



Up goes the birdhouse: Special Olympians (from left) Dave Kutt, Mike Holshine, Darrell VanTassel and Steve Lynn provide a home for the birds in Heritage Park.

# Special athletes brave cold to help the birds

BY BILL COUTANT  
STAFF WRITER

Farmington area Special Olympians didn't wait for the spring thaw to get started on a nature project at Heritage Park.

Several athletes, parents, and coaches from Team Farmington went to the park one recent Sunday and repaired 12 birdhouses that had been vandalized. Alan Bolton, 85, had built the birdhouses along Blue Bird Trail.

The athletes braved 20-degree temperatures and windy conditions to replace bent, lightweight metal conduit supports with heavy-duty pipe. Once the supports were in place, the athletes attached the repaired birdhouses.

"The community has really supported these athletes," said Special Olympics coach Mike Todorov. "We wanted to give something back to the community."

As part of the project, Special Olympians met at the park's day camp center and saw a film about

**■ 'We saw deer and rabbit tracks. We even found a foxhole. Putting up the bluebird houses was fun. You have to turn the house away from the wind and you have to face it towards a tree.'**

*Dave Kott  
Team Farmington member*

bluebirds and how to establish and maintain a bluebird trail.

"It was cold, but we had a lot of fun," said Dave Kott, a Team Farmington member. "We learned a lot too. We saw deer and rabbit tracks. We even found a foxhole. Putting up the bluebird houses was fun. You have to turn the house away from the wind and you have to face it towards a tree."

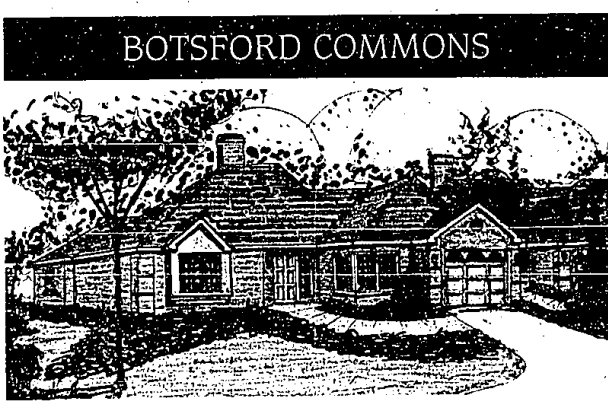
Joe Derek, a member of the Farmington Hills beautification committee, praised the group's efforts.

"Their coach (Todd Lipa)

wanted to get these kids interested in something besides sports," Derek said. "They realize that sports is not all there is to recreation."

Derek, Lipa and Don and Mary Tests of Backyard Birds are planning a birdhouse/birdfeeder contest that will be judged on April 24 as part of an Earth Week event.

Other events planned for that Saturday include the release of 24 pheasants by Team Farmington athletes, a tree planting, a wildlife art show, a wild game dinner, and seminars on backyard habitats.



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