

Dancing on air



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BUCKLER

**Do-wop hop:** Members of the Earth Angels dance troupe entertained at the St. Vincent Sarah Fisher Center last Friday, taking their audience back to the 1950s. Ranging in age from 9 to 16, the 21 boys and girls perform under the direction of Lisa Campos, pictured left. The Livonia-based troupe will be among the acts featured on stage in the Downtown Farmington Center parking lot after Saturday's Founders Festival parade, which begins at 10 a.m. on Grand River.



# Earth Angels put a smile on director's face

By CARA PLOWMAN  
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The local dance troupe Earth Angels transported the St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center community back to the 1950s at noon Friday.

The group packed their well-rehearsed routines into a half-hour line up for 60 children and staffers at the center in Farmington Hills.

The crowd seemed to enjoy the energy of the dancers, who performed songs from 1950 through 2001. Everything from Elvis to the BackStreet Boys was included in the exhibition.

Earth Angels started more than 15 years ago, as a childhood hobby for founder and director Lisa Campos.

### Dance, Dance, Dance

Including 21 boys and girls, age 9 to 16, from all over the Detroit area, the group lip-synchs to songs — mostly from the '50s and '60s, learns choreographed moves, mixes together costumes and interacts with audiences during its shows.

Katie Lietz, 13, has been an Angel for four years. Lietz, who attends Frost Middle School in Livonia, has been dancing since age 3.

"It's great to see how much fun people have watching the show," she said. "We're all really close. We're like a second family."

Lietz said she would like to be a dancer/actress later in life.

Every summer the Livonia-based troupe goes on tour in Michigan. In the past, they've performed for the Big Red Bont cruise line, Disney World in Florida and the Woodward Dream Cruise.

Since everything is paid for by performance fees and fund-raising, the group holds sock-hops, sells candy and does bottle drives to raise money for travel, costumes and other expenses.

Earth Angels rehearse sporadically throughout the school year but concentrate on their routines mostly when the weather's nice. Campos said they practice about eight hours a week during the summer months.

Jordan Berman, 15, has been a member since he was 10 years old. The West Bloomfield resident said he eventually wants to try out for a hip-hop music video, but doesn't have dreams to be a professional dancer.

Because the age range is so extreme, Berman said he has become close to other kids not in his age group. "The age difference really doesn't matter."

Berman added that the group has increased his people skills. "It's fun to interact and not be afraid to go up to someone. ... But I've never had stage fright."

Berman said he would like to become a pediatrician or a veterinarian.

### Backyard to center stage

Campos started dancing in her backyard with friends at a young age. By age 15, she was performing for parents and charging admission. The idea for Earth Angels grew from those backyard shows.

Now at age 30, Campos, who spends her days as a first grade teacher in Ann Arbor, works with the Angels on a daily basis. Campos is also finishing her master's degree in education at the University of Michigan, Dearborn.

Because of the group's high enthusiasm, Campos said they aren't hard to teach. "They're pretty attentive. They're a hard working bunch of kids," she said. "It's very rewarding for me to work with them. They have high expectations for themselves."

*The Earth Angels will perform at 1:30 p.m. Saturday afternoon, after the Founders Festival parade, on the main stage in the Downtown Farmington Center parking lot.*

Friends used to ring Campos' doorbell at 10 a.m. every Saturday for dance practice in her parents' basement. Mom and dad were supportive then and still are now. In fact, her mother comes to see as many shows as possible, and her father aids with costing.

### Help from a friend

One of Campos' friends, Jennifer LeCureux, has been volunteering with the Earth Angels for two years. During shows, LeCureux makes sure the music selections are cued and ready to go for the dancers.

In addition to helping the Angels, LeCureux is a medical assistant.

"(Earth Angels) is like a second full-time job. I don't think that there's one day that I don't spend even a little bit of time working for Earth Angels," she said.

Campos said the best part about Earth Angels is "the chance (it gives) to maybe touch or affect their lives in some way. It's something they'll remember when they're older."

Over the years, she has been given the chance to look at the world more light-heartedly. "The things that are worthwhile really stand out ... They always put a smile on my face."

# Farmington, Hills projects listed in \$1.6 billion RCOC road plans

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The Road Commission for Oakland County recently released its study of road repair needs facing the area. Those plans mean both Farmington and Farmington Hills residents could see more orange barrels in the next 10 years.

The RCOC planning report stated that the cost to fix the county roads over the next decade would be \$1.7 billion. Two years ago, RCOC estimated a \$1.6 billion price tag. Most of the cost is attributed to roads that are congested now or expected to become congested, according to the report.

Public information officer Craig Bryson said RCOC does not have enough money to pay for all of the projects listed in the report. He said the commission will have \$200-\$300 million to spend on county roads over the next decade. Projects that can't be paid for will remain on the list but will have to wait, Bryson said.

Bryson added that the report was not a "wish list" and said that an estimated one-third to one-half of all the projects addressed in the report will get done.

"Vastly more projects are being submitted (for funding) than there is funding," Bryson explained, adding that RCOC and cities apply to the Federal Aid Task Force Funding Committee for money to fix roads. That committee looks at requests and allocates money for projects.

"A lot of these are projects that should be done," he said. In a meeting last fall, officials from cities all over the county met with representatives from RCOC.

Farmington officials noted that, for the most part, they were satisfied with the services received from RCOC but suggested that litter pickup and mowing in the city could be improved upon, according to the report.

Two roads were identified that

**■ 'Vastly more projects are being submitted than there is funding.'**

*Craig Bryson —Oakland County Road Commission spokesperson*

the city would like to see improved in the future, including a portion of Grand River Avenue, from 10 Mile to Nine Mile. That road is not under RCOC jurisdiction because it is a state road. City manager Frank Lauhoff said that both the city and RCOC would like to see the county take over the road, but RCOC will not assume jurisdiction until the Michigan Department of Transportation fixes it first. "That road, Grand River, is going to be in need of major reconstruction," Lauhoff said. "The state has rejected that idea."

The second project identified in the report was the reconstruction

of Farmington Road from Eight Mile to Grand River, which will begin next week. Lauhoff said he made a written request for that road to be repaired in 1993, and it hasn't been addressed until now.

Officials from both communities pointed out that the Halsted/Grand River/ M-5 interchange will need repairs.

In the Farmington Hills report, officials noted that both RCOC and the Southfield Garage, which handles much of the city's road maintenance, have been responsive and timely.

Eight road repair projects were highlighted in Farmington Hills. The report said the city would like to complete the Haggerty Road connector to Pontiac Trail and eventually extend it to M-59. They would also like to see Northwestern Highway extended and beautified, Orchard Lake Road from 12 Mile to 14 Mile reconstructed, intersections along Middlebelt Road improved and a portion of Eight Mile resurfaced.

City manager Steve Brock said the Northwestern connector is one of the city's top priorities. Eight Mile Road repairs are also high on the list.

Brock said the city plans to begin construction on both areas next year. Also, Brock said the city is hopeful that a widening project will start up next summer at 10 Mile and Middlebelt Road.

"These are kind of big projects, yet we want them to be realistic," said Brock.

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Dr. Robert Go  
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Chief of Obstetrics and Gynecology

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