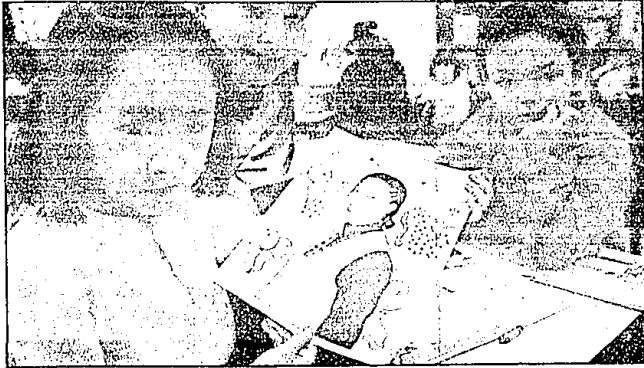


How much do they love her?

Wooddale students celebrate appreciation of their principal



All done: Alyssa Usuba, Emily Orban and Amanda Amish display their tribute to Wooddale Elementary principal Lasenia Jones.

BY TIM SMITH
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How much do Wooddale Elementary School pupils love their principal, Lasenia Jones? Let them count the ways.

"She likes to solve problems," said fifth-grader Ben Harris, 10. "She's very nice and she helps out the kids a lot."

"If I have a problem, she'll ask me if there's something wrong," noted another fifth-grader, 10-year-old Ryan Podges.

"Once my ride wasn't here and she waited outside for 20 minutes until my ride came," said 11-year-old Gary Fursten-

berg, also in fifth grade.

The best review came from a second-grader, 7-year-old Eriko Mori. "Mrs. Jones is the best principal ever. She's real nice, and if you get in trouble, she talks to you, but not in a mean voice."

Eriko, pressed on the subject, acknowledged that she never was in such hot water herself. But she has a friend who was.

Those youngsters, in the classes of fifth-grade teacher Debbie Wilson and second-grade teacher Carolyn Kugler, were hard at work over the past week or so, crafting special tributes to Jones - to celebrate both National

Principal's Week and Valentine's Day. (The tribute came early. Principal's Week actually doesn't begin until today. But Farmington Public Schools are closed for the midwinter break until Monday, Feb. 22.)

On one particular day recently, students from both classes united to work on a picture-filled scrapbook, to have been presented Friday.

"We brainstormed all her duties and what she likes to do," explained Wilson.

The scrapbook project received a big assist from Wilson, who took "on-the-fly" photos of Jones during the school year. From

those pictures, kids created thematic pages, including decorations and poems.

For example, fifth-grader Laura Anne Mihaliko, 10, and second-graders Blana Cocks, 7, Katie Plummer, 7, and Chelsea Liebowitz, 8, collaborated on a page about Jones, directing traffic inside and outside of the Farmington district school.

The page featured a photo of Jones, smiling as always, arms raised in the air, taking care of that task. An accompanying poem read "Directing traffic is your job. When you do it, you never sob."

"We had a picture of Mrs. Jones and we had to cut her out (from the extraneous part of the photo) and draw around her," said Laura Anne. "And then, we had to make a poem up that goes with the picture."

Dressing up another scrapbook page was the team made up of Ben Harris, 10, Alex George, 7, Nathan Fittler, 10, and Tyler O'Hara, 7. Their page deals with Jones in the role of school judge, with an appropriate photo augmented by the words, "She has good judgment."

"She's a good principal," said Tyler, the son of Wooddale PTA President Jill O'Hara. "She helps us get along. She helps us learn and we have fun, too."

Other pages delved into Jones' fashion sense, citizenship, "and how she greets every day with a smile," Kugler said.

The scrapbook wasn't to be the only gift for Jones. Students also were expected to perform "She's Got the Whole School in Her Hands," to the tune of the obvious standard.

What would prompt an entire school to go to such lengths?



STAFF PHOTOS BY BILL BERGER

Let's rhyme: Ben Harris and Tyler O'Hara work on poetry to honor principal Lasenia Jones.

"We had a picture of Mrs. Jones and we had to cut her out (from the extraneous part of the photo) and draw around her. And then, we had to make a poem up that goes with the picture."

Laura Anne
—Student

"It should be shared what a wonderful principal we have," Kugler said. "And that they don't always get the credit they deserve. She probably knows 250 names (of students)."

That's not all. Kugler noted that Jones doesn't hesitate to

supply Band-Aids to students who need them, while also lending an understanding ear to kids.

Other grade levels at Wooddale made presentations to Jones earlier last week.

