

# State alters training of visually impaired

BY TIM RICHARD  
STAFF WRITER

Michigan's efforts to aid the blind — also known as "visually impaired," or VI to educators — are shifting from a residential school in Lansing to local school services.

"The home school district is best. We give aid on curriculum, orientation, the math code and short-term placement," said Kathy Brown, principal of the 18-pupil Michigan School for the Blind (MSB).

Brown reported on the MSB program Dec. 16 to the State Board of Education meeting in Lansing.

Board vice president Dorothy Beardmore, R-Rochester Hills, said she has had calls from parents with children for whom visual impairment or blindness is the only impairment. "Otherwise, they may be gifted. On campus, we have the multiple impaired," she said.

"It's not the old residential school," said Arthur Ellis, state superintendent of public instruction.

"Kathy has expanded the outreach and indirect services," said Mike Williamson, deputy superintendent.

One example is a program operated in western Wayne County for children from several districts, housed in former Dickinson Junior High in Livonia.

Because programs are so varied, Brown was unable to cite the number of served children. "We need to see the numbers indirectly served," said board member Barbara Roberts Mason, D-Lansing, "so people can see the impact."

At the local level, Brown said, VI aid may involve lengthening the school day or altering attendance time.

The program involves home or community observation, a functional vision evaluation, psychological evaluation and short-term instruction for each student.

Outreach services include:

■ "Space Camp" — in Huntsville, Ala., designed for VI children.

■ Sport camp — four days of athletic events for elementary students in collaboration with Western Michigan University.

■ On-site basic training — home intervention of infants and toddlers who are multi-handicapped.

■ Braille strategies workshop — teaching Braille to multiple-impaired students for professional.

■ Camp challenge — two days of activities to develop teamwork and trust.

■ Middle school weekend and high school weekend — an on-campus, peer program.

■ Technology workshop — a full day of distributor demonstrations of new equipment and software to take place in January and April.

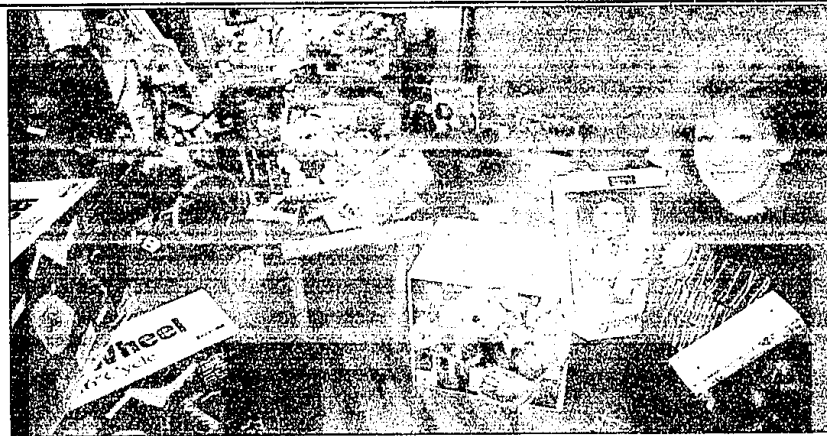
MSB also offers a lending library and Internet web site to parents and the public, and a VI awareness programs for third grade pupils.

MSB is one of two such schools operated by the state. The other is Michigan School for the Deaf in Flint.

The schools have their champions, mostly parents. For the past two years, parents have trooped regularly into State Board of Education meetings to plead for continuation of the schools.

Last meeting, for example, Amy Van Dahlen, a Kalamazoo mother of a 10-year-old boy, appealed to the board to keep MSD open. "It used to be what we thought was the right thing," she said, presenting a petition from parents arguing that "children should not be shipped off."

The State Board of Education is scheduled to meet at 9:30 a.m. Wed., Jan. 7, on the fourth floor of the Hannah Building, on Allegan Street two blocks west of the Capitol in Lansing. Public comment will be heard at 1 p.m.



STAFF PHOTO BY JEFF KOSSEL

## OCC students, staff gather holiday gifts

Some deserving children will be having a happier-than-expected holiday this year, due to the generosity of students and staff at the Auburn Hills campus of Oakland Community College.

Co-chairs of the project, Rochelle Heyniger and Janine Midgett, helped to gather and distribute the gifts, which were temporarily housed in Heyniger's barn at her Rochester Hills home. Actually, reports Heyniger, the barn is her husband's workshop, but he cheerfully gives up space, keeps it warm, and unloads and loads presents.

The project has been undertaken by the college's Commu-

nity Service Council for the last three years. Heyniger, who is a student delegate to the OCC board of trustees, explained that hand-decorated ornaments with the children's wish for the holiday are taken by students and staff and, after purchase, are dropped off.

