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designed a float featuring an old-time schoolhouse on an anniversary cake — with candles that go up and down.

The mechanics of that might have killed the idea in a lesser group. But, fortunately, the Gill Year-Rounders include at least four fathers who are professional engineers.

Using only an illustration of the float, the engineer-dads — Tim O'Connor, John Shore, Gene Roma and Dave Stulock — figured out the hydraulics necessary to make the candles work, Nassar said.

The drawing was by fellow committee member and parent Howard Gelman, a freelance advertising designer who conceptualized what a half-dozen committee parents brainstormed.

The Year-Round program, created six years ago as part of the district's "Schools of Choice" effort, has classes until July 15, so teachers and students can join parents in finishing up the float.

This year, they're using decorative birthday-card posters drawn by the kids, pinwheels and 150 helium-filled balloons.

The float project was first suggested six years ago by Gill principal Mike Duff as a way to show the involvement of Year-Round parents with their kids.

In the group's third year, the float was the President's Trophy for best-overall entry and has taken the Queen's Trophy

ever since.

Many Gill Year-Round kids will march with the float Saturday, wearing T-shirts specially decorated by parents and teachers.

Variations on the "Happy Birthday" theme are being created and recorded on digital piano by Gill Year-Round music teacher and parent Brenda Gold-Sloan.

"I think it's wonderful," she said of the project's sense of community involvement.

"It's great. It's real fun," said Gelman, the illustrator. "The point is, the kids are involved and the parents are involved."

The end-result of a float is not the big deal: it's the participation.

Last year, he noted, it was the kids who came up with the idea for the float.

Valorie Nassar, Fred's wife, children's co-coordinator with Monica Kakos and a mom herself, said the project enables parents to meet each other.

"We even have a post-parade picnic at Drake Park each year," she said.

Added kindergarten teacher, mother and first-year participant Pam Pressisio, "It's like a family network. It makes me feel more involved."

Other key committee players include Patricia Sullivan, T-shirt stenciling co-distributor, and Linda Rhead, fier-distributor and classroom contact person.

Hills asks arts booster to stay

Farmington Hills' first-ever cultural arts coordinator wants to resign. City officials and arts commissioners are trying to keep her involved.

Sally LePla-Perry submitted her resignation letter, but City Manager Daniel Hobbs hasn't made it official. He wants LePla-Perry to remain, possibly in a consultative role, and fill the part-time position.

The Farmington and Farmington Hills Commission on the Arts is developing a master plan, which Hobbs and the commission members want to see LePla-Perry involved in.

"She's done a wonderful job," Hobbs said. "She did one bad thing: She raised our expectations. She's opened our eyes to everything that can be."

The cultural arts coordinator position is part time. As a result, LePla-Perry wasn't able to attend weekend or night events.

She took the part-time position in order to spend time with her 11-year-old daughter, Kate. "If my daughter was 18, it might be a different story," LePla-Perry said.

"I didn't resign because I don't love the job; I love the job ... I want people in the community to know how much I love working here."

LePla-Perry believes the coordinator should be accessible more than only part of the time, especially with the burgeoning Farmington area arts community. "It's my quality standard," she said.

Her self-imposed standards may be too high, others suggested.

An arts commissioner understands LePla-Perry's predicament. Fern Barber is band and orchestra conductor in Walled Lake schools and is also a music teacher in addition to serving as chair of the arts commission.

"I try to cover as much as I can, but I can't," said Barber, who describes LePla-Perry as "wonderful" and "enlightening."

The job may be more than one person can handle, Barber said. In July 1999, the position turns into full time.

"You're almost talking about two full-time positions, but we don't have those resources yet," said Barber, who would also like to keep LePla-Perry involved in the strategic arts planning process.

"She's taken a lot of time to become acquainted with the strengths and all the different groups in the arts community," Barber said.

Though only on the job for six months, LePla-Perry believes she has helped elevate the arts in community. She's also started a database to refer people who want to take voice or music lessons.

She doesn't want to see that momentum curtailed, which is why she is remaining until a possible solution can be worked out.

"The whole purpose of this job was to help people in Farmington and Farmington Hills understand the beauty that they have," LePla-Perry said.

"The truth is a lot of these groups want to do more. There will be a good coordinator with them, whether it's me or not."

Firm awards Metrobank its top, '5-star' rating



Metrobank has earned, for the sixth straight quarter, the highest Five-Star rating from Bauer Financial Reports Inc., a nationally recognized bank research firm in Coral Gables, Fla.

Based in Farmington Hills, Metrobank has earned a Five-Star rating since March 1, 1997.

Bauer Financial Reports Inc. awarded this rating to Metrobank based on an analysis of data filed by the bank.

Marshall's music scholars
Marshall Music Company of Lansing awarded music scholarships in the amount of \$315, to the following Farmington/Farmington Hills elementary school students:

Alexandra Burke of Woodcreek, Gyan DeSilva of Longcreek, Steven Gaines of Beechview, Sarah Horrie of William Grace, Allison Iott of Kenbrook, Thomas Kavel of Highmeadow, Morgan Markiecki of Our Lady of Sorrows, Matthew Stefanski of William Grace, Trevor Tabel of William Grace, Zachary Wasserman of

Woodcreek, Jeffrey Williams of Eagle and Mark Wolf of Lani-gan.

Beanie Baby birthday

Glory the Ty Beanie Baby will celebrate her birthday with a special party Sunday, July 12, for children ages 4-12 at Village Hidden Treasures gifts, collectibles and doll shop.

Timed to coincide with Farmington Founders Festival, the party offers each youngster a lunch, free gift, crafts project, Beanie surprise and a meeting and picture with Glory.

The event, at \$12 per youngster paid in advance, will have seatings at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., with each lasting about 1 1/2 hours.

Seating is very limited. Village Hidden Treasures is on the lower level of Village Mall, 33335 Farmington Road in Farmington, (248)477-3388.

Hills man wins drawing

Robert Call of Farmington Hills was one of two dads to win the "Perfect Father's Day Gift" drawing held at Livonia Mall, Seven Mile and Middlebelt Roads.

He and Paul Koslosky of Northville each won an RCA 27-inch color television.

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