

# On guard

## 20-year veteran helps kids cross, parents relax

By Tim Smith  
STAFF WRITER

As long as longtime crossing guard Alice Heuwagen is on duty outside William Grace Elementary School, parents such as Kathy Knorp figure they can rest easy.

Knorp was waiting for Heuwagen to signal all was clear for her and first-grade daughter Rachel to cross Shiawassee Street after school Monday.

"Okay, come on," said the strict but smiling Alice, waving the Knorps and some other William Grace pupils across the street. "Good bye, we'll see you tomorrow."

But Knorp has a fourth-grade son, Paul, who comes and goes every day on his own. Like clockwork, he safely walks past Alice, now in her 20th year guiding children who live in the surrounding Farmington Hills neighborhood.

"I'd be leery letting my kids cross without me if Alice weren't here," said Knorp. "People drive like maniacs around here... It's a peace of mind knowing he crosses with Alice."

But motorists know the scores when they see Heuwagen venture out into the middle of the two-lane street, wearing her bright orange vest and holding up a wooden "Stop" sign for

motorists to see as they approach Jefferson from the west or Hamilton from the east.

Students such as second-grade student Kori James also know the score when they walk to or from the Farmington district school. They have to wait for Alice to give them the go-ahead, and then must walk quietly to the other side, keeping between the white lines.

Monday, Kori was escorted by her 12-year-old brother Joe, who remembers seeing Heuwagen on a daily basis. "I think she does good with the kids," Joe said. "She's here so kids can get across the street safely. She does a good job of it, too."

Appreciative of the veteran crossing guard's efforts is new William Grace School Principal Katy Hill.

"I don't know how many people would want to deal with all kinds of weather and be out the door at 7:30 in the morning and be back again at 3 in the afternoon," Hill said. "We expect her to be there, because she always is."

Such dedication is not unique to Heuwagen, a 61-year-old widow who took the part-time job in fall 1978, back when Richard Close was at the William Grace helm. She shrugs

off her 16 minutes of duty each morning and afternoon as just helping out the kids she loves.

"What would I do without them?" said Alice, noting that she found out the crossing guard job was open from a neighbor across the street, who was giving up the post.

She has been faithfully there ever since, except for 1993-94, when she needed surgery to repair an aneurysm and missed the entire year.

"I guess they had the cops out there," joked Heuwagen, who has two adult sons and three grandchildren. "And another person did it for a while."

Ah, but it wasn't the same. Before the following school year, Alice was contacted, confirming that she'd be returning. She came back without missing a beat.

"I have to be really, really sick to be off," said Alice, getting ready to store away her vest and sign into a William Grace office closet until the next day.

If you asked those in the William Grace school and community, they'd say there is no such thing as their crossing guard being "off." That she's always "on" is good news, even for Hill, who hasn't been around the building that long.

"The safety of our children is



Alice says stop: Alice Heuwagen, a 20-year crossing guard at William Grace Elementary School, holds up traffic on Shiawassee Street to let a couple students cross.

STAFF PHOTO BY DEAN MURCELL

extremely important," said Hill, who transferred this summer from the principalship at Forest Elementary School. "And we feel very comfortable that Alice is out there" protecting and patrolling them. "That makes her an important part of our school family."

The job is sometimes more frustrating, however, said Heuwagen, citing the increasing traffic on Shiawassee, particularly in the morning. No matter, she always gets the kids across, even if it took five minutes once.

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Heuwagen, citing the increasing traffic on Shiawassee, particularly in the morning. No matter, she always gets the kids across, even if it took five minutes once. "Within the last three years it's been real heavy," Alice said. "But they see me every day." Parents such as Kathy Knorp are glad they do.

## Parenting tips, state funds top PTA agenda

By Tim Smith  
STAFF WRITER

Attracting potential PTA officers is just one part of Saturday's statewide fall conference, hosted by the Farmington PTA Council at East Middle School.