"It's been unbelievable. We've been able to add the welfare-to-work program this year," Heyniger said. "Fifty-nine children are getting two or more gifts. I'm excited."

An OCC spokesman noted that despite entrance in the welfare-to-work program, students don't immediately earn a wage that permits purchase of toys.

**Presents galore:** Rochelle Heyniger (above) of Rochester Hills displays some of the dolls, bikes and other toys that were donated by students and staff at the Auburn Hills campus of Oakland Community College. At the beginning of this week, Heyniger and co-chair Janine Midgett loaded the toys for delivery to 59 lucky children.



## OAKLAND DIGEST

**Oakland Digest provides a summary of headline stories from around the county during the week leading up to Dec. 24.**

### BIRMINGHAM

**Restaurant may make wine:** A Birmingham restaurant is seeking a small wine maker's license through the state's Liquor Control Commission in hope of being able to serve wine without a liquor license. Some local restaurant owners and city officials strongly oppose the idea, but it's not clear whether the restaurateur needs municipal approval to get the license.

### CLARKSTON

**Schools rethink plans:** In the midst of revamping its strategic plan for 1998, Clarkston Schools is facing larger questions about curriculum, like whether to teach more business skills or more traditional coursework.

### FARMINGTON HILLS

**Bomb hoax:** Students at North Farmington High School were evacuated and had classes canceled after a bomb threat — later determined to be a hoax — was phoned into Farmington Hills police Dec. 19. Police officers and school officials searched the building, but did not find a

bomb. The caller, who was a male, said a bomb had been placed in the school and was set to go off in an hour. Police traced the call to a pay telephone on Orchard Lake Plaza, at Orchard Lake, north of 12 Mile.

### ADDISON TOWNSHIP

**Beer guild formed:** Addison Township resident Rex Halpin, who is the publisher and editor of the Michigan Beer Guide, recently facilitated two meetings for representatives of 30 licensed Michigan brewing operations, forming the Michigan Brewers Guild.

### ROCHESTER HILLS

**Roads get 1999 priority:** Rochester Hills City Council recently voted to make road improvements a major priority during the 1999 budget talks. Roads have been traffic-clogged in the community, but voters have already rejected a millage request for road repairs.

### SOUTHFIELD

**Family show set:** Family entertainer Jerry Jacoby will perform Jan. 10 at the Southfield Centre for the Arts, as part of the city's Kids Concerts series. Jacoby's 45-minute show begins at 1:30 p.m. Admission is \$3.25.

per person and tickets are on sale now. For information, call (248) 424-9022.

### TROY

**Kindness streak:** A group of Troy High School students recently supplied a Detroit family with food, clothing and toys. The 30 students put together \$400 from their own money and donations.

### WEST BLOOMFIELD

**Photos sought:** Pictures of Israel taken since it became a

nation are being sought for the Israel at 50 Photo Exhibit sponsored by the Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield. Deadline for submitting materials is Dec. 31. Send of hand-delivered photos between two stiff pieces of cardboard to: Beth Greenapple, JCC of Metropolitan Detroit, 6800 W. Maple, West Bloomfield, Mich. 48076.

— Compiled by staff reporter Nicole Stafford

## County offices to close

Oakland County governmental offices will be closed Wednesday and Thursday this week because of the winter holidays.

But those offices will have normal business hours, 8:30 a.m. until 5 p.m., Monday, Tuesday and Friday.

The same schedule will be in effect over New Year's. County offices will be closed Wednesday and Thursday. But they will be open from 8:30 a.m. until 5 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday and Friday.

## AAA offers drink ideas

This is the 17th year that the AAA has run its Great Pretenders alternative drink contest. It's a campaign that has paid off in more than just award-winning, non-alcoholic drinks.

The number of drunk driving fatalities has dropped from 69.5 percent to 36.4 percent of all fatalities, according to Nancy Cain, public relations manager.

But that isn't the whole story. "The bad news is that there were 555 people lost last year," Cain said. "That's just too much."

Besides the annual campaign to be careful while driving, AAA also produces a party guide, which is free to all, members and

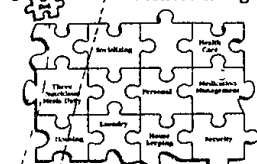
non-members alike. The party guide, with non-alcoholic drinks, is available at all AAA offices. This year 66,000 were printed, Cain said.

"It's done in a positive way. The non-alcoholic drinks are wonderful and easy to make," she said. "We're encouraging hosts to be a friend before a host." That can mean everything from calling a cab for a partygoer who is drunk, having guests spend the night or being a designated driver.

AAA is predicting that, due to the way the winter holidays fall this year, there will be more traffic than usual.

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## Correction Notice

Due to unforeseen demand, the Pentium® 166MHz computers and the Hewlett Packard 3100 computer package advertised in our December 25 insert may not be available at all stores.

We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused.

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