

Fire safety

'Austin Flowers' teaches the Great Escape

BY TIM SMITH
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Pence, love and — fire safety — was the mantra Friday morning at St. Paul's Lutheran School in Farmington Hills.

The occasion was "Austin Flowers' Great Escape," a fire prevention skit by Farmington Hills Fire Department's "Four Flames." In the mod starring roles were fire inspector Denny Hughes, firefighter Kim Alvarado and Lt. Stan Barnes, as "Austin," "Vanessa" and "The Professor," respectively. Rounding out the cast, in the straight-man's role, was Lt. Mike Garr.

Middlebelt pre-K-8 school enjoyed a tame, kid-friendly parody of Mike Myers' raunchy Austin Powers character. Painted peace signs and flowers adorned the walls of Austin Flowers' second-floor apartment, a fire trap if there ever was one.

For example, Garr held up a wicker basket filled with old newspapers and laundry, which had been placed too close to the furnace. Then, he held up a pair of Austin's boxer shorts, complete with Winnie the Pooh drawings.

"Yeah," said Garr with a grin, glancing at the boxer shorts. "Keep combustibles away from an open flame."

Usual fire safety tips were

interspersed with goofy jokes and pratfalls. The Professor tripped over a couch while demonstrating the need to stay low in a smoke-filled room.

"Next, we'll talk about 'Stop, Drop and Roll,'" said Garr, to the St. Paul's students, who were enthusiastic about the skit. "Yeah, baby," chimed in Austin Flowers. "Rock and roll... all right!"

With the music blaring on a portable radio, Austin, wearing tie-dyed garb, and Vanessa, in her psychedelic bell bottoms and top, launched into a groovy dance routine.

Of course, Garr quickly corrected them, and the main characters returned to the task at hand, learning about: 1. how to avoid fire and 2. how to safely get out if there is one.

Garr mentioned the need to have two fire exits, plan ahead of time and to have a designated meeting place after getting out safely.

Austin brought out a two-rung ladder, to be dropped out of the second-floor window. "This is for Mini Me."

Meanwhile, Garr urged youngsters to move quickly in the event of fire.

"A plan only works if you practice it," Garr said. "Even Pokémon cards aren't worth your life. If there's a fire you have to get outside fast."

Between now and the first week of October, the troupe will make more than 40 appearances, mostly at elementary schools in the Farmington and Clarenceville districts. Monday, they also performed at Our Lady



Get out: With Farmington Hills firefighter Kim Alvarado's "Vanessa" looking on, Lt. Mike Garr (right) holds up a window ladder during "Austin's Great Escape" fire safety skit at St. Paul's Lutheran School. Also pictured at far left is "The Professor," played by Lt. Stan Barnes.

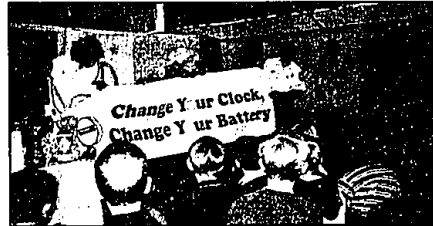
■ 'A plan only works if you practice it. Even Pokémon cards aren't worth your life. If there's a fire you have to get outside fast.'

Lt. Mike Garr
—Farmington Hills Fire Department

"They keep the kids' interest and give them valuable information," Wiersig said. "They go home and discuss it with their parents."

After the skit, co-written by Garr and Alvarado, Hughes said the decision to base the skit on Austin Powers was done because Myers' character is so recognizable, funny and popular.

"It was a place to jump off from, something that's topical and popular. But we certainly don't endorse all the behavior of Austin Powers."



Change is good: Reminding St. Paul's students about the need to keep clocks and fire detectors in good working order are the "Four Flames," including (from left) "Vanessa," played by firefighter Kim Alvarado, "The Professor," portrayed by Lt. Stan Barnes, "Austin Flowers," by fire inspector Denny Hughes and Lt. Mike Garr, in the straight man's role.

Open house kicks off national fire prevention week

BY JOANNE MALISZEWSKI
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Move over Harry Houdini. Kids will be the next great escape artists after Farmington Hills firefighters finish their tours of area schools in preparation for the annual, national Fire Prevention Week Oct. 3-9.

The week of fire prevention messages will culminate in the Farmington Hills Fire Department's 22nd annual open house noon-4 p.m., Sunday, Oct. 3 at fire headquarters on Orchard Lake Road, just south of the city hall at 11 Mile.

"We will be talking up the fire prevention message," said Lt. Mike Garr, Farmington Hills firefighter.

Visits to the schools, including those in Clarenceville, will highlight the designated week's theme, "The Great Escape."

"We are in the second year of a three-year theme," Garr said. "We are visiting kids at school when they have fire drills. But do they know how to get out of their own home?"

Through skits and talks firefighters teach students the ins and outs of fire safety and exiting burning buildings.

The hope is that kids will take the information home to their parents. "We encourage parents to do a drill at home," Garr said.

Drills, escape routes from your house, general fire safety and fun for kids and adults will high-

light the fire department's open house.

New this year will be a "fire-fighter" obstacle course for kids, a scavenger hunt and child fingerprinting.

"The obstacle course is to let the kids know if they have the true stuff to be a firefighter," Garr said.

The scavenger hunt will allow kids to move from one safety exhibit to another gathering clues, with the ultimate goal of earning a firefighter's hat.

The event will also allow kids to dress up as firefighters and meet Sparky the fire dog.

Families may visit the "smoke house" where they can learn what it's like to be in a smoke filled building and how to get out. Fire apparatus will be on display while paramedic and firefighters will display their skills, techniques and talents.

Moms and dads can stop by and watch a kitchen fire demonstration, including a demonstration on gas grill fires.

Also on tap will be some lessons in Stop! Drop! and Roll! as well as vehicle extrication, and poison control information.

Parents also will be informed of emergency preparedness for disasters, especially for food, water and shelter. "We will have examples of kits and literature available," Garr said.

OCT. 3-9

You're invited to annual 'Sober October' kickoff

Farmington Families in Action's 11th Annual Community Breakfast will be held 7:15 to 8:45 a.m. Friday, Oct. 22 in the Shannon Room at the Costick Activities Center in Farmington Hills.

The guest speaker is Milton Creagh, from Atlanta, Ga. Creagh has been a successful background as a parent educator with the national FRIDE anti-drug campaign. He is a speaker for both youth and adults.

His topic will address the theme for this year's Sober October Month, "Zero Tolerance for 00 — Enough is Enough."

The goal of F.F.I.A. is to educate community members that "Zero Tolerance is a community wide intolerant attitude toward behaviors that threaten the health and safety of our children. Every incident deserves a response."

F.F.I.A. chose this theme to support the first goal of the recently formed Farmington/Farmington Hills Call to Action Coalition.

All community members are welcome to attend. Tickets are \$12. For more information or to purchase tickets, contact Becky Dworkin at 661-4646.

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