But, according to Farmington PTA Vice-President Janet Holm, there also will be plenty of time to get into a variety of issues - from state funding and legislation to parenting tips.

The Michigan Parent Teacher Association conference, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., is the first of its kind to be held in the Farmington area in some time, Holm noted. It is open to any registered PTA member in Michigan, although it will mostly draw from the southeastern part of the state (Regions D&F).

Preregistration fees are \$12 (with lunch) or \$7 (without) for PTA members. Holm said non-members and Saturday walk-ins will be required to pay \$15, which does not include lunch. Those interested in attending should contact Debbie Squires (248-363-7779) or their local PTA representative.

"There's always a need for more involvement," Holm said. "PTAs generally have

enough people to run the programs they need to run. But it's typical with volunteer organizations that a few people are doing a lot."

The session will include training workshops both for potential officers and for prospective PTA newcomers, Holm said.

In the Farmington district, elementary schools with PTAs are Beechview, Eagle, Flinders, Forest, Gill, William Grace, Highmeadow, Hillside, Kenbrook, Lanigan, Longacre and Wood Creek. Of the other schools, only East Middle School is affiliated with the state and national groups. East has a PTSA, which includes students.

Squires said there also will be workshops to explain why people should want to join a PTA rather than an independent, such as a PTO.

PTAs are affiliated both state and nationally, enabling parents to tap into available resources, she explained. "You're working, not just for your own building, but for the good of all kids," Squires said. "... And the state and national (PTAs) have people who can help and programs you can use. You're not on your own."

East Middle School is located at 26000 Middlebelt Road.

## Runaway bus crashes on school property

Farmington Hills firefighters, Edison and Consumers Power workers were called after a runaway school bus cut gas and electrical lines after crashing at the Clarenceville School District bus yard on Eight Mile Road Thursday.

The driver, who was not

injured, said she was backing up to park the vehicle after her morning route when the bus suddenly accelerated and crashed through the yard fence.

No children were aboard the bus at the time of the accident. She told police she tried to

brake but could not stop the bus.

She made a right U-turn backwards to avoid traffic on Eight Mile and returned through the yard fence and ended up striking the building.

The bus also took out two wires to a telephone pole.

The bus was last inspected June 10, Farmington Hills police reports said the gas pedal was in the upright position and the brakes appeared fine.

The 71-passenger bus, a 1996 International Navistar, sustained \$2,000 damage.

## Construction fire may be arson

A home under construction was damaged in a fire Thursday, which fire investigators believe was deliberately set.

At 7:41 a.m., Farmington Hills firefighters were called to a fire at 23903 Watercrest, which is being constructed and owned by Phoenix Land Development.

Smoke was coming from the northwest side of the garage roof, where firefighters found a gasoline can inside next to a small fire.

A building site superintendent said the gas can had not been in the garage before and didn't belong there.

The front entrance door was open and door jam busted, police reports said. Another home under construction as part of the same development was also broken into.

Inside the burned house, investigators found four sets of burn marks, which appear to have been unsuccessful attempts to start a fire with a liquid accelerant.

Property damage is estimated at \$30,000.

No one was seen near the home before the fire, initial witness reports said.

## Kenbrook from page A1

was written Sept. 23 by the Guthries and mailed to families residing in the Kenbrook attendance area, calling for their support.

"We believe that no matter how great any of our fourth grade teachers are, and we believe they are, it is impossible to give sufficient personal attention to such a large number of deserving students," stated that letter, signed by nine families.

Cowan, asked about the situation during Tuesday's regular school board meeting, said increasing the amount of paraprofessional time in the classrooms is something he "doesn't

see forthcoming."

Kenbrook parents originally wanted the district to hire an additional fourth grade teacher to help resolve the matter. But that was mutually ruled out during the Sept. 12 meeting with McKinley and Cowan. A major reason was parents did not want to reassign their children, who had already gotten used to their new teachers.

Even if the district opts to not increase paraprofessional time, Kenbrook parents are hopeful their efforts will help officials better plan for 1998-99.

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