

Hills library focal point for kids' reading effort

BY JONI HUBERD
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When it comes to preparing young children to read, the epicenter of Oakland County lies in the Farmington Community Library.

The Hills branch has become a distribution site for Read, Educate and Develop Youth (R.E.A.D.Y.) kits. Produced by Central Michigan University, the boxed materials emerged two years ago, from Gov. John Engler's Reading Plan for Michigan, designed to help every student read at or above grade level by the time they complete third grade.

Library Director Bev Papai said the movement toward working with kids early in their lives has gone on for years, but began to take on a more scientific focus in the mid-1990s, with brain research directed by the U.S. Department of Education.

"What they found in that children who are read to learn to read," she said, "that parents are the first and best teachers of the child, and that essentially, reading is a key to lifetime success. And it sounds so basic."

At the time, Papai was presi-

dent of the Michigan Library Association. The group began to look at two "at risk" categories: early teens, when teacher/parent interaction tends to drop off and other influences become stronger; and newborn to age 4, before kids start their formal education.

"We began to look at programs directed for those two at-risk categories," Papai said. "We looked at what the library's impact could be on that age group as a determinant for lifetime success."

Everyone realized the libraries couldn't do it alone. The effort would require a collaboration with all the community's service providers, Papai said.

In Farmington Hills, that included the Commission on Youth and Families, of which Papai is a member. The group talked about creating an information packet that could help parents with ideas for activities geared toward improving reading readiness in the very youngest children.

That's about the time Jan

Dolan stepped into the picture. A former Farmington Hills City Council member and state representative, she's been a long-time advocate of early childhood education.

Dolan heard about the R.E.A.D.Y. packets several years ago. They contain items like a read-along book and cassette of Sesame Street tunes selected to help develop the skills and abilities necessary for learning to read, as well as support information and an "I Am Your Child" video for parents.

Kits specially designed for each of three age groups — under 12 months, 1-2½ and 2½-4 — have been produced through Central Michigan University's Educational Materials Center.

"No one from Oakland County was responding to requests to distribute the kits," Dolan recalled. "That's when I suggested doing it through the library. It's a very neutral, non-threatening place."

The subcommittee took a look at the kits and asked the Department of Education about

making the library a distribution center. A number of organizations submitted letters of support, including the Boys & Girls Republic, the city of Farmington Hills, Farmington Schools, Farmington Youth Assistance, Oakland Family Services and the Interfaith Association.

The only way the state would let Papai have the kits would be if the library could serve as a distribution point for the entire county. She didn't really have the space or the staff time.

"But I figured we would never get it if I didn't find someone who was willing to do it for us," she said. "So I called the Oakland County Reference Library."

After hearing her presentation, the Oakland County Library Board agreed to do it. The initial shipment of 1,000 kits went to Farmington Hills, but the rest will go through the county.

In addition to the prepared materials, the kits contain local information about library programs, preschools and parenting support resources. Kids from Boys & Girls Republic helped assemble the packets.

For more information about the R.E.A.D.Y. kits, call the Farmington Hills branch, (248) 563-0300.

The Hills branch has become a distribution site for Read, Educate and Develop Youth (R.E.A.D.Y.) kits.

Crime rate continues downward course

BY TRACEY BIRKENHAUER
STAFF WRITER

Major crime in Farmington is at a record low for the third year in a row, Gary Goss reported at Monday's Farmington City Council meeting.

The city's director of public safety said serious crimes in 1999 were down about 12 percent from the previous year.

There was one murder in the city, the third in the past 20 years. The others were in 1994 and 1981.

Goss said the suspect in the 1999 murder is mentally disturbed and is still undergoing a forensic evaluation. He is scheduled to appear in court on March 24.

The low crime rate is partially attributed to low unemploy-

ment rates and a good economy, Goss said.

The public safety department in 1999 responded to almost half as many fires as it did in 1998, down to 24 from 46. On the other hand, the number of medical runs was up slightly. The department had almost 3 percent more calls in 1999 than in 1998.

OBITUARIES

MARIE BENOIT

Services for Marie Benoit, 83, of Farmington Hills, were held March 8 at Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church in Farmington with the Rev. Scott Thibodeau officiating. Burial took place at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in Southfield.

