

North students win at auto repair competition

**BY SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER
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Four North Farmington High School seniors placed in all four areas of competition in a recent Vocational and Industrial Automotive Clubs of America regional competition.

Dave Verbeke, their teacher, has taught at the school for 10 years.

"They were the top students in my automotive program this year," Verbeke said. "I pick out the students which do the best in the written and hands-on part of the classes. We got into heavy electronics, heavy electrical, everything with the computer of the car. I have in this shop everything that a dealer has and more."

■ Eight schools attended the competition, which included more than 70 students.

Besides the awards, the students also received tools.

"Our program speaks to our community and our bond issue," Verbeke said, referring to last fall's successful Oakland Schools vocational education millage. "It provided new equipment."

About 75-100 students participate in the automotive program at North Farmington High.

"The demand for mechanics is so great in the technical field, yet for boys to get experience, it's difficult," Verbeke said.

Sometimes dealers are reluctant to pay minimum wage, he said. Yet, the student is working on a car with the supervision of a technician.

"If he clocked an hour's worth of work on a brake job, that dealer just made \$99," Verbeke said. "I find they end up using the kids more as go-arounds, rather than doing enough to work with the kids one-on-one."

The school program is certified by the National Automotive Technician Education Foundation.

"In automotive, we don't have



Car magic: Mike Livshiz, Austin Poole, Tim Godfrey and Steve Frey are auto wizards.

an apprenticeship program like a plumber or like an electrician has a journeyman's card," Verbeke said.

Students often do repair jobs at home or for friends. "We do hands-on live repair work in here," Verbeke said. "We do a lot of student and staff (work)."

Teachers are more understanding of the educational process, he said.

Verbeke gets personally upset with stories about how auto repairmen try to take advantage of customers. One staff member spent \$1,400 on repairs with the advice of an outside repair person that he might face up to a total \$3,000 in repairs.

"The guy panicked," Verbeke said. "He didn't need any of it.

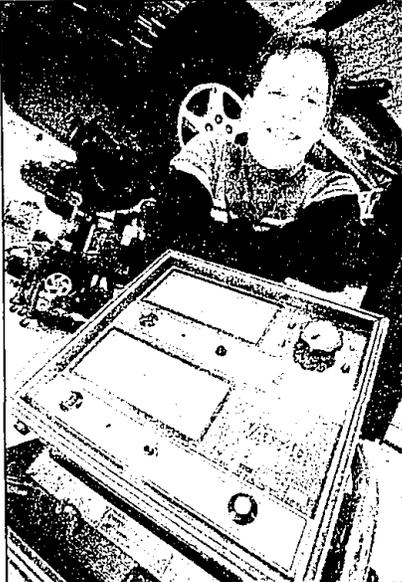
He needed one item."

Bob Sellers on Grand River where he did an internship a couple years ago is one of the few dealerships that impressed Verbeke said. "Bob Sellers has been a big support for us. He has been on our advisory committee."

The school recently received a \$25,000 equipment trainer from Ford Motor Company.

"Sometimes we get re-donations," Verbeke said. "Mecom Community College is a supporter of us. It's one of the strongest local automotive programs."

A re-donation is an item donated to one program, which when its use is finished, is given to another program, he said.



Charged up: Austin Poole is an electrical expert whose skill may disprove the old bromide that if you've got a car with electrical problems- sell it.

OBITUARIES

EDWARD K. BENDA

Funeral services were held Thursday for Edward K. Benda, 76, of Calumet, Mich. He was a former resident of Farmington Hills.

He was born June 16, 1926, in Baltimore, Md. He died March 12 in Southfield.

Mr. Benda retired as a research engineer at General Motors after 30 years. He was a graduate of Michigan Technological University with a degree in electrical engineering.

Mr. Benda was a veteran of W.W.II and was in the Naval reserves. He served in the Korean War as a commissioned officer.

He was an avid outdoorsman, a member of the American Tree Farmers Association, and was an active member of the National Ski Patrol. Until three weeks before his death, he was serving in the National Ski Patrol at Mt. Brighton.

He is survived by his wife, Margaret, of Calumet; sons, Karl (Dino) Benda, Steven (Ann) Benda, Martin (Denise) Benda, Jeffrey (Barbara) Benda, Bruce (Anne) Benda, Robert (Christina) Benda, and James (Rebecca) Benda; daughters, Lynn Sherman and Deborah Bitch; his mother, Emilie Benda, a sister, Shirley (Charles) Morgan, 34 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

The family requests that memorials be directed to: National Ski Patrol of Mt. Brighton, c/o Richard Thacker, 260 E. Shore Dr., Whitmore Lake, MI, 48189, or to the Construction Fund, First Apostolic Lutheran Church of Detroit, 26325 Halsted Road, Farmington Hills, MI, 48331.

Arrangements were under the direction of Thayer-Rock Funeral Home in Farmington.

ROBERT BELLARMINE OLDANI

A memorial mass was held Saturday at St. Fabian Catholic Church for Robert Bellarmine Oldani, 66, of Farmington Hills. He died March 14.

Mr. Oldani was born in Detroit. He retired in 1995 after 34 years of government service, including 16 years as Deputy to the Commander of Defense Contract Management Command in Detroit.

Mr. Oldani was a founding member of the Michigan Chapter of National Contract Management Association, and served as its president for four years. An annual award for excellence was established in his honor.

He is survived by his wife of 44 years, Marilyn McNamara Oldani of Farmington Hills; sons, Robert E. (Stephanie) Oldani, of Virginia Beach, Va., John L. (Karen) Oldani of Livonia, Michael J. (Heather) Oldani of Canton, and Patrick (Dawn) Oldani, also of Canton; a daughter, Kathleen M. (Craig) Horn of Saginaw; two brothers, Norbert J. Oldani of West Bloomfield, and John F. Oldani of Anna Arbor; a sister, Majoria Patek of Grosse Pointe, and 13 grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorial donations be made to: The American Cancer Society, Angela Hospice and the Jesuit Society.

Arrangements were under the direction of Griffin Funeral Home in Canton.

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Adoption Associates holds meeting

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For more information call: 248-474-0990. Adoption Associates, Inc. is a non-profit adoption agency located throughout Michigan, Connecticut, and Kansas.

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