

Been there:
Chelsea
Johnson
speaks with
some au'hor-
ity on Africa.
She has vis-
ited Zim-
babwe with
her family.



Fourth-graders ride techno-highway to an East Africa tour

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

If students cannot go to East Africa, the continent can come to them.



The emerald green and parched brown landscape splash through on a television screen in Helene Blackman's fourth grade class at Eagle Elementary.

Blackman's class is on an electronic field trip. Turner Adventure Learning is providing the live remote from East Africa, showing the majesty and troubles in the Great Rift valley region.

Some children sit on desks, their legs swinging back and forth.

A segment focuses on how a hunting tribe, the Masai, are trying to adapt their ancient customs in a modern world.

"That's a Cote," said one student as a native takes a swig from a bottle on TV. A phone number flashes on the screen. Children rush to the back of the classroom where a phone sits. Blackman motions them back to their desks as Megan

Loch tries to get through.

A TV moderator answers several questions from school children across the country. A collective sigh goes up when she announces there's no more time for inquiries.

The television excursion is one of two Blackman's class will take. An electronic field trip is planned to CNN newsmen in Atlanta March 22-24.

MetroVision provided the hookup. District media director Peggy Schmidt also helped make the field trip a reality.

The media program was made possible through a grant Blackman received from the Farmington Public Schools' Technology Advisory Committee. Teachers can apply for up to \$1,500 to bring innovative projects to their classrooms.

Not all requests have to center around computers either, said Kathy Jones, director of Information Management. They can include voice and video technology.

"It introduces kids to the possibilities of global technology," Blackman said. "It makes them familiar with other places they may or may not ever have a chance to go. They get a global perspective."

After the morning broadcast, students reflect on what they saw with a torrent of facts and obser-

ventions.

Rachel Kahan mentions how the Masais are trying to adapt the diverse ethnic groups speak Swahili in order to communicate with one another.

"Today, they talked about the drought that was so bad the lakes were almost dry," said Megan Loch, who was unsuccessful getting through with her question on the phone. "It was hard for people to get food, and they had to migrate and they found it very difficult to adjust."

Students watched a half-hour preparatory video before the live broadcast. A photographer also visited the classroom to display photos he's taken in the region. Some researched facts on East Africa using Grollier's Encyclopedia on CD-ROM in the school's computer lab.

A computer and modem in the classroom allows students to ask Turner Adventure Learning questions on American On-Line about East Africa.

Since the field trip aired two weeks ago, students have continued to approach Blackman, showing facts on geography and geology they have looked up.

"There's a lot of incidental learning going on," Blackman said.

walking past your house," Dean said later. "You're going to have kids parking next to your house... Sometimes they walk on your grass."

Compounding the problem is the school parking lot's lack of space and reluctance by students to use it.

Farmington High has 265 parking spaces for students, plus six handicap spots. The school sold 300 one-year permits at \$20 each and has since quit selling daily permits.

An average of 12 to 14 spaces are going empty every day, Dean said.

Permit-only parking is not option, Andreksi said. It would deny residents a chance to park freely, and Andreksi added, "Who's to say that won't move up another block?"

"That makes starting a new business or expanding an existing business more feasible and that's good for the economic growth of this community," Blaisell said.

Throughout the summer, Farmington Hills and communities throughout the metropolitan area participate in Ozone Action Days. On very hot days, residents are asked not to fill gasoline tanks during the day, not to mow their lawns and not to barbecue on charcoal grills. The goal is to reduce air pollution.

Ground-level ozone can cause breathing problems, reduced lung function, asthma, eye irritation, stuffy nose, reduced resistance to colds and other infections and may speed up aging of lung tissue, according to the EPA. Ground-level ozone can also damage plants and trees, and reduce visibility.

Out of Africa: Eagle Elementary School students watch a live program from Kenya.

STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LEMMON

Line busy: Megan Loch looks disappointed after calling the show only to find the line busy.



Parking overflow plagues sub

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Students are parking on side streets, so residents can't find any space. Kids are walking on lawns, loitering and littering.

As Yogi Berra said, it's *deja vu* all over again.

Some Bel-Aire subdivision residents are now complaining about students from nearby Farmington High parking on their streets.

Similar complaints led the city of Farmington to create a parking-by-permit-only district on Lakeway, Valley View and Prospect streets in September. As a result, Loomis Street residents have inherited the excess parking.

"We all knew they would just move once they put up the (permit-only parking) signs," Loomis resident Craig Andreksi said. "We were taking leaves and all of a

sudden kids started parking there. That's the first time we noticed it."

Kids have shown no respect for the property, Andreksi said. They flick cigarettes on lawns and leave McDonald's wrappers behind.

Farmington High Assistant Principal Ken Dean said he's spoken to Andreksi about the problem. Students are encouraged to be "good citizens" in such situations.

Otherwise, the school doesn't have much authority, Dean said. It's not illegal for them to park there.

"You can't tell them they can't park there unless you put up the signs like they did on Lakeway," Dean said.

"I told the gentleman when you buy a house in the area of a high school, you're going to have kids

Hills businesses to get breathing room

BY BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills and other southeastern Michigan communities will reap a reward for taking care of the area's air quality.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced that seven southeastern Michigan counties, including Oakland, now meet federal air quality standards.

"The achievement of 'attainment status' is important to businesses in Farmington Hills," said Hills Director of Public Services Tom Blaisell. "As a 'non-attainment area' a business would have to show it could improve air quality before it could expand or make improvements."

Blaisell said that cost to businesses was most evident in this area of the state where industrial concerns are concentrated.

"It meant they had to retrofit or they couldn't expand," he said. But the EPA restrictions also affected government projects, such as new or resurfacing of roads.

"Road improvements are something everyone wants," he said. "But unless you could show how air quality would be improved, you couldn't have it."

The new status won't mean motorists won't have to get their required emissions tests, but should the EPA quality guidelines, further measures are not likely.

It means that businesses do not have to adopt more expensive emission control procedures including the purchase and installation of mechanisms to control more strictly the escape of emissions from smokestacks and gas pumps, Blaisell said.

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