



Mac attack: Doing the Macarena are left, Betsy Sote, a Special Olympian and Farmington High student, and middle, Farmington Hills Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi.

Holiday dance has promising future

BY WILLIAM COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

David Reynolds, 29, of Farmington Hills was enjoying the music and had just sat down to some good food at the "Holiday Dance" for those with special needs.

"I like it a lot," he said, while watching couples dance at the William Costick Center Dec. 20. Then a friend chimed in that he wished there were more girls attending.

But about 40 people did attend the city's first dance for special needs individuals, an idea that has been successful elsewhere.

"We just thought that this would provide a social outlet for special needs students and adults that they don't already have," said Todd Lips, director of the Farmington Hills decentralized youth program and a coach and activist for Special Olympics.

If the initial response is any indication, the event has a place in the hearts of many area residents.

"I can't tell you how excited our kids are," said Alice Toroyan, Special Olympics liaison for the city's Commission on Children, Youth and Families and the mother of a special needs young man.

Parents and participants brought plenty of good food and beverages were provided. The \$3 admission wasn't too steep and Lips said that day Jon Ray gave event organizers a great deal on his services.



Rest awhile: Enjoying the dance are (far right) Jan Hughes and others, who turned out for what might be an annual event at the William Costick Center.

The city's senior program donated the use of Killarney Hall for the event.

Similar social events have been very successful in Wayne County, according to Debbie Sullivan, who volunteers with the "Just Fun Club" through the Association for Retarded Citizens of Northwest Wayne County.

"Our activities have ranged from dances to pizza parties to topical themes for Valentine's Day, Halloween and ice cream socials," said Sullivan, who works in a group home while attending Eastern Michigan University where she is working towards a degree in special education. "We have something every other Friday."

Lips said he doesn't want this type of event to be

restricted to developmentally disabled or any other specific handicap. And since anyone 16 and older was invited to attend, the dance was not just for high-school age students or only Special Olympic participants.

Sullivan said there have been as many as 280 participants in Just Fun Club events with 120-180 participating on average.

"It gives individuals an opportunity to socialize with their peers," she said. "For some in group homes, it's one of the few times they do things with others."

The Farmington Hills dance was a modest beginning, but everyone seemed to enjoy doing the Macarena on a special evening.

City officials: Shovel snow, or fork over fine money

BY JENNIFER PLACINTO
STAFF WRITER

John Konesol hasn't had to issue a single snow removal ticket this year and he hopes to keep it that way.

"I don't have nearly the same problems with businesses and residents as I have in years past," said Konesol, code enforcement officer for the City of Farmington. "We certainly appreciate their conscientiousness in doing that."

Konesol is responsible for making sure pedestrian travel is safe in the winter. And since many residents walk to their destinations within the city, including elderly residents to whom slip and falls could prove very dangerous, Konesol doesn't take his job lightly.

"We have a large amount of seniors walking... or exercising," Konesol said. "There's a good amount of people that just don't deal with it, but, yet I think, due to the effort, more people are thinking in terms of safety," Konesol said, adding that some people walk because they don't have cars. "That's why they live here because they are close and convenient," he said.

In years past, Konesol issued an average of 30 to 60 tickets to ordinance offenders. However, during the past five years, the majority of people have kept their sidewalks clear and Konesol's only had to hand out a handful or less annually.

The city ordinance requires residents and business owners to keep sidewalks adjoining their property to the streets clear of snow, ice and other pedestrian obstructions. Snow and ice must be removed from the sidewalks within 24 hours after the accumulation.

"Sometimes something as simple as a dusting (of

snow) can be hazardous," Konesol said, adding that he encourages the use of road salt when needed or calcium chloride for those concerned about damaging concrete.

While it is each individual's choice if they want to clear walkways leading up to their homes or private drives, Konesol encourages them to do so for the safety of others such as postal workers.

"I'm sure other public people, such as the post office (workers) certainly appreciate that being clear," he said.

"Most people take care of it," however, Farmington Post Office supervisor Ron Bergum said, local mail carriers experience difficulties with uncleared walkways on occasion.

If postal carriers report the unsafe conditions to their supervisors, Bergum said, they don't have to deliver to that home or business.

"When they don't get their mail, that's when they usually will shovel their walk," Bergum said.

Konesol added that people should be thinking in terms of lawsuits, too.

"The more you do to help and make sure you made the effort to do it, the better off you're going to be," he said.

Thus far, snow removal hasn't been much of an issue this year since accumulation has been melting within 24 hours, according to Konesol who surveys the sidewalks and tickets any offenders. He also takes a photograph of the offending white stuff since because accused violators sometimes challenge the charge in 47th District Court.

First time offenders face a minimum fine of \$25. Subsequent offenders can face up to \$100 and more if they are found guilty of disregarding the ordinance.

RECREATION NEWS

Each week the Recreation Division of the Farmington Hills Department of Special Services presents a synopsis of upcoming activities in this column. For further information regarding programs, contact the Recreation office at 473-9570. Pre-registration is required for most activities. For matters regarding Farmington Hills City Council agenda items, call the news line at 473-9532.

DOWNHILL SKIING
Students in grades 4 through 12 can enjoy skiing at Mt. Brighton on Friday evenings. Buses leave designated sites

throughout the city at 4:30 p.m. and return at approximately 10 p.m. There are three, two-week sessions and one, one-week session scheduled. The first session will run Jan. 10 and 17. The fee is \$50 for a two-week session. If ski rental is required, an \$11 rental fee will be collected on the bus.

SWIM LESSONS
Beginning Jan. 4, there will be a six-session program at the Costick Activities Center pool, 28600 11 Mile Road. Classes from pre-school beginners through youth advance at various times, Monday through Sat-

urday are available. A pre-registration fee of \$30 is now being accepted at the recreation office. Private lessons are available by calling 473-1834.

PRE-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

A variety of activities for preschool children will be offered at the Heritage Park Day Camp Center beginning the week of Jan. 6. Activities include dance, art, music, tumbling and creative play. Either refer to the recently distributed program brochure or contact our office at 473-9570 for further information.



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