

Summer study

Hard to argue with results

Summer school — two of the most dreaded words from most of our childhoods — takes on a positive feeling when it helps students to improve test scores and even feel good about doing it.

Farmington school district officials are deservedly proud of their special summer reading and writing program called Summer Extended Learning Program (SELP), reporting last month that students from previous years showed some strong improvement on several standardized tests.

The effort targets early elementary youngsters — second, third and fourth graders — who can benefit from a month of half-day sessions. This summertime program means kids get intensive work on reading and writing with more teachers per student than regular classrooms, plus the help of paraprofessionals.

Students get a chance to attend there by referral, from classroom teachers and standardized test scores. These aren't necessarily the worst-scoring students at their grade levels. Many of them are slightly below average in reading and writing.

They are students "who can benefit most from short-term intervention," said Barbara Chorem, director of assessments, evaluation and special projects.

A new twist this year is the requirement that parents "buy-in" on the special help. They're paying \$100 per student to enroll their youngster in the program, which doesn't come close to covering costs but makes parent and child realize they're making a commitment to ensure that students show up for class. An absence of student absences attests to that commitment.

As long as the parent's cost isn't prohibitive — and PTA groups provide scholarships for those who can't afford it — the \$100 investment is a good idea.

Once there, school officials report that students develop a good attitude about this summer school stuff. They call it "Camp Read-a-Lot." They get more one-on-one instruction and its showing. While officials caution that the data is still preliminary because the program is only 2 years old, standardized test scores for students in the program have shown sizable increases.

The combination of improving school attitudes and test scores are key for this younger age group of students. And, while some might quarrel with the expense of such a program, it's hard to argue when a program delivers what everyone is looking for — measurable results in the form of better test scores.

Keeping your health in mind

Most of us care about our health — surely some more than others.

Health can be measured in varied ways. But there's one constant to any discussion about it — a commitment to healthy living is more apt to promote good health than not.

That's why your Observer over the past few years has strengthened its commitment to heightening public awareness about the world of health through expanded coverage in the paper and increased support in the community.

For example, we're committed to spotlighting the goals and activities of Healthy People, Healthy Oakland. The grass-roots movement aims to improve Oakland County's quality of life by spurring a shared vision for healthy lifestyles.

Regular features in your Observer now include recreation, fitness and health coverage. The rationale behind such coverage is simple: readers tell us they like information about active living that inspires them to exercise more, eat better and feel fitter.

Meanwhile, I was happy to hear about the turnout for the fourth annual Health Day coordinated by the Oakland County Medical Society (OCMS) in April. More than 250 people interacted with doctors from a host of specialties. This year's event sponsors included The Community House of Birmingham, the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers and Huntington Bank of Birmingham.

The O&E co-sponsored Health Day for the third straight year because of the medical society's unflinching commitment to helping people help themselves by sharpening the focus of their health. The society is a nonprofit, professional group of 1,600 licensed physicians and surgeons.

On Health Day, you can learn about blood pressure and CPR, or you can have your hearing and eyes checked. The concurrent Project Health-O-Rama offers free and low-cost health screening.

But make no mistake: the keystone of Health Day is Dialogue With Doctors. These free, fast-paced classes enable you to discuss new technologies and treatments. They also

OAKLAND WATCH



Bob Sklar

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serve up a basic review of anatomy and physiology.

Peter Muller, a Bloomfield Hills pediatrician and president of the Birmingham-based OCMS, says Health Day's long-term benefit is "that it truly allows for very frank, candid discussions about not only specific medical conditions but also personal preventive health care, the various types of health plans on the market and literally any other related question the participants care to ask."

"Current trends in health care delivery," he says, "are exerting an impersonalizing influence on the patient/physician relationship. We're seeking to recapture that conversation with your physician."

We're dedicated to maintaining an emotional bond as well — to you, our readers. So if you have an idea on how we can better serve as a valued source for local news about health, fitness or recreation, please send me a note by mail (805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009), fax (810-644-1314) or e-mail (skater@oconline.com). We welcome your input.

Bob Sklar is managing editor of our Oakland County editions.

TURNING BACK THE PAGES

This week in history as reported in past editions of the Farmington Observer and the Farmington Enterprise.

40 YEARS AGO — JULY 11, 1957 (ENTERPRISE)
 Clayton Goers, a 15-year Farmington Township treasurer, announced his resignation before the end of his elected term for health reasons. "The people of Farmington Township have made my tenure of office a very happy one," he wrote in his letter of resignation.

Vicious storms hit Farmington and Farmington Township, with tornado force winds, torrential rains and damaging lightning. "According to oldtime residents, the two storms were the worst to hit the Farmington area in their memory." Along 11 Mile, the

storm uprooted trees and damaged many barns and houses.

