotgun, which Cook reportedly used to protect the marijuana, according to Assistant U.S. Attorney Charles Holman III, who prosecuted the case.

"Several months after the marijuana and firearm seizure and before Mr. Cook could be tried on marijuana charges by local prosecutors, federal agents visited the site of the marijuana seizure. At that time, Mr. Cook was found in possession of an unregistered firearm, which Mr. Cook was in the process of converting into a machine gun," Holman said.

Cook's sentence reflect a mandatory minimum five-year sentence for his use of a firearm while possessing marijuana, which he intended to distribute, Markman said.

The federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms investigated the case.

THEFTS REPORTED

An amplifier, speakers and CDs valued at \$500 were reported stolen from a 1983 Toyota on Kingswood Square, April 6-7.

A car phone valued at \$300 was reported stolen from a 1985 Lincoln, on Country Bluff in the Cross Winds Condominiums, April 10-12.

A telephone, six cassette tapes and a car boot valued at \$700, including \$10 in coins and cash were reported stolen from a 1988 Chrysler at the Farmington Square Condominiums on 12 Mile, April 12. Damage was estimated at \$1,000 when the robber tore open the car's convertible top.

Four tires and rims valued at \$2,000 were reported stolen from a car at the Bill Cook auto dealership, 37901 Grand River, April 9-10.

Two incidents occurred at the Mills Products lot, 23106 Eight Mile April 10. In one case, wheel covers valued at \$400 were stolen. In the other, an \$18,000 four-wheel driver Oldsmobile vehicle was taken.

Approximately \$140 worth of food stamps were reported stolen from a car parked at Tops Motel, 28744 Grand River, April 11-13.

A rear window valued at \$400 was reported stolen from a 1990 GMC on Salem, April 10-13.

Tools valued at \$1,969 were reported stolen from a garage on Lundy, April 12-13.

A bicycle valued at \$197 was reported stolen from a storage area on Madison Court in the Independence Green Apartments at Halsted and Grand River, April 11-13.

DAMAGE REPORTED

A brick was thrown onto a car parked at Maude's Pizza, 233331 Orchard Lake Road April 13, causing \$250 in damage.

A rock was thrown through a windshield at Bob Dussseau Used Cars, 31625 Grand River, April 9-10, causing \$400 in damage.

J SHOP

MADRAS DRESS

\$22

FLORAL TANK

\$26

Your favorite silhouette
dropped waist, free
and easy morning
cool, comfortable
and cotton. Full Skirt
S-M-L Left Navy
or side button
front \$22 Right Red
or multicolor daisy
print, \$26

Jacobson's

We welcome Jacobson's Charge and American Express®
Shop until 9 p.m. on Thursday and Friday. Until 8 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday.
Shop Sunday Noon to 5 p.m.