

'Officer Henderson!'

C'ville D.A.R.E. officer takes to the road after five years in class



STAFF PHOTO BY JIM JACOBSON

Their viewpoint: Shanell Eastman and Josh Ghena answer questions from Jodi Graham's fifth grade class at Grandview Elementary. In background is D.A.R.E. Officer Cheryl Henderson.

BY JONI HUBRED
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They had to resort to subterfuge to get Livonia Police Officer Cheryl Henderson to last week's Clarenceville School Board meeting.

But parents and students at Botsford Elementary had a very special reason - to thank Henderson for devoting the past five years of her career to teaching Drug Abuse Resistance Education. Henderson's five-year stint with the program ends this summer, when she returns to road patrol.

"To me, it was a good opportunity to be able to work with the kids and to help them make good choices, so we don't see them later in life," she said of her decision to teach in 1997. "It turned out to be more fun than I thought it would be."

On Monday, one of the job's intangible rewards showed as two Clarenceville High School students who had been through D.A.R.E., visited with 5th graders at Grandview Elementary. Josh Ghena, a senior and Botsford alumnus, and Shanell Eastman, a junior who went through Grandview, talked about what life is like in the upper grades and how they've handled peer pressure, among other issues.

Asked to share two important pieces of advice, the teens talked mostly about how they related to other students.

"Be careful picking your friends," Eastman said. "There

are some people you think are your friends, and you find out they're not."

Admitting he was a bit of a bully and hanging out with the "tough kids" at a younger age, Ghena said, "I wish somebody would have told me I really didn't have to pick on people to be cool."

He also wished he'd have learned more time-management skills at a younger age, to help him get his school work done without having to stay up late studying or completing a paper.

Both older students recalled giving speeches at their D.A.R.E. graduation ceremonies. And while they may not have traveled the easiest roads, both believe the program helped.

Eastman felt learning specific ways to respond in a given situation was particularly helpful to her. D.A.R.E. utilizes a variety of techniques to educate kids about the dangers of drug and alcohol use, as well as hands-on lessons about responding to different types of pressure to use chemicals.

"I have younger brothers and sisters, and I see the impact it makes on them," Ghena said of his decision to visit the 5th graders.

"I love kids," Eastman said. "If there's any way we can impact them, that's great."

Hands-on lessons

Having the chance to talk with older kids is a regular part of the D.A.R.E. program, which offers hands-on lessons designed to

help kids say "no" to drugs, alcohol and violence.

"This is a great opportunity for the 5th graders to ask all those questions (about middle school)," Henderson said. "It helps dispel some of the myths."

A very young looking mother of two adult children, she has particularly enjoyed getting an "inside look" at how schools are run. In addition to the two Clarenceville elementarys, Henderson works in two Livonia schools and two parochial schools.

Grandview Principal Ellen Davis feels the program has been very beneficial, in that it gives kids an opportunity to build a positive relationship with a police officer.

"Cheryl has just been a wonderful role model for them," Davis said. "They know if they needed help, she would be there for them. She has really built a rapport and a positive relationship, as well as giving them information they need so very much."

Officer Henderson's last Clarenceville D.A.R.E. graduation will be held May 30th at Schmidt Auditorium. It's a big event, Davis said, one that combines both elementary schools.

But chances are, that won't be the last her students see of Officer Henderson, who says she quite often hears from former students.

"I'll be walking through Kroger, and I'll hear, 'Officer Henderson!' from across the store. That makes me feel good."

Six file for two OCC Board positions; election slated June 10

BY MIKE MALOTT
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Six candidates - two incumbents and four challengers - have filed nominating petitions to run for two seats on the Oakland Community College Board of Trustees this June.

Incumbent trustees Sandra Ritter and Jeanne Towar have filed to retain their seats. Challengers include Phillip Abraham, Rose Couture, and Sandra Tyndell, all residents of Royal Oak, as well as Pontiac resident Michael McGuinness.

McGuinness, 18, is a graduating senior at Walled Lake Cen-

tral High School and will start college this fall at Oakland University as a political science major. Abraham is a Certified Public Accountant who previously served twice as a Royal City Commissioner, from 1996-97 and 1998-91.

Couture was a long-time employee of OCC until her recent retirement. She worked in the business office at the Royal Oak campus of the community college and served as president of the classified workers' union. Tyndell, 51, previously worked in the administration at the University of Detroit. Ritter is a retired vice principal from the

Waterford school district who has served on the OCC board since 1978. She has served as the board's chair, vice chair and secretary and is the board's senior member.

Towar, current chair of the OCC Board, was first elected in 1996. She is also the vice president of editorial for the Home-Town Communications Network, the company that owns this newspaper.

Filing deadline was April 8, and the candidates had until April 11 to withdraw. Both seats up for election are for six-year terms, which begin July 1. The election is June 10.

Plant swap slated for Saturday, May 18

The Farmington Hills Beautification Commission will hold its fourth annual Plant Swap 8:30-11 a.m. Saturday, May 18 in the City Hall parking lot at the corner of 11 Mile and Orchard Lake.

"This is a great opportunity for local gardeners to trade in extra daisies, daylilies, and

other perennials for something new," said Marie Donigan, who is the City of Farmington Hills liaison to the Beautification Commission. "It's also a good opportunity to meet and talk with other gardeners."

Gardeners are welcome to bring plants or seeds to share. Beautification Commission

members, local Garden Club members, and Master Gardeners will be on hand to answer questions and share plant-care tips. Complimentary coffee and doughnuts will be served.

For more information call Marie Donigan at (248) 473-9543.

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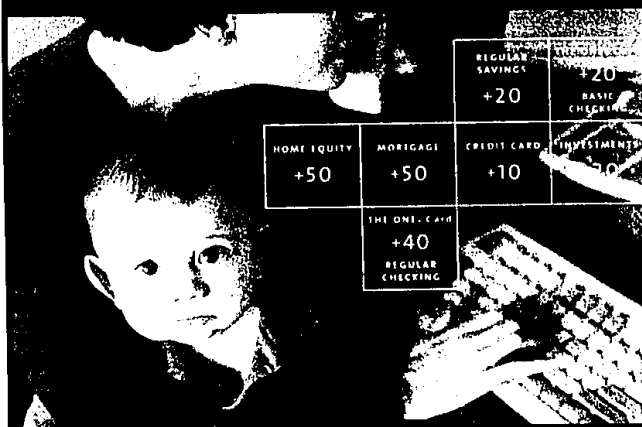
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