



Winning Longacre Elementary School's first-place team in Odyssey of the Mind competition includes: front row (from left), Clara Yoon, Danielle Graessle, Chelsie Hennick, Matt Watson; back row, Lindsay Fredericks, James Graessle, David Piskorowski.

Longacre team takes first in Odyssey effort

Longacre Elementary School students in the recent Odyssey of the Mind competition came in first in their division, out of 17 schools throughout the region.

Team members included fifth-graders James Graessle, Chelsie Hennick, Matthew Watson, Lindsay Fredericks, David Piskorowski and third-graders Danielle Graessle and Clara Yoon.

The team's presentation involved a sales transaction between two or more co-workers and their customers. Essential components of the presentation include teamwork, creativity and cooperation. The presentation was required to include a

memorable customer, a demonstration of an original product and the resolution of a problem involving the business.

Longacre's OM squad created a prop that must change direction, size, appearance, move another object or product original music.

Team members chose the moon as their location, a water machine that could turn rocks into water, an evil sorcerer trying to dry up all water on the moon, moon people as the customer and a fast-growing money tree as payment for the machine, said Longacre OM spokeswoman Marlene Graessle.

CLARIFICATION

Those interested in attending "Many Faces: One Future," a diversity conference at Oakland Community College - Orchard Ridge campus, should contact Farmington Public Schools at

(248) 489-3349, and not the phone number listed in Thursday's Observer.

The conference is scheduled from March 18-20, and is co-sponsored by OCC, Farmington

Public Schools, Oakland Schools, and the Farmington Multicultural/Multiracial Community Council.

OBITUARIES

WARREN L. PELL

Memorial services for Warren L. Pell, 84, of Farmington will be 11 a.m. Saturday, March 27, at Nardin Park United Methodist Church with the Rev. Katherine Groff officiating.

Mr. Pell, who died March 9 at Huron Valley Sinai Hospital in Commerce, was born Sept. 13, 1914, in Buffalo, N.Y. He was a charter member and officer of a men's senior golf league and a life member of B.P.O.E. and a member of the American Legion.

Survivors include his wife, Harriet, sons Gregory (Judy), Gary (Phyllis) and Bill; sister Mary (Al) Norman; two grandchildren; and several nieces and nephews.

Visitation is at Heene-Sundquist Funeral Home, 23720 Farmington Road in Farmington. Memorials may be sent to the American Heart Association or to Nardin Park United Methodist Church.

WAYNE LOUISE EICHLER

Memorial services for Wayne Louise Simmons Turnbull Eichler, 90 of Farmington Hills will be 2 p.m. Saturday, March 20, at Kirk in the Hills Presbyterian Church, 1340 W. Long Lake Road in Bloomfield Hills.

Mrs. Eichler, who died March 4, was born March 12, 1908, in Detroit and was a graduate of Case Tech High School. She was a past president and life member of the Farmington Garden Club, an ordained deacon at Kirk of the Hills Presbyterian Church and a member of the Orchard Lake Country Club. She is remembered for driving a buckboard into town to pick up groceries.

Survivors include daughters Marilyn (John) Dewar of Farmington Hills and Barbara (James) Clark of East Lansing; six grandchildren; and nine great-grandchildren. Preceding in death was her husband, Ray, in 1985.

Thayer-Rock Funeral Home in Farmington handled the arrangements. Memorials may be sent to the Kirk in the Hills music fund.

INA A. JARVIS

Funeral services for Ina A. Jarvis, 81, of Plymouth were Saturday, March 13, at the Schrader-Howell Funeral Home in Plymouth with the Rev. James Hoff officiating.

Mrs. Jarvis, who died March 10 in Farmington Hills, was born Feb. 17, 1918, in Livonia. She was

an assembler for the Burroughs Corp. for 35 years, retiring in 1978. She was a lifelong Plymouth resident. She enjoyed dining out, square dancing and spending time with family. She was a lifelong member of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Livonia.

Survivors include daughter Janet (Michael) Flavin of Novi; brothers William (Betty) Esch of Plymouth and Herman (Elaine) Esch of Grayling; two grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

Preceding her in death were her husband, Clarence, and brother Harvey. Burial was at Glen Eden Cemetery in Livonia. Memorials may be sent to St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 17810 Farmington Road, Livonia 48162.

MATTHEW JAMES WILLER

Funeral services for Matthew J. Willer, 16, of Farmington will be noon Monday, March 15, at St. Gerald Church in Farmington with the Rev. Daniel W. Cave officiating.

Mr. Willer, who died March 12 at William Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak, was born Aug. 1, 1982, in Southfield. He was a sophomore at Farmington High School.

Survivors include parents Wendy J. Conway of Farmington and Larry (Beth) Willer; brother David Willer; sisters Becky Willer and Caroline Conway; grandparents Carol (Jeffrey) Starr, J.B. and Evelyn Willer and Robert Denison.

Burial will be at Acacia Park Cemetery, Birmingham. Memorials may be sent to Families in Action. Heene-Sundquist Funeral Home in Farmington handled the arrangements.