Mrs. Benoit was born Oct. 10, 1906 in Germany and died March 5 at Alterra Wynwood Assisted Living in Northville.

She is survived by son, Emil (Rose); daughter, Sr. Maria Benoit; sisters, Frieda Kiefer, Emilia Anderson and Eliza Schlachter; nieces, Trudi (Richard) Geratnor and Myrta (Herb) Moelner; and five grandchildren.

Memorial contributions can be made to Hartland Hospice.

HAROLD G. CRISMAN

Services for Harold G. Crisman, 72, were held March 10 at Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church in Farmington. Mr. Crisman was born Dec. 12, 1927 and died March 6 at U of M Hospital.

He is survived by wife, Barbara; children, Gil Ann (Neil) McQuarrie, Dean (Anita), Donald (Rebecca), Harold (Teresa), Karen Bushar and James (Mary); brother, Donald; and 11 grandchildren.

Memorial contributions can be made to the Christ Child Society c/o Tribute and Memorial Fund Chairperson 16761 Joy Road, Detroit 48228.

ALBERT V. FARLESS

Services for Albert Victor Farless, 63, of West Bloomfield,

were held March 9 Hooney-Sundquist Funeral Home in Farmington.

Mr. Farless was born Nov. 7, 1946 in Detroit and died March 6 at Beauford Hospital in Farmington Hills.

He is survived by daughters, Lonette (John) Williams and Angela Farless; sister, Marilyn (Richard) Endline; and brother, Thomas.

He was preceded in death by his brother, James (Janet); sister, Anita (Joseph) Redmond; and parents, Arless and Frances Farless.

MARIAN E. KEIMIG

Services for Marian Elizabeth Keimig, 78, of Farmington Hills, were held March 11 at Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church in Farmington with the Rev. Scott Thibodeau officiating. Burial took place at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in Southfield.

Mrs. Keimig was born May 7, 1921 in Pittsburgh, Pa. and died March 9 at Angela Hospice in Livonia.

She is survived by sons, James (Linda) and Dr. William Jr. (Joanne); daughters, Marianne (Dennis) Weiss and Teresa (Nicholas) Kober; and 12 grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her husband William. Memorial contributions can be made to Angela Hospice in Livonia.

Arrangements made by Heehey-Sundquist Funeral Home in Farmington.

HAZEL L. ERICKSEN

Services for Hazel L. Erickson, 83, of Farmington Hills, were held March 7 at Thayer-Rock Funeral Home in Farmington with the Rev. Roland Troike officiating. Burial took place at Roseland Park Cemetery.

Mrs. Erickson was born Dec. 17, 1916 in Calumet, Mich. and died March 4 in Farmington Hills. She was a homemaker and member of Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Southfield.

She is survived by sons, Leif, Robert, David, Raymond and Andrew; daughters, Christy (Fred) Lukanchoff; 16 grandchildren; and 13 great-grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her husband Leif.

Memorial contributions can be made to Emmanuel Lutheran Church, 23425 LaSalle Road, Southfield 48336.

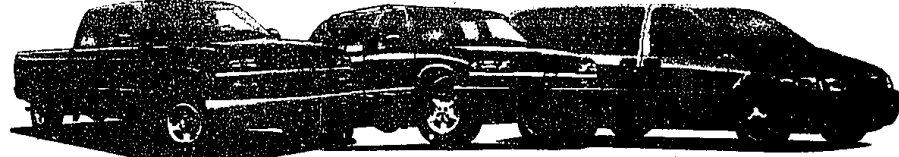
ERMA M. MCVAY

Services for Erma M. McVay, 87, of Farmington Hills, were held March 10 R.G. & G.R. Harris Funeral Home in Livonia with the Rev. David Owen officiating.

Mrs. McVay was born July 6, 1912 in Mt. Pleasant and died March 6 at William Beaumont Hospital.

She was a homemaker. She is survived by her children, Elena (Joe) Firmont and Garry (Michelle) McVay; grandchildren, Shannon, Bethany, Kelly, Kevin, Amanda, and Erick; great-grandchild, Reed; and brother, Joe Hughey.

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