

Longacre does well, but could stand some accessibility improvements, survey says

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Longacre Elementary is very accessible to people with disabilities, but still has room for improvement.

Students who participated in a Disability Awareness Workshop last week completed a physical disabilities worksheet checklist, which showed a few problems exist.

The parking lot needs spaces reserved for people who have disabilities. Carolyn Das, a parent who volunteered at the workshop, knows she's seen signs in the past.

"They were knocked down," she guessed.

Also needed are parking spaces at least 12 feet wide so a person using crutches or a wheelchair can get in and out of a car or van.

Though door handles are the required three feet from the ground, if someone is immobile the handles aren't easy to grasp or turn. Lever handles require less hand and wrist action.

Windows need to be 24-28 inches from the floor so people who are short or use a wheelchair can see out. Classroom aisles should be at least 32 inches wide so people who use wheelchairs, crutches or walkers can get around safely and easily. Also, the school office doesn't have a telecommunications device for the deaf so that a person who is deaf can use the phone.

Some facts included in a student quiz on disability awareness were:



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRENNER

Ahil Thorpe and Danny Memar learn just how difficult it is to do everyday tasks while in a wheelchair.

■ Arthritis is the nation's number one crippling disease. More Americans have arthritis than any other physically impairing disorder.

■ Diabetes, cancer, heart disease, mental illness and epilepsy are hidden disabilities. Because these conditions cannot be seen, they and others, like high blood pressure, are thought of as hidden disabilities.

■ Never pet, feed or talk to a blind person's guide dog. A guide

dog is not a pet. It is trained to guide and protect its master.

■ At least 80 percent of people who are blind cannot read Braille.

■ The color used on stairways is a frequent cause of stairway accidents for elderly people. Low contrasting colors can trick the eye and are found to be the cause of numerous stairway accidents.

■ Public restroom signs marked "Ladies" and "Gentle-

men" or other clever names may be a barrier to people who are mentally impaired. Some people are taught to distinguish between restroom facilities by the length of the word on the door. A short word means men; a long word means women.

■ The heat from bath or shower water can cause heat stroke in elderly people. Lowering the hot water heater thermostat may prevent this from occurring.

Budget from page A1

reinforcement of the fact that the budget proposal is a work-in-progress, school officials said. In a prepared statement, district officials also pointed toward continuing financial challenges.

The legislature had originally agreed on the increases in 1999 but all indications were that the state would be unable to fulfill that commitment after the state was found to be facing a \$1 billion budget deficit. Although the amount will decrease the projected district budget deficit of \$6.4 million for the 2002-2003 school year, it is also believed that the district could experience a shortfall for the 2003-2004 school year.

Maxfield commended the efforts of state Rep. Andrew Raczowski (R-Farmington Hills) who plans to introduce the bill in the House of Representa-

tives. "We looked at innovative ways to keep our promise," Raczowski said. "It's innovative because we didn't use Enron accounting schemes. It's simple math. It's all about teaching and education in the classroom."

Raczowski was concerned when he read about the cuts the Farmington school district planned, which included things like increasing class size, eliminating Spanish classes and other programs.

"We were thinking of ways to help," Raczowski said. "This is innovative. It brings more money to the state coffers for schools. This is major breaking news. It is phenomenal news. We are still keeping education as a priority. I'm proud to play a role in it."

Roads from page A1

this detour to avoid construction delays.

"The construction detour is the most workable solution," Lauthoff said. "People remember last year

and the backups."

For more information call the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce at (248)474-3440.

Theater slates auditions

The Orchard Ridge Theater Company of Oakland Community College will hold open auditions for its spring production of Agatha Christie's *The Mouse Trap*, at 7 p.m. Monday, Feb. 11, at the Smith Theater, Orchard Ridge Campus, 27055 Orchard Lake Road, in Farmington Hills.

Performances will be April 11, 12 and 13. Contact Professor of Theater, Carol Thomas King at (248) 622-3595 for additional information.

Volunteers are also needed to build scenery, props and costumes.

Disabilities from page A1

how difficult things can be," Das said.

A variety of equipment was placed on tables so children could experiment. Included were long-handled sponges, a door knob handle, elastic shoelaces and adaptive silverware, like a swivel spoon that helps people who have tremors.

Curved, long-handled utensils

help people who have limited range of motion.

The large group instruction room beckoned the children to learn about a different sensory disabilities — visual, hearing, speech and learning. For instance, signature guides placed over a check or credit card receipt help a vision-impaired person feel where he

needs to write.

Glasses that simulated macular degeneration dimmed the world for the kids, and knock sensor lights flashed. These allow a deaf person to know when a visitor arrives at the door.

Fourth graders Victoria Grimshaw and Neeyati Shah

spoke using an electric larynx.

"It's fuzzy," Grimshaw said. "You need to get it right on your neck."

Suzanne Boomer, a parent, explained why someone would need an electric larynx. She raised two fingers to her mouth.

"Smoking," Boomer said. "Don't do it."

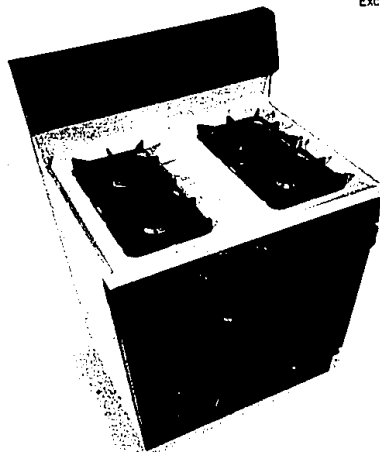
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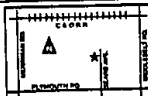
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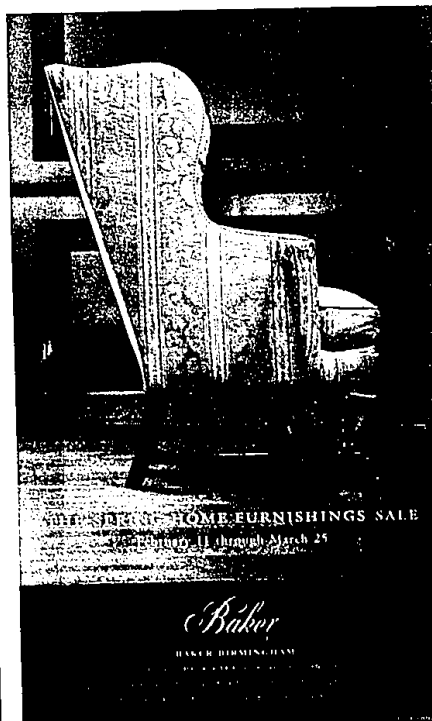
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