

### CHAT ROOM



ELLEN HERSCHER

## Salting roads deserves care, extra attention

Salting roads is absolutely necessary in order not to jeopardize our safety. However, there is a strong connection between the proven hazard to vegetation and automobiles. We can take steps to prevent or diminish such destruction.

Accumulation of salt is toxic to plant life. Trucks spray the salt directly on the streets, yet the snowplows cannot avoid throwing it onto the landscape. Melting snow causes salt-saturated runoff that can damage vegetation within 25 feet of the roads.

Sometimes we salt our driveways and sidewalks for home safety. When the next snowfall hits, we end up inadvertently shoveling the salt onto our lawns, and it is nearly impossible to avoid contamination of plants from the residue.

### Protect lawns and plants

Build temporary burlap or plastic shelters to help protect the lawn, shrubs and plants. Shovel walkways before salting.

### Accumulation of salt is toxic to plant life. Melting snow causes salt run-off that can damage vegetation within 25 feet of the roads.

Alternative for de-icing is the use of urea fertilizers; however, superfluous applications will result in nitrogen burning.

If you have the option of re-landscaping, plant salt-tolerant plants such as Siberian pea shrub, Russian olive, juniper, honey locust and poplar. Shy away from salt-sensitive plants if there is any possibility of pollution. When spring arrives, salvage the salt-laden areas by leeching the soil with large amounts of water.

### Damage to cars

Automobiles are impaired cosmetically, functionally and structurally by salt. Road salt erosion hurts the cars' body, resulting in rust, stains and discoloration of paint. Metal trim gets severely pitted. Brake linings corrode; body panels become perforated; bumper support systems fail, and frames deteriorate, thereby impairing the functional and structural integrity of the vehicle.

In keeping potential damage at bay, we can be more aggressive with auto maintenance. Seal nicks caused by flying stones, runway shopping carts and minor accidents. Wash cars frequently; include the undercarriage flush and rust inhibitor. Maintain a good wax coating.

Finnish studies have been done on experimental roads, replacing salt with sand and reducing salt to bare minimum. Winter costs of maintaining the experimental roads increased by about 20 percent. The experimental roads were more slippery, thereby causing a 6-percent increase in injury accidents, yet no increase in traffic fatalities. Groundwater contamination decreased substantially during that period and damage to roadside vegetation was reduced significantly. Salting roads is imperative, but there is a better method of doing it, which is referred to as an anti-icing rather than de-icing. This strategy that involves timing, applying salt or ice-melting chemicals to the road before a storm strikes. (If temperatures are too cold, a brine won't develop.) The freezing-point deterrent will preclude ice from forming on the pavement. Salty brine prevents ice, so the road is wet yet not frozen slick. Consequently, there is a reduction in accidents, and clean-up is simpler.

By taking responsibility for our own lawns and automobiles, we can eliminate some stress in our lives.

Ellen J. Herscher is a resident of Farmington Hills.

# Young pen pals bridge the gap

■ Lanigan Elementary third graders from Farmington Hills met their pen pals from a Detroit school at Focus:HOPE recently.

BY HEATHER NEEDHAM  
STAFF WRITER

Lanigan Elementary students got a chance to meet with Detroit students and pen pals and learn about Black History Month recently.

The Lanigan and Duffield third graders met at Focus:HOPE to talk with their pen pals and watch a presentation by a professional storyteller about Black History Month.

The students meet five times a school year for the different cultural presentations. So far, they've learned about Hispanic, Arabic and African-American cultures. Twelve Detroit and metro Detroit school districts participate in the program.

### Good learning experience

Pat Weston, a Lanigan third-grade teacher, said the pen pal program is a good learning experience for students.

"The purpose is really to bring in-city students together with suburban students," Weston said. "Basically I think (suburban children) either have misconceptions or no idea of what kids are like who live in the city — they find they're just like them."

Chantell Morrison, a Duffield third-grade teacher, said the students benefit from the writing exercise.

"It increases their writing skills," she said. "I encourage them to write as if (they) were talking."

Morrison said she'd like to start an e-mail pen pal program for the students but doesn't want to eliminate the letter writing program.

"Letter writing is an art form," Morrison said.

Molly Tyler, a Lanigan third grader, said she likes the pen pal program.

"We get to learn about different things," Molly said. "I like that we get to meet different people."

