

## Message in a song



STAFF PHOTO BY LAWRENCE R. MCKEE



Juniors and seniors: Junior Music Camp students from the Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Farmington Hills spent last week learning Bible stories, church hymns, musical concepts and instruments. On Wednesday, they visited Halsted Place Convalescent Home in Farmington Hills where they brought stories, prayer, songs and gifts. At top, the youngsters sing for more than 30 residents and staff. Just above, Keaton Curran, 5, gives a gift to Rose Birecki while Viola Crocker chuckles. At right, Dana Baier, 5, sings with feeling.



Parking lot: City and historical officials celebrate as the state Historical Commission named three Heritage Park buildings as historic sites.



STAFF PHOTO BY TOM HOFFMEYER

## State cites 3 Farmington Hills buildings as history

BY TODD WICES  
STAFF WRITER

On June 14, the state of Michigan finally learned what Farmington Hills has known all along: That Saturday, that state officially bestowed "historic" status on three Heritage Park buildings that have long been known as local landmarks. Plaques on the structures were unveiled at a small ceremony, attended by Farmington Hills Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi and members of the Historic District Commission.

"It reinforces what we know all along," said Ruth Moehlman, Historic District commissioner. "The buildings already had local historic status, but this is the frosting on the cake."

Each of the three structures has its own unique history. The prize of the collection is the Gray-Spicer house, built as a summer home in 1926 by David and Martha Gray. The house was designed by famous architect Marcus Burrows, whose designs are scattered throughout the state.

After David Gray died, the house changed hands once or twice, but eventually became the Grays' again. In 1935, the house was a wedding gift to daughter Ellie Gray and her new husband, William Spicer. Ellie rode horses

around the 211-acre farm, and held onto the house even after William moved out.

Their oldest son, Nick Spicer, honored his mother's wish that the property never be developed upon. Now the administrator of the estate, he was instrumental in helping the historical district commission receive the state designation.

Most of the rooms in the Gray-Spicer house are still intact. The bedroom wing and kitchen were turned into conference rooms, and are now used by various local commissions for meetings. The house is open to the public by arrangement.

The other historic structures are barns. One is a cow barn with a silo, built circa 1880. The other is a combination horse stable, chauffeur's quarters, and garage built around 1918. It was originally part of the Longacre estate owned by Luman and Elizabeth Goodenough.

Even with Nick Spicer's help, Moehlman said getting the state designation wasn't easy.

"We had to jump through a few hoops and beg them," she said. "They used to hand them out very easily. It's getting more and more difficult now."

Moehlman said the buildings serve as an important history

lesson to local residents.

"It makes us aware of our heritage. Now we are aware that they're significant, not only to us, but to the state of Michigan. (That time) was a stepping-stone to life as we know it today."

"Between 1800 and 1923 was when everything we know in modern life came along: indoor plumbing, central heating, the automobile, and those."

The structures can also remind today's Farmingtonites how much things have changed. The state gave the Historic District Commission a framed certificate, which was going to be hung in the front hall of the Gray-Spicer House — until they remembered how popular asbestos was in construction back then and decided not to drill a hole in the wall.

Vagnozzi was pleased to see the buildings receive the state designation.

"The Spicer family and their land and buildings have played a vital role here," he said. "We wouldn't have Heritage Park without them."

"I've been to Europe in recent years, and you see how they handle their historic sites and buildings," added Vagnozzi. "I think we're starting to catch up. The house isn't a colosseum, but it's close."

## Maxfield gets raise; contract extended

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Public Schools Superintendent Bob Maxfield received a 2-percent raise with 1-percent incentive tacked on and a pass to go back to class.

The Farmington Board of Education extended the superintendent's contract another year, which means Maxfield will oversee the district of 11,877 students and 1,493 employees through year 2000.

Maxfield's salary increases to \$126,450 annually, which is believed to put him in the top five in terms of salary among school district administrators in the county.

The 1-percent incentive is based on his achieving of predetermined goals and is given at the board's discretion, Trustee Linda Enberg said.

Maxfield, who joined the district from Berkley schools in 1994, has typically received 3-percent raises and an additional year on his ongoing three-year contract.

This year's agreement includes a new professional activities section, which encourages the superintendent to attend a management workshop or seminar of his choosing — outside the circle of school leadership.

"What we're saying is a seasoned superintendent needs more than the national conference every year to see them grow," Enberg said. "I think it's kind of a nice message: He's a lifelong learner as well as our students and our teachers."

The seminar would be limited to one week a year or two weeks every two years. Maxfield attends the American Association of School Administrators conference annually.

"My observation was that so much I get to go to such as the



Bob Maxfield

**'I appreciate the board's vote of confidence.'**

**Bob Maxfield**  
—Superintendent, Farmington Public Schools

association meeting is kind of routine," Maxfield said. "The suggestion to the board, and they willingly jumped on it, was that a week a year or two weeks every two years — not to exceed that — could be devoted to something that kind of stretches me."

Board members feel Maxfield stretches himself to every portion of the district.

"We continue to be amazed at the amount of time he puts into the job," Enberg said.

Trustee Cathy Webb added, "It's not just a job to him; He gets involved personally and gets to know everyone on a personal basis. He's all three in one: He's an excellent teacher and administrator and a good person."

He is reviewed annually by a board subcommittee. As in the past, both parties worked together in developing goals for the coming year.

"I think each year we put what we're about into sharper focus," Maxfield said. "I appreciate the board's vote of confidence."

The first three years have been busy, interesting and productive, Maxfield said. He initiated the Mission 2007 goal setting process, which involved residents and school people.

The narrow defeat of the \$110 million bond measure dealt a setback to his goal of becoming a premier school district of the 21st Century. The district plans to go back to voters with a two-part proposal in late September, though.

"I guess the part of the three years I feel best about is that we have a pretty broad consensus on what we need to become and we're not equivocating on it," he said. "We're saying this is truly going to be an outstanding place to learn and to teach."



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