CLARA IRENE MCCLOUD

Funeral services for Clara Irene McCloud, 97 of Farmington Hills, formerly of Redford, will be 10 a.m. Monday, March 15 at Thayer-Rock Funeral Home, 33003 Grand River with the Rev. Robert Bough officiating.

Mrs. McCloud, who died March 12, was born Nov. 10, 1901 in Iowa. She was formerly employed by D.J. Healy in Detroit as an assistant buyer. She enjoyed reading and crossword puzzles.

Survivors include son John of Farmington Hills, one grandchild and two great-grandchildren. Preceding in death were her husband George in 1963 and daughter Patricia Tichauer in 1978.

Burial will be at Mt. Olivet Cemetery in Detroit. Memorials may be made to donor's choice.

HILLS AGENDA

Farmington Hills City Council
City Hall, 474-6115
7:30 p.m. Monday, March 15

Agenda items include:

■ Proclamation in Remembrance of the Holocaust Victims and presentation by Holocaust survivor Goldie Kalb

■ Proclamation in honor of Eagle Scout James Clapp, III

■ Recognition of Council member Nancy Bates as winner of the 1999 Chili Cook-off, People's

Choice Award

■ Consideration of adoption of resolution regarding I-276 reconstruction and noise issues

■ Presentation of annual report of the Historic District Commission by Ruth Mochlman, chairwoman

■ Consideration of adoption of resolution in opposition to the transfer of state TDF funds

■ Public hearing on community development block grant consolidated plan and 1999-2000

projected use of funds

■ Public hearing on continuation of consideration of application requesting approval for certificate of need regarding cellular tower proposal for Haggerty Road and Eight Mile

■ Consider enactment of ordinance to reclassify property on the north of 10 Mile, east of Ridgeview Drive, to show RA-2, single family residential district where OS-1, office service district classification is now shown.

Charter schools—promises must be kept

Steve Johnson believes in keeping promises. As a founding member of the Saginaw Career Complex charter school, Johnson promised high school students from Saginaw County a world class school-to-work learning experience.

He promised that they would be working beside some of the area's most prominent business, labor and skilled trades professionals. And he promised that the school would be open to any high school student who wanted to attend.

Johnson, a member of the Michigan Education Association (MEA), and the entire staff have kept their word. Saginaw Career Complex is a quality charter school with quality teachers delivering a quality education to about 600 students.

"Quality education always boils down to dedicated teachers putting kids first," said Johnson, who teaches auto technology. "Charter or no charter, that's what education is all about. Unfortunately, such charter school success stories are the exception in Michigan.

Five years—and millions of dollars—into the state's experiment with charter schools, we cannot say that very many charter schools are doing what they promised they would do—or what the law requires them to do. And yet the Legislature is poised to remove the cap and allow an unlimited number of charter schools in Michigan.

Disturbing trends

Such a move is reckless in light of state and national research that clearly shows charter schools are not revolutionizing public education. On the contrary, recent studies revealed disturbing trends such as:

- "Cookie cutter" schools run by profiteers.
- Enrollment practices that eliminate unwanted applicants.
- Few special education services.
- Little exchange of information with the public or the education community.
- Low student achievement.

Two recent studies, conducted for the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) by Western Michigan University and Public Sector Consultants Inc., showed that charter schools were performing worse on standardized tests and had higher dropout and teacher turnover rates than traditional public schools.

Not exactly high-quality school reform.

Charter schools are an experiment. They are independent public schools that don't have to follow the same rules as traditional public schools. Freeing them from cumbersome regulations was supposed to make it easier for them to be innovative, flexible and responsive to student needs and parent demands. Most charter schools are a long way from meeting those goals.

But are they here to stay? The MEA believes we must give them a chance to answer the question: Is this a good vehicle for improving public schools for all children? We must find and learn from the successes such as the Saginaw Career Complex. And we must weed out the failures.

That will be impossible if the Legislature removes the cap.

The state does not keep track of the 140 charter schools already out there. Creating more without a plan for monitoring them could undermine the experiment altogether.

Accountability key to quality

Nearly all of the charter schools that participated in the studies reported that MDE staff had never visited their schools—never checked up on their enrollment practices, their curriculum, their business practices.

Traditional public schools on the other hand are increasingly held accountable for such things as test scores, dropout rates, teacher quality and parental involvement.

Maybe that's why it was natural for Steve Johnson and his colleagues to strive to live up to their promises. The Saginaw Career Complex had been a traditional public school skills center run by Saginaw Public Schools until the staff decided to convert to a charter school three years ago. Converting allowed them to streamline the enrollment process and increase per pupil funding.

"There is no oversight from the state," Johnson said. "But because we started off as a traditional public school, we learned to do things right. And we didn't become a charter school to lower our standards or get away with anything. That's the problem with so many charters out there. They're just not held to the highest standards."

Research—and common sense—clearly shows that the Legislature ought not promise more charter schools until charter schools prove they can live up to their promises.

Julius A. Tralloy
President, Michigan Education Association

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