Her pen pal, Shontell Tillman of Detroit's Duffield Elementary, said she likes "learning about other people."

Leon Garmes, also a Duffield student, said "I like them to perform for us."



Meeting of the minds: Brian Namee and Van Scott work on a paper that describes how they would change the world. Below (right) Alma Greer presents a story and song.

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Pat Weston  
—Lanigan teacher

### Dream and dreamer

Alma L. Greer, a former Detroit educator and member of the Detroit Association of Black Storytellers, donned traditional African costume and gave a presentation called "The Dream and the Dreamer."

She told the story of African-American "dreamers" through song and a percussion performance.

Greer said the teaching of black history should be more prevalent in schools.

"I think it shouldn't just be a month," she said. "The history of black people should be infused into the curriculum."

This information was left out of the curriculum for too long.

Annette Vanover, arts project coordinator for Focus:HOPE said the program teaches children valuable lessons.

Focus:HOPE provides the schools with "cultural kits" featuring curriculum materials about the culture the children will study.

"We started the program in the hopes we could start introducing (children) to different cultures, to different communities and different ways of life. It gives them a chance to celebrate differences as well as commonalities."



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BENJER

## One on one

### WW partners with trainers in new fitness venture

BY MARY RODRIGUE  
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Anyone who has ever pulled a muscle working out will appreciate Synergy Fitness, a new personal training service housed in the Weight Watchers headquarters in Farmington Hills.

The gym is open to WW employees, WW members, and everyone else. "We're not competing with big chain health clubs," said Boo Sadikot, Synergy's director of fitness. "We expect that much of our clientele hasn't worked out before. We'll let them train safely and get results."

Sadikot, certified by the National Academy of Sports Medicine and the American Council on Exercise, said the company will cater to all training levels.

His partner, Chris Klebba, president of Synergy Fitness, said their philosophy is to "educate members on resistance training."

Equipped with the newest Reebok workout machines, the compact gym has a station to focus on every major muscle group.

WW CEO Florine Mark is excited by the new venture.

"It's very important our people get to exercise," said Mark, working out on an Elliptical Trainer, a machine that simulates jogging without stressing the knees.

"I feel so good, I'll be doing this three days a week."

"In the last 30 years, I've been in the business of helping people lose weight. We've learned that if you don't exercise, you don't keep it off."

Mark said many WW followers yearn for more variety once the program gets them walking and enjoying more active lifestyles.

"When you want to lift weights, it's always best to start with a trainer," Mark said.

### A painful reminder

She recalls an earlier time when she dabbled with kick boxing and tore a muscle in the process.

"Work smart, work hard," Chris Klebba stressed.

"We're hooked over our computers several hours a day," Mark said. "Exercise makes you feel better. Everyone deserves a good life every day. And you are the only one who can do that for yourself. Another benefit: When you do strength training, you don't want to eat three candy bars a day."

WW won recognition from the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness for employee perks. There are 80-100 workers at WW headquarters on Orchard Lake Road, north of 12 Mile. Several other businesses are housed in the building. The company employs 3,500 workers across the United States and Canada. There are also 1,000 WW followers who attend meetings each week at the Orchard Lake Road location.

Some of the on-going employee activities include seminars on looking and feeling good, a lunch club that offers nutritionally sound food prepared by a staff chef, and a CPR training class offered free to all employees this week.

Danielle Elbaz, WW events coordinator, uses the new gym during her lunch hours.

"It's kind of a nice way to break up the day," she said. "You know how in the afternoon you feel sluggish? This is an energy boost."

Visitors will find coral- and teal-colored walls — not the stark clinical white or gray of many gyms and health clubs. Even the Reebok equipment is a

jazzy blue. The Synergy Fitness staff doesn't expect a full house — in fact, they envision only a few clients at a time with an emphasis on personal attention.

Please See FITNESS, B2



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BENJER

Training: Weight Watchers regional manager Robin Bingham works out in the new gym.



Exercise break: WW CEO Florine Mark puts in a quick workout session with Synergy Fitness personal trainer Boo Sadikot before heading off to a meeting Tuesday morning. The new gym opened this week in the Weight Watchers building in Farmington Hills and is available to WW members and anyone else who wants to get into shape.

PHOTO BY JACQUELYNNE