

Carriers like new facility

100 postal employees move into Indoplex Circle site

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

For United States Postal Service carriers and clerks serving Farmington and a portion of Farmington Hills, the recent move into a larger, brighter annex was an early holiday gift.

In early December — just in time for the holiday crunch — approximately 100 employees moved over to a 25,000-square-foot facility at 24505 Indoplex Circle, near Grand River-Drake. Some came from a building about one-third the size, on Slocum Road in Farmington. Others made the switch from the area's main post office branch on 12 Mile Road in Farmington Hills.

"This is very nice," said Carol Seaton, who delivers mail to homes and businesses in zip code 48336. "We are not crowded anymore. We couldn't move in the other building. This (move) was way overdue."

Veteran clerk Bette Burt agreed that the additional work space was making life easier. "The other office (on 12 Mile) was very overcrowded, but we did the best we could. Here, we can move equipment and much more efficiently."

It means the mail is sorted faster, on trucks faster and probably in mailboxes faster, explained Seaton.

Conditions were even more crowded at the now-closed Slocum branch, an outdated 8,000-square-foot facility.

"The little Slocum station was too small to handle all the customers at that zip code," said Postmaster Marlene Bowers. "And the main post office was becoming too small. It's all because of the tremendous growth in Farmington and Farmington Hills during the last 10 years. We were tremendously over-crowded."

Bowers said 55 carrier routes were moved Dec. 4-5 into the brighter, wide-



Sorting it out: Postal carrier Flora Richardson prepares mail for delivery last week at the spacious new annex. She came over from the now-closed Slocum Station in Farmington, which was approximately one-third the size.

open Indoplex facility, which is for mail processing only. The affected zip codes are 48335 and 48336, mostly in Farmington but including part of Farmington Hills. Customers in zip codes 48331 and 48334 will continue to be served out of the 12 Mile main branch.

Except for the pick-up of certified mail, vacation mail and parcel pick-ups, Bowers said post office services for customers in those two zip codes — including the purchase of stamps — will be handled at the main branch and at the United States Postal Service retail store in the Downtown Farmington Center.

According to Bowers, it cost about \$2 million to purchase and retrofit the Indoplex facility, which had been a light industrial warehouse.

A replacement for the Slocum station has been sought since 1985, said a real estate manager for the post office, Royal Oak-based Bob Borne.

"God hasn't made any new land out here," Borne said. "So we've had a really tough time."

Borne said Farmington City Manager Frank Lauhoff deserved much of the credit for both the Indoplex carrier annex and downtown retail store.

"It's just very hard to relocate a post office," Borne said. "We have the best of both worlds now. Retail is where retail ought to be and we have a place just for the carriers."

The new digs suits former Slocum-based carrier Flora Richardson just fine. Not only are working conditions improved, she has a chance to become reacquainted with colleagues she hadn't seen in years.

"We have another zip code here, another unit of people who we had not worked with for several years," Richardson said. "Before (at Slocum) we were limited to one zip code. Now there's more people and more camaraderie. . . . The coffee club is bigger."

Besides the extra indoor space, Richardson noted other benefits of the Indoplex facility — better morale and docking stations for mail trucks to unload.

"We don't have to wait for everything to be shuttled to us from the other building," she said. "That's the major time saver right there."

Richardson also said employee morale is on the rise thanks to the switch. "Being in a new facility is always nice. It makes you feel better."

Burt couldn't agree more.

"This feels much more positive," Burt said. "We started brand new and it's teamwork. You can see your results."

Customers will soon have a chance to see the facility for themselves. Bowers said an open house was being planned for sometime in January or February.

Kenbrook poinsettia sale nets \$732.50 for playground

Kenbrook Elementary School's new playground will soon be a reality thanks to a successful poinsettia sale, held in early December.

The Kenbrook Parent-Teacher Association sponsored the fund-raising effort, while the student council promoted the effort with posters and morning public announcements.

Then, on Dec. 5-6, student council members were hard at work, filling customer orders.

According to Kenbrook parents, enough poinsettias were sold to generate \$732.50.

That money will be used to help fund the final stage of the playground.

— Tim Smith

Leading the way: Left, Suzanne Gourley, a Kenbrook teacher, spearheaded the PTA-sponsored poinsettia sale. Below left, the gymnasium resembled a florist, with all of the pre-sold poinsettias awaiting pickup from parents and teachers.



Fill 'em up: Members of the Kenbrook Elementary School student council spent two days in early December filling customers' poinsettia orders.

WL school board divided on new redistricting plan

BY JENNIFER PLACINTO
STAFF WRITER

Changing the schools Walled Lake school district children attend came down to one vote — and that was in favor of altering all but four attendance areas.

The board of education voted 4-3 to approve the final redistricting committee proposal Dec. 18 following public comment from mainly Mt. Royal subdivision residents trying to keep Lower and Upper Mt. Royal students together. The subdivision is south of Commerce Road between S. Commerce and Benstein roads in Commerce Township.

The Walled Lake District includes a northwest portion of Farmington Hills.

"I knew it would be a split vote," said Mt. Royal subdivision President Dean Gidlof. "I was hoping it would fall in our favor."

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Dean Gidlof
Mt. Royal subdivision president

make the decision Dec. 18, "so students don't go to 'ough the rest of the school year with undue anxiousness."

"I feel (committee members) should not have been restricted from not using the portables," said Stoen, who lives in the Mt. Royal subdivision.

"I believe the redistricting committee did a great job working with the information they had," however, McConnell said after the meeting. "I think there are some things we, the board, might have been able to do differently."

"We have a number of options we can have without asking for more money," Stoen said after the meeting. "The idea is to get those classrooms in the north built."

After the vote, Stoen suggested district officials organize a committee of the community, including area municipalities and businesses as well as parents to keep students in schools closer to their homes when redistricting again. Officials expect redistricting to be necessary in about three years.

"We're not an island," Stoen said. "We affect each other and we have to start realizing that and work together."

Several redistricting committee members commented on the hard work, long hours, changes to accommodate residents, and personal effects the plan has on their families.

"There's over 14,000 children in the district and there's always going to be somebody unhappy," said Rose Scullion, committee member.

Superintendent Dr. James Geisler said it was important to

"We can't control the growth of the district," said Lora Miller, committee member. "The plan we have is the best plan that all of us could recommend that will benefit the entire district."

Mt. Royal parents, who had safety concerns, wanted the opportunity to work with the board.

"I urge you to vote this down now," said Kitty Lewan. "Give us the opportunity to make it good."

"You can work with these people — case by case if you have to," said Wixom parent John Klink.

Single parent Lori Klemanski said she moved to the Mt. Royal area to be close to Commerce Elementary. Redistricting or not, she said she will drive her child, who will be in second grade next year, to Commerce Elementary.

"I don't feel safe with my child that far away," Klemanski said. "I don't want her bused. She is going to attend Commerce Elementary."

"We're dumping M-5 into the township in the next couple of years," said Todd Martin, a Commerce firefighter. "Now you're busing kids all over the place. For the last 20 years, my worst nightmare is to pull up on an accident with all these kids."

And after the meeting, parent Tammy Stuks said, "It does come down to our convenience. There is no reason that they can't make an exception for 60 kids."

Mike Bowers, who read a letter from his Commerce Elementary daughter stating her sadness about being separated from her best friend, suggested parents could maintain a portable to keep the children at Commerce Elementary.

But committee member Michael Fabian said it wasn't that easy.

"Every time we move children, it requires other children to be affected," Fabian said.

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