

**Black History Month: Thirty-five dancers with the Renaissance High School troupe visited North Farmington High School to perform "Crossroads: A Look at the Path of African Americans from Africa to the Present." When the Renaissance troupe finished their performance, North Farmington students jumped up on stage and joined their Detroit counterparts in an impromptu collaboration.**



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL DESSERZ

## Renaissance dance troupe performs pathway of African-Americans

BY TIM SMITH  
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North Farmington High School students Tuesday enjoyed a unique, entertaining way to learn about African-American history.

Thirty-five dance students from Renaissance High School in Detroit, directed by Gina Ellis, performed "Crossroads: A Look at the Path of African Americans from Africa to the Present" during a lively program in the North auditorium.

Before the conclusion of the choreographed program, about 20 North students jumped up on stage and joined the Renaissance troupe for an impromptu collaboration.

"It was the best history lesson of all," said Melissa Poli, who teaches the first-year dance program at North. "It combined poetry with dance and script, the whole visual" gamut.

Poli described the program as being "more of a dance drama than an all-dance concert." That dance traced the "pathway" of African-Americans from Africa to America.

She added that audience members were so captivated by the "fast, festive, together" performance that they sat with eyes riveted to the action on stage.

"There was total silence during the program," said Poli, emphasizing just how attentive the audience was.

That "it was high school kids performing full-out for high school kids" was considered a bonus, she added. Approximately 650 students watched the performance, during which various dance styles were melded. Those included swing-inspired steps and styles such as the "jitterbug" and "pick-a-cher-y," she said.

The program featured the following numbers: "The Marketplace," "Capture," "Voyage to Unknown Places," "Field Songs," "Spirituals," "Harambee/Freedom," "Harlem Renaissance" and "The Civil Rights Movement."

Renaissance High troupe members included students who take dance as an elective class and those who comprise the Renaissance Dance Workshop. The latter performs at area concerts and festivals.

Under the leadership of Ellis, a veteran professional dancer who performed in New York, the Renaissance dance program has grown in leaps and bounds since its inception in 1994.

Besides entertainment and a different look at African-American history, both Poli and Principal Rick Jones said they were confident the morning program generated enthusiasm among North students to become interested in the high school's new dance program.

"We now are offering dance as an elective and we want to give kids a chance to see what modern dance is all about," Jones said.

This year also is the first for a new dance studio, which was part of the school expansion-renovation made possible by the \$93.1 million bond issue approved by voters in 1997.

Meanwhile, Poli said the assembly helped expose North students to "a different style of dance."

The performance was just one of many Black History Month programs held throughout the district during February.

## Charged from page A1

A complaint filed by two Farmington Hills teenagers, coupled with the seven-day surveillance, gave police the leverage they needed to obtain search and arrest warrants, Nebus said.

Long into Friday night and early Saturday morning, officers loaded hundreds of tapes, Polaroid photographs, clothing and other items into boxes and garbage bags.

Nebus described a dresser whose drawers were filled to the top with photos of young boys, dressed either in shorts or completely nude. In one, two youngsters were fighting and had bloodied each other's faces.

Police took out truckloads of material, now in the Farmington Hills Police Department evidence room, ready for investigators to sift through. Nebus said officers didn't spend time examining everything in the apartment; however, they did listen to tapes from his car that were recordings of conversations with young boys.

"Even when I worked vice, I never saw this volume of tapes," Dwyer said.

The collection includes a stack of 8 1/2 x 11 sheets of typing paper covered top to bottom with dated and numbered lists of names. Bundles of hand-written note cards included one that read "Top Boy of 1971" and a list of 10 names, with the winner's name block printed at the bottom.

Some of the photographs date back to the 1960s, Nebus said. It wasn't until the Farmington Hills teenagers confided in school liaison officer Pat Sidje three weeks ago that authorities had cause to investigate him again. Dwyer and Nebus both praised the trusting relationship Sidje has established in the schools, coupled with cooperation between Sidje and Detective Rose Mackie.

Dwyer also commended the Oakland County



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL DESSERZ

**Evidence search: Assistant Chief Charles Nebus examines audio and video tapes confiscated during the Friday evening raid.**

prosecutor's office for their cooperation.

After executing the search warrant Friday, members of the South Oakland Narcotics Investigation Consortium - consisting of officers from Farmington Hills, Novi and West Bloomfield - arrested the suspect on the street. He was interviewed early Saturday morning.

Police urge parents to talk to their children about this case, to warn them again about the danger of talking to strangers and to determine whether their child may have had contact with the suspect. Anyone with information may call Nebus at (248) 473-9684.

## Schools of choice is meeting focus

TUESDAY, FEB. 29

In accordance with state law, the Farmington Board of Education will conduct its annual discussion about interdistrict schools of choice at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 29 at the Lewis Schulman Administrative Center.

Each year the school board is required to state its intention regarding the acceptance of non-resident students.

Michigan law allows local school boards to decide whether they will accept students who reside outside the local school district boundaries but within the Oakland Intermediate School District boundaries; reside in surrounding school districts but are part of another

intermediate district.

In the past, the Farmington school board has decided not to participate in interdistrict schools of choice after hearing comments from interested citizens.

The Schulman center is at 32500 Shiawassee in Farming-

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