Gill School

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130 students. That would take into consideration 21 current fifth graders moving up to middle school next year.

The informational meeting will help district administrators decide the program's future. One area to be examined is whether there is sufficient interest to merit its cost.

Meanwhile, Zimmerer said schools Superintendent Bob Maxfield is expected to update parents during a meeting at Gill, scheduled for 7 p.m. Wednesday, March 21.

Maxfield met with about 70 parents in November and already knows how much they want the year-round program to continue. To underscore that point, an ongoing campaign led by parents to raise awareness throughout the district includes hard-working committees on public relations/marketing, parent orientation and research.

"What they were saying is they love this program," Maxfield said shortly after the November meeting. "It gives them a choice, fits their schedules better and they just think it's right for their children."

Makes sense

In a prepared statement, Gill Year Round teachers emphasized how the extended school calendar eases stress, reduces the potential for burnout and enables youngsters to retain more from year to year.

"Since we no longer need to schedule the school calendar around an agricultural year and since most children are ready to go back to school after five or six summer weeks off, it seems the year round calendar makes the most sense," said teacher Vickey Shaw.

Kindergarten teacher Linda Lipson also noted how families and staff connect in a familial way because of the program.

"Since parents have specifically chosen this program for their children, they have demonstrated their commitment to being active partners in their children's education," said Lipson in the statement. "I think this is a definite strength of the program.

According to fifth grade teacher Jon Vondrasek, the program provides for "a real family atmosphere. The students all know each other, which takes care of any first-day jitters of wondering who will be in their class. They also know who their teacher will be the following year."

Smaller class size is another benefit, ensuring individualized instruction.

Students in the K-5 program attend the same number of days as do those in the traditional calendar, even though their year stretches into mid-July.

Gill Elementary School is between Eight Mile and Nine Mile roads on the west side of Gill Road; (248) 489-3690.

Editor

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Hubred is anxious to take the reins at The Farmington Observer.

"I'm really excited because I know the community very well and truly enjoyed the last year working in Farmington and Farmington Hills covering stories in both communities," she said.

"Joni will continue a tradition of involvement in the community that has been a trademark of Farmington Observer editors over the last two decades," said Susan Rosiek, publisher of the Observer Newspapers. "The Farmington/Farmington Hills communities expect a lot of their Observer editor and Joni is poised to take on the challenges and opportunities that loom."

"The Observer is pleased to continue its tradition of excellence in community journalism with Joni at the head of our Farmington/Farmington Hills team," added Rosiek.

"I'm looking forward to continuing the emphasis on community involvement and community focus established by my predecessor, Joanne Maliszewski," Hubred said.

Maliszewski left the newspaper last Dec. 1 to take a position with Boyden Global Executive Search in Bloomfield Hills. Observer veteran copy editor Doug Johnson filled the gap until Maliszewski's replacement was named this week.

Hubred's family lives in Montevideo in southwest Minnesota; she was born and raised in Hoffman, Minn. She is the mother of two children: Jared, 21, and Leah, 19.

A Farmington resident for almost a year, her hobbies include indoor gardening, walking around town and reading "voraciously."

Contest

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real estate section with Barry Jensen as editor and Doug Funke as lead writer.

Front-page real estate columnists are Robert Meisner on legal issues and Tim Phillips on mortgages.

A third-place award for the HomeTown Life section was earned for best young people's coverage," a section and coverage overseen by editor Kim Mortson.

All told, the Observer Group — which also includes papers in Livonia, Westland, Garden City, Plymouth, Canton and Redford — took home 16 awards, including four first-place honors.

"We are proud to receive this recognition from the Suburban Newspapers of America," said Hugh Gallagher, managing editor of the Observer Newspapers." We work hard to produce what we believe are the best community newspapers in the country. The SNA awards encourage us to continue to improve what we do to serve our readers.The respect of our readers is always our highest reward."

Other winners:

■ **Livonia** — First place, best editorial writing; first place, best special section ("Livonia at 50); first place, best sports photojournalism (photographer Tom Hawley); second place, best local election coverage; and third place, best front page. Local editor is Dave Varga.

■ **Westland** — Third place, best breaking news story (staff writer Darrel Clem); and second place, best in-depth reporting (also Clem). Local editor is Julie Brown.

■ **Redford** — Third place, best sports writing (staff writer Paul Beaudry); and third place, best environmental coverage. Local editor is Jeff Counts.

■ **Plymouth** – A pair of individual awards went to photographer Paul Hurschmann, who won third-place honors in the category of best sports photojournalism, and to local editor Brad Kadrich, who was recognized with a second-place award in the category of best column writing.

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