

CHAT ROOM



ELEANOR BLUM

Schools to meet higher standards

New standards for Michigan Public Schools were recently approved by the State Board of Education in March.

Bill Bushaw, Chief Academic Officer, for the State Department of Education, played a key role in getting these standards together and approved.

This process will impact Farmington Schools, as well as all state public schools, grades one through twelve.

Focusing on the individual child and making sure that youngster can read and compute is an important part of the accreditation process. Each student needs to show a year of growth for every year instruction.

"Attendance is important for student progress," Bushaw said. "We need to keep youngsters in school, perhaps, till the age of eighteen focused on learning and their future goals."

Each high school student will have a plan focusing on their goals for the future. Bushaw said that having employability skills is crucial for all students. The new accreditation plan will cover this area.

In Bill Bushaw's office is this motto, "A Ladder not a Hammer." All students need help to climb the ladder, so they can climb as high as possible, not a hammer to be hit over their head and put down.

It's a wonderful thought and maybe if teachers and all involved with schools practiced this quote, all our students would achieve their potential.

MEAP scores will count approximately 62 percent of the total accreditation evaluation. This is a vast improvement since prior plans to evaluate schools are based solely on MEAP (Michigan Education Assessment Program) tests.

State Superintendent Tom Watkins and Bill Bushaw have added new ways to look at students and schools. Reading at grade level and solving math problems are important to elementary students. Middle School youngsters need to show a year of growth for each year of instruction. High school students need goals - what are their plans for graduation? Many seniors develop "senioritis" and need to be engaged in learning. Perhaps, they could take some classes at a community college in their senior year of high school that would apply when they enter college in the fall. Schools will be judged on professional development for teachers (in-service) bringing new ideas to teachers and stimulating their creative juices.

Parental involvement will be another area looked at and included in accreditation process. School districts will need to show they are committed to improving teaching instruction and involving parents and the community in education. Parents need to feel that they are partners with the schools.

Providing pre-school programs and health services will ensure that our young people will be ready to learn and more likely achieve good scores on their MEAP tests in the fourth grade.

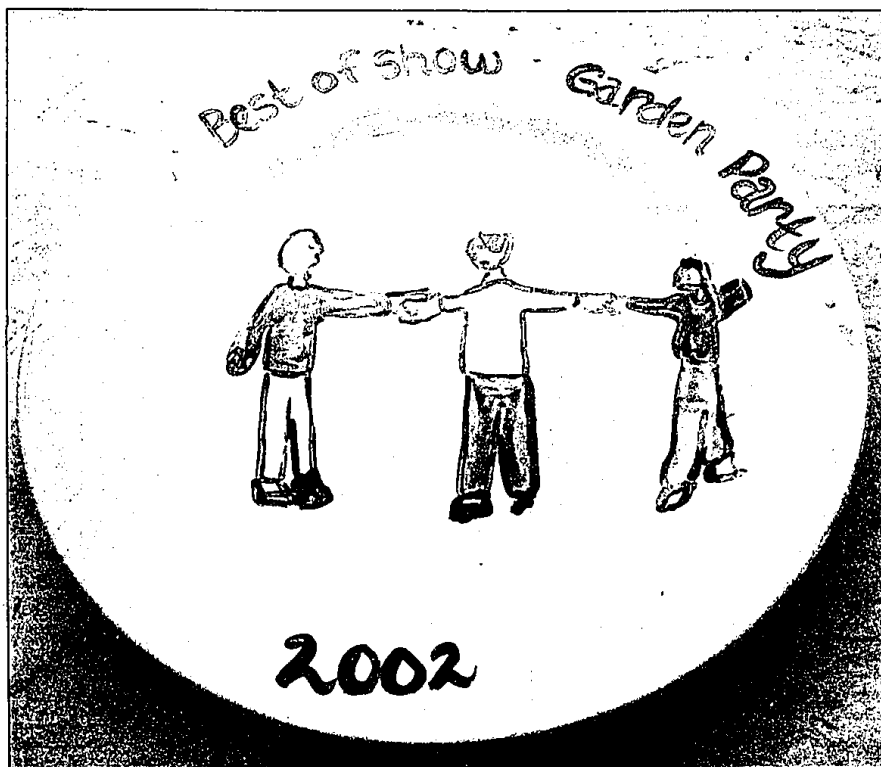
Looking at teacher in-service, parental involvement and student attendance so that the MEAP is not the sole criteria for grading a school, is a more realistic way to evaluate schools.

