



Core and feeding: Jeff Stewart watches his daughter Meghan, 11, and her friend Clare Pearce, 10, brush one of the two horses on the property.

SHARON LAMBERT/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

## Farm from page 1A

on smaller farm animals, but still find young visitors who are thrilled to see the animals up close.

"When we bought this farm they kept horses here," said Louise McFarland, who lives on Power Road across from Alameda School south of 11 Mile. "We wanted to have animals for the kids."

McFarland and her husband moved to the six-acre Willowridge Farm four years ago. Like the Stewarts, they will have their farm featured on the historic house tour this fall.

As a substitute teacher, McFarland has found plenty of interest in her pygmy goats and chickens.

"We've had schools and Scout troops visit," she said. "And my children have liked having the animals."

In fact, one of her 11-year-old daughter Annie's chickens, Fancy Nancy, recently took second place in a show. McFarland said the goats

are odorless, but the chickens are something of a chore. But, other than the fresh eggs the chickens produce, they are not typical of their farm brethren.

"We give the eggs to neighbors," she said. "But they (chickens) don't have to worry. They'll never be chicken stew."

Stewart, who has also had chickens and a goat, said although his family's two quarter horses, Asti and her daughter Nutmeg, still have plenty of room to roam, the building of subdivisions and apartments nearby is a reminder that he is no longer in the country.

"We used to be able to ride on dirt roads, go into woods and sand pits," he said. "It's frustrating to see a lot of new growth."

Sherrie Stewart said she should have seen the growth coming. But, like a lot of people from the area, she didn't.

"I naively thought it would stay like this," she said. Jeff Stewart said it is late



STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/TOM HANLEY

All chickens have names: Annie McFarland, 11, holds her chicken, Bonnie Blue. All her chickens have names.

— but perhaps not too late — to save the less dense, natural beauty roads, such as Power Road north of 11 Mile. And if it is too late, Farmington Hills

could lose its quaint, pastoral character. "It's at the bottom of what makes this to me a great place," he said.



STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/TOM HANLEY

Goats got theirs: John McFarland (left) and Tim McFarland feed goats Daisy and Molly on the McFarland's Power Road property.

## Report on families leaving disputed

Editor's note: The Walled Lake School District includes about one-square mile of northwest Farmington Hills.

By KAREN OLIVER  
SPECIAL WRITER

Residents of a Walled Lake community are taking issue with a newspaper report that says Jewish residents are leaving that school district in favor of West Bloomfield schools.

The front-page story of the July 28 Jewish News, titled "Fuddle Jumpers," referred to Jewish families in the Timber's Edge subdivision — which is part of the Walled Lake Consolidated School District — leaving the area for houses only streets away in order to be in the West Bloomfield School District.

Eighty concerned parents sent a letter to the Jewish News in reaction to what they called a one-sided article.

Phil Jacobs, editor of the Jewish News Tuesday said, "West Bloomfield and Walled Lake are important to our readers. There are certain documented trends going on in those areas. We've chosen to report on those trends, and if the coverage creates a level of concern, it's our hope that there's no misunderstanding by it."

The letter to the Jewish News, written Monday, says, "While you wrote about a handful of Jewish families who have chosen to leave the district for a variety of reasons, you ignored the fact that many more (probably several times) that number of Jewish families have moved into the Walled Lake district this year and many others have stayed within the district when building their new homes."

Signed by 80 Walled Lake school parents, the letter requests the same front-page prominence in the Jewish News that the article had received.

"We were very disappointed with the whole structure of the article," said Walled Lake school board trustee Marc Engler, who signed the letter. "I don't feel the Jewish News provided a balanced or fair pic-

## WALLED LAKE SCHOOLS

ture of what's going on. The letter written was a very rapid response by families who were very irritated."

Calling the story "one-sided" was Steven Gaynor, assistant superintendent of the Walled Lake district. "Out of 12,000 children in the Walled Lake School District, they interviewed three to five parents who no longer live here."

According to Gaynor, the average number of students joining the district over the past six years is 381, probably coming out of 200 to 250 households. In 1994-95 alone, 550 students joined the district, out of an estimated 300 to 350 families. Gaynor said that the district has a "fairly large and growing Jewish population" that was offended by the article.

"I was extremely upset with the article because everything in it appeared to be false, misleading, and trying to cause mass hysteria" said Walled Lake district resident Judge Michael Gill. "I have two children in Walled Lake schools and we're very happy with the district. The article seemed like a deliberate act to panic people to move and form a blockbusting. It's an extremely upsetting issue."

The Jewish News story was called false and inaccurate by one person mentioned in it.

"The tone of the article was inaccurate and some of it was factually inaccurate," said Daniel Tukul, president of the Timber's Edge Subdivision Association. "Herman Frankel was mentioned as the developer of Timber's Edge, but he hasn't developed any of the subdivisions in the Walled Lake district."

Frankel, of the Herman Frankel Organisation, agreed that the article was inaccurate. The article stated that Frankel developed both Timber's Edge and Village Place, neither of which is true. Additionally, Frankel claimed that the article misquoted him in reference to

the failure of three bond issues since October 1993.

"This is not a concern about how many Jewish families are moving in or out," said Tukul. "It is a culturally diverse area, and we assume that's why people move into it."

Michael Fabian, one of the parents who signed the letter, said that his family last December moved into a new home built in the Southwest subdivision, which is in the Walled Lake district.

According to Fabian, seven out of 10 homeowners in that subdivision are Jewish, and he said, "We chose to be in the Walled Lake district because of what we feel is a high quality of schools. What disturbs me is, it (the article) gives the misleading impression that the Jewish community is exiting the Walled Lake district for a few chosen subdivisions in the West Bloomfield School District."

Fabian said that while some families may have jumped from Walled Lake schools to the West Bloomfield district, "far more Jewish families have chosen to move into the Walled Lake district."

"I do not believe all of the Jews are moving out," said Walled Lake resident Sue Hoffman, who also signed the letter to the Jewish News. "... As a Jewish parent in this district I am very happy, and I believe this to be a growing, thriving Jewish community."

Both Gaynor and Fabian agreed with one part of the story, that the defeat of the three bond issues probably has some people feeling uneasy about the long-term future of the district.

"I'm not saying that's not legitimate," Fabian said. "But I think the overwhelming majority of families feel, while that's a setback, we're happy with the quality of education in Walled Lake."

Staff writer Tim Smith contributed to this report.

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