

COMMUNITY LIFE

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Youth center off to flying start

■ The Farmington Community Foundation is busy raising funds to support and expand the youth center.

BY MARY RODRIQUE
STAFF WRITER

Imagine leaving work at 3 p.m. each afternoon and heading to the local library, where you must stay put quietly until your ride home appears at 8 p.m.

Now imagine being an energetic 12 year old who has just spent six hours cooped up in a stuffy classroom and must follow that scenario, five days a week. Not much fun, but that was the drill for at least some local middle school kids until the Farmington Hills youth center was established last January.

Targeted to youths ages 11 to 15, the program is housed in the William Costick Activities Center and provides a positive after school environment, complete with swimming, sports, games and interaction with other kids. Wildly popular in its debut, the center was expected to attract 125 youths, but 476 middle school kids have already been through its doors. On any given day, it is used by 75 to 125 students.

"Our goal is to build a protective environment for our kids. We can't lose any more kids. They're our investment in tomorrow," said Nancy Bates, Farmington Hills city councilwoman.

Bates was the impetus behind the idea. As mayor in 1993, she turned her concern for the status of families into action by establishing the Farmington Hills Commission on



STAFF PHOTO BY BRADON LEHNER

Executive dip: Youth center director Todd Lipa examines a new book for the learning center while waist deep in the swimming pool (another activity available at the center). He's with Steppingstone summer campers Audrianna Archibald, Chris Conrad and Joel

Children Youth and Families to identify unmet needs in the community.

After a year, it became clear to the commission that the best time to impact young lives was during the middle school years. And the best approach was prevention, offering something positive to keep kids busy and out of trouble.

From police chief William Dwyer, Bates learned of a juvenile justice grant available for just such a purpose. With \$200,000 in local parks and recreation millage money already earmarked for youth programs, Bates' commission applied for the matching grant and received \$600,000 meted out over three years. At the end of the grant peri-

od, a stipulation is that the program must continue through local funding.

Thus the Farmington Community Foundation was born.

"The foundation was set up to take over funding of the youth center when other revenues run out," said

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RICHARD STRAUZ

Schools peek into future of technology

As has been the case the last ten years, I will be spending time this summer with a large number of my colleagues from Farmington Public Schools. We will be continuing to update our technology skills. School has changed a lot since I graduated from high school (West Bloomfield, Class of '65). I know that I have come a long way in my computer competence; there is always more to know.

Recently I was asked where I thought the community and Farmington Public Schools will be with home and school uses of technology use five years from now. I glibly replied: "I don't know." Upon further reflection, there are a few predictions I am willing to make.

We will be talking to each other via e-mail. I recently learned that I can get free access to the internet (and therefore the world) from Farmington community library. The Observer offers reasonably priced access to the full World Wide Web. Picture absent students getting copies of their teachers' handouts from home. Or, envision parents being able to check on their children's work whenever they want. Some already order out groceries and do banking from a home computer.

You probably have friends who have the latest

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