Students' test taking skills on the day of the MEAP exam, may be not as strong that day for some. It is more fair, as the new accreditation process does, to factor in other key elements besides one test. Counting 87 percent for the MEAP test and evaluating other related education items gives a better picture of each school and the district.

Sharon Wise, a member of the State Board of Education said, "The new accreditation system should start in September of 2002. She believes we need to dedicate our resources to grades kindergarten through third, enabling children in those grades to read and compute on grade level."

Another view of this "new" accreditation system comes from Dorothy Beardmore past President of the

Please see BLUM, C6



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BREXLER

The Best of Show plate was designed and made by the kids.

'If these walls could talk...' St. Vincent marks 150 years of service

BY JONI HUBRED

STAFF WRITER
jhubred@oe.homecomm.net

Later this year, one of the biggest family reunions in the country will take place in Farmington Hills.

This won't be your typical family reunion, with aunts and uncles you haven't seen in years or cousins you've never met, but a gathering of men and women who had no family and nowhere else to turn, but the St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center.

As the Center celebrates 150 years of service in the Detroit area, alumni have been invited back to a place that became home when they could no longer live in their own homes. Former staffers have also been asked back for the July 14 celebration. In September, a celebration mass and reception will be held at the St. John Conference Center in Plymouth.

Executive Director Jean Vickers has no idea how many children the Center has served since its inception, but she has made an educated guess.

"Over 30,000," she said. "It would have to be, even if just a quarter of the kids turned over every year, and that's just in residential care alone."

The Center provides physical and psychological care for, at most, 60 children. Some have such severe emotional problems that they must be stabilized before returning to their homes. Others are permanent wards of the court, whose parents have had their rights terminated.

"We call them 'the new orphans,'" Vickers said.

Taking in orphans is a large part of St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center's history. Having its 19th century origins in the City of Detroit, the mission began with the Daughters of Charity, who opened St. Vincent Orphan Asylum and the House of Providence, caring for unwed mothers.

"The facility has been here since 1929," Vickers said, referring to the 12 Mile/Inkster Road campus. "When (the St. Vincent Center in Detroit) became uninhabitable, they moved out here into a white, clapboard house."

That later burned, and the Fisher family contributed funds toward the red brick building that stood on the site today.

"Each cottage is almost like a family," said community relations coordinator Rebecca

Food, auctions featured at 2002 Garden Party

To keep alive a tradition of service that has lasted 150 years, the St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center will host the 15th Annual Garden Party, Sunday, June 2 on the grounds of the Center at 27400 W. Twelve Mile Road in Farmington Hills.

Presented by Ford Motor Company, this celebrated event will incorporate a 1920's theme, including vintage vehicles, costumes and many surprises. Its goal is to help bridge the gap between public and other funding, and the needs of various programs that serve scores of children, teen parents and families.

Fifty of the finest restaurants in Detroit will offer samples of their specialties. Guests will be treated to delectable hors d'oeuvres, entrées

Please see SERVICE, C6

Please see PARTY C6

Cemeteries play important role in history

Cemeteries tell us a lot about life in the past. In early Oakland County most children didn't make it to their fifth birthday.

The population died young, particularly the women and children. Men often had at least two wives during their lifetimes.

Charles Martinez and Graydon Forman from the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society went to the March meeting of the Farmington Historical Society to talk about a book is putting together about Oakland County cemeteries.

The West Farmington Cemetery in Farmington Hills is one of the cemeteries Martinez knows a great deal about. In 1988 12 Mile in Farmington Hills

was widened and made into a boulevard. Twenty-four graves in the West Farmington Cemetery had to be moved.

Bob Rock of the Thayer-Rock Funeral Home in Farmington supervised the move.

Charles Martinez, an archaeologist who was at Wayne State University at the time, volunteered to assist. During the grave relocation Martinez gathered material for a research paper.

He learned about the types of caskets and coffins used in Victorian times, the vaults, soil condition and if the deceased was embalmed, according to the article in the Observer and Eccentric at the time.

Former Mayor, Jean Fox, representing the Farmington Hills Historic Commission, also was involved. Jean Fox said privately at the time that the city tried to buy some additional land lost to the highway, but the abutting neighbor refused to sell.

The bodies in the highway path were reburied in new gravesites, in new coffins, if necessary.

Martinez recalled for