Blood drive to help Rouge employees

National Donor Day is Saturday, Feb. 13, and Saturn of Farmington Hills is partnering with America's leading donor organizations to obtain blood to help the Ford Rouge employees. This event, which is open to the public, will take place from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. at 24730 Haggerty Road.

Visitors also may receive a free blood pressure check provided by Providence Urgent Care Centers of Livonia & Farmington Hills Corporate Health Services. Lunch is being offered to those who register by Taste Bud's Cafe, Bean & Bagel, Arby's and Motor City Bagel.

Assess from page A1

you're grossly underassessed, we've caught up with you."

The city assesses property values to determine tax rates.

Property owners pay \$1 of tax for every \$1,000 of state equalized value, which is supposed to be half the market value. For example, the owner of a home assessed at \$160,000 would have an SEV of \$75,000, which means he'd pay \$75 for each tax mill levied.

Some older properties were falling short of the 50 percent mark partly because of depreciation.

Under the old system, houses were depreciated 1 percent for each year to a maximum of 55 percent, regardless of market value. Thus a home built in 1943 had maximum depreciation.

Under the new system, a home would have had to be built in 1920 meet the maximum depreciation.

Those who live in areas where

there's a mixture of new and old homes - such as Greening Street and the southern part of the city - will see the biggest difference.

People who live in neighborhoods where housing is the same - such as Kendallwood or Kimberley subs - will likely see a 6 to 8 percent rise.

"We've done it," Babb said. "A lot of people won't notice the difference. The more diverse the neighborhood, the bigger the swing (in reappraisals)."

City staff spent 2 1/2 years on reappraising residential properties in 400 neighborhoods.

When compared with actual home sale prices, the new assessment figures came within 49.9 percent, Babb said. The 24-month study took place April 1996 to March 1998.

"When you take the SEV of 50 percent and double it and then ask, is this your house's actual worth on the market? In most cases, we can say yes."

Verdict from page A1

She said her son did well in recent medical tests on his lungs and heart and "seems to be fine, now. ... But this will leave mental and physical scars for the rest of his life."

The stabbing victim now is trying to catch up on school work, having missed two months of classes since Dillard was stabbed. His heart and a lung were punctured in the attack, when Ford plunged a knife into his chest.

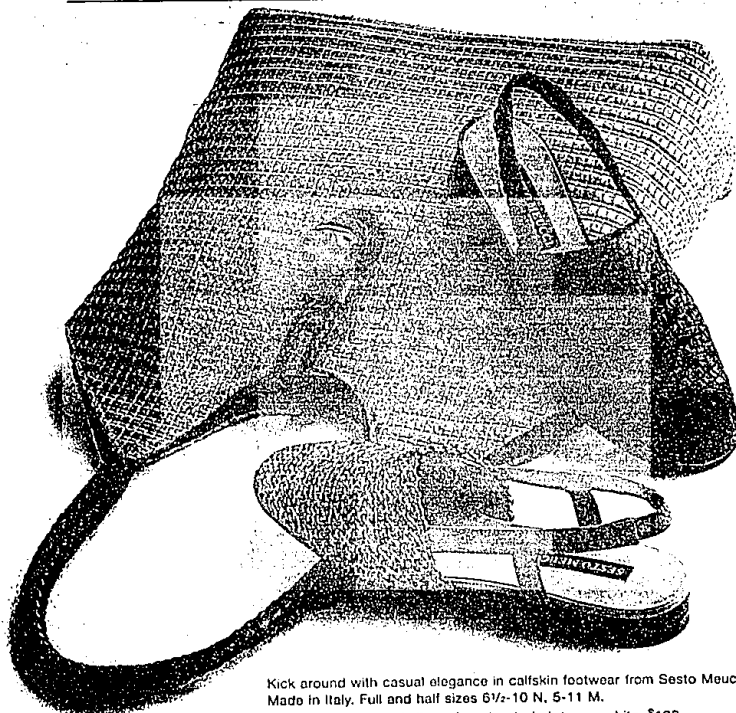
Ford had been paroled in August 1998 for a previous incident involving a knife, police said. Schutz said the fact he violated his parole "will play a part in the actual sentencing."

According to Farmington police reports, Dillard and four other teens were in a car near Farmington-Nine Mile when one of them yelled obscenities at Ford - who was walking with another man.

Obscenities were exchanged, although one of the teens in the car realized that her verbal tirade against Ford was a case of mistaken identity.

But the episode did not end with an apology from the girl. Instead, the parties moved over to the Clark gasoline station, where Dillard was stabbed. Ford was arrested on the nearby M-5 embankment.

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