25 YEARS AGO — JULY 12, 1972
 Plans for an official grand opening ceremony for the new YMCA building at 12 Mile and Farmington Road were delayed after vandals destroyed about \$2,000 worth of tinted glass windows on a Thursday. Vandals hit again two days later, smashing another \$1,000 in windows.

2 YEARS AGO — JULY 13, 1995
 Farmington city officials' effort to spruce up the Farmington Road corridor from Eight Mile Road to Slocum accelerated, with council members approving a plan to ban parking in rights-of-way along the road within two years.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

"If your pet could talk, what do you think he/she would say about Kids Day?"

We asked this question — where else? — at Kids Day in Shiawassee Park.



Taylor Hazel, with Toby Farmington



Amanada Mergener, with Daisy Mae Farmington Hills



Doug Wright, with Balto Farmington Hills



Katherine Soavo, with Trickle Farmington Hills

LETTERS

Offended by Inch

I find a comment made by Trustee Jack Inch in your June 19 article "Students show improvement on state test" extremely objectionable. In response to the fact that only 50 percent of Birmingham's students took the HSPT, Inch said, "selectivity does lead to excellence, doesn't it?" He implies that Birmingham deliberately selected students to take the exam on the basis of how well they would perform, in effect cheating, so that the district's scores would look good.

Inch should be very sure of his facts before promoting such damaging rumors. As English Department Chairperson for Senholm High School, whose proficiency scores were number one in the metro area, I can assure you that no such selection occurred. In fact, we did a careful study of who did and did not take the test. Our best students were the ones who chose to waive this exam. Fully two-thirds of those who waived the test had a GPA of 3.0 or above — many in the 3.5 range. We can only guess that if those students had taken the test, they actually would have increased our scores.

To imply that we would select students to take the exam is unfounded, ludicrous and offensive. Our students earned those scores because they work hard in rigorous academic programs that are clearly effective. I, too, have reservations about the HSPT, but I would never belittle another district to achieving excellent scores. Instead, I would be in touch with them to see what strategies might work for my own students. Strange, we haven't received even one phone call. Trustee Inch owes Birmingham Public Schools and their fine students an apology.

Kyle B. Hall
 English Department Chair
 Senholm High School

Good septic tanks don't pollute

I'm getting sick and tired of city and county officials lying to the public about the viability of septic tanks as compared to sanitary sewers.

They consistently use the totally untrue statements as if they were fact in order to force septic tank users to connect to sanitary sewers because "that would improve water quality in the streams which make up the Rouge River basin."

The fact is, septic tanks and septic fields do not pollute anything. They are by far the most sanitary method of household waste water and sewage disposal ever devised by man. And besides, there are so few septic tanks still in existence in Oakland County the very thought

of them being a source of pollution is preposterous.

Persons who have household septic tanks are far more anti-pollution conscious than those who use sanitary sewers, which are the real sources of river pollution, not the septic tanks. Septic tank users know that they cannot flush toxic chemicals such as oil, gasoline and paint down their toilets, or food down their drains or it would ruin their systems. They know enough to maintain their septic systems because any problems that may arise from misuse are at their expense.

On the other hand, being connected to a sanitary sewer is an open invitation to home and business owners to flush anything they wish into their sanitary sewers because any problems it may cause at the other end is not directly attributable to them or their personal expenses.

There was a time many years ago when homes and businesses right here in Farmington and Farmington Township used to flush their waste directly into what we used to call the creek, particularly the one that runs along the base of the hill behind the old schoolhouses and football field. But those days are long gone. Sewers now carry that waste to more districts points where it empties into someone else's river. A well-maintained septic tank and field is contained on the owner's private property and does not pollute any water system.

Kenneth Kemp
 Farmington Hills

World Food Day coming

Last year, the Michigan Committee on World Food Day's annual event known as the "7% Solution" raised over \$34,000 for the Food Bank Council of Michigan. Restaurants contribute 7% of their gross receipts from the one day event.

This year the "7% Solution" will be held on Oct. 9. For the third year, WNIC (100.3 FM) will be holding a radio-thon announcing names of participating restaurants and encouraging people to eat out and contribute to the cause. Anhusser Bush will also be sponsoring the "Help Your Bud" campaign during the month of September, then will donate funds to support the radio-thon.

Again, we would like to thank you for the publicity you provide for the event in your column. We look forward to the success of this year "7% Solution" and am hoping that, with your support, 1997's "7% Solution" will be the most successful yet. If you have any questions, call Micki Grossman at the Jewish Community Council, (248) 642-5393.

Micki Grossman
 Michigan Committee, World Food Day

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— Philip Power