

SOS gives students an inside look at schools

By Sue Buck
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Amy Lebeis, who normally spends her school days at Farmington High, got to look deep inside the district administration building on Shawanese Friday.

Amy took a tour of the warehouse with Paul Hain, supervisor of purchasing, and Mary Reynolds, business manager, as part of Students Operating Schools Day. This was the 10th year the district arranged to have students shadow teachers and administrators to learn what it's like behind the scenes in education.

"This is interesting," Lebeis said, walking through a hallway with Reynolds.

Later, following a luncheon at the Farmington Training Center on Thomas Street, Lebeis told the 44 other students how she saw an area not privy to others. "I saw paper, tissue paper, I saw everything," Lebeis said.

Though the warehouse looks like just a bunch of boxes, Hain also got an idea about what's in them.

"This district eats paper," Hain said. "It uses about 750 cases of Xerographic paper per



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRADLER

Conversation starter: Elizabeth Taylor reports on her group's discussion on early start times. Taylor is a student at Harrison.

month. That's about a semi month. There's about 650 cases on a semi."

The district participates in an Oakland County cooperative with other districts, which helps with prices. Basically prices increase an average of 3-6 percent annually, Hain said.

"The highest percentage we've experienced in product cost is nine percent," he said.

"That happens to be in some of the custodial supplies. They

aren't in paper goods but chemical products."

Hain keeps tabs on prices by looking at a variety of industry sources. "We were pleasantly surprised. A lot of our vendors kept their prices firm this year."

Hain also studies the price of paper pulp. "That's a reflection of what I can expect to pay for paper products further down the road and my basis for negotiating prices. The demand for

paper pulp for creating all this paper is down. Like anything and economics if the demand is down you'd think the prices would be down."

Students in other parts of the building got a run-through of other processes. Justin Prinstein of North Farmington High shadowed both Kathy Ostrander, a personnel clerk, and Sue Zurvalac, assistant superintendent of staff and community services.

"I've learned how staff is hired, about pay, benefits and compensation," Prinstein said. "Basically everything comes through here."

Megan Springer, a Harrison High school student, shadowed Diane Bauman, director of school/community relations. "She takes care of all the brochures, the website, the brochures and special events like the Superintendent's Breakfast," Springer said.

Prinstein summed up the role of the school board and administration.

"We learned the difference between the school board and the administration," Prinstein said. "The school board does the 'what' and the administration does the 'how.'"



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRADLER

Longevity: Pat Bolt has worked at Dubin Optometrists since 1968.

Dubin employee sees benefits in years of service

By Joni Hubred
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"It's been like a family affair." That's how Pat Bolt describes her 34 years of employment at Dubin Optometric Clinic in downtown Farmington. She's been there through three doctors, an expansion and even a small plane landing on what was then the Farmer Jack store across the street.

When asked about what her duties have been, Bolt says, "Just about everything. A lot of insurance billing, dispensing contacts, reception work, you name it."

Her career started when a former boss contacted her with the news that his optometrist, Dr. Herman Title, was looking to hire someone. A short time later, Dr. Howard Dubin joined the practice and the partners took over adjacent space.

Other staff members, many of whom stay in touch, came and went. Bolt stayed because she was very comfortable with what she did and enjoyed her work environment.

"They always made it so comfortable to be here and do the family thing when I needed it," she said. "We're all one big family here, and we love one another."

"The family thing" has included caring for her ailing parents

and an older brother, then coping with their deaths. Bolt was so close to the Dubins, they closed up the shop when her parents passed away.

"There's a lot that's special about her," Dr. Dubin says of Bolt. "She is extremely loyal. I think that loyalty stems from the fact that she's always felt the people in the office and the community are her family."

Even though she was ill herself and taking care of family, business, he added, Bolt always had a concern for the office. She and her wife, Susan, had a very close relationship that transcended the work day. Pat and her husband William don't have children, but their time is occupied with four nephews and their families. "And we have a wonderful black Lab, Molly and parrots Bandit and Max."

While it is exceptional to have an employee stick with the same company for more than three decades, Dr. Dubin feels there are things and employer can do to retain good help.

"What an employer can and should do is to try to make the person really feel as much like family as possible, to be attuned to their needs and try and address their needs," he said. "I've always tried to put myself in their shoes and deal with the situation. It's kind of the Golden Rule."

Students would favor small change in start time

By Sue Buck
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Farmington students wrangled among themselves in small groups and in open discussion Friday about delaying high school start times.

Adults in the community have looked at the issue since last fall, so the Farmington School District decided to incorporate the topic into the annual Students Operating Schools' town hall meeting Friday at the Farmington Training Center.

That's a day when students shadow teachers and administrators to learn more about

their occupations. The day began at the school administration building.

After about an hour of listening to pros and cons, Superintendent Bob Maxfield summarized some key questions for the 45 students.

"Do you think sleep deprivation is a problem?" he asked. Twenty-three hands went up, some slowly.

"How many of you think it is not a problem?" Nine people.

"Is a later start time — probably an hour — a solution?" Just five hands showed.

"If you could tweak it and change it to 20 minutes to a half hour?" And with that ques-

tion, Maxfield garnered a majority vote.

High school students currently start school at about 7:30 a.m. Their vote would bring the school start time to 8 a.m., which has the most efficiencies of all the times the adult transportation subcommittee studied.

The school district has looked primarily at a change to either 8:30 a.m. or 9 a.m.

"We looked at the 8 a.m. time," Maxfield said after the meeting. "There was no efficiency to it. It wasn't going to work."

He focused on the fact that students said school should

start later.

Though some students like to sleep in, Peter Mellon of Farmington High was the epitome of an early riser. "I used to get up at four in the morning instead of seven in the morning and get my homework done in the morning rather than the night before," Mellon said. "I found it helped me later on in the day. My body had more time to get awake."

Nikolina Nikoloski, who attends the Alternating Academy, praised her school's later start time of 8:30 a.m. "It makes a huge difference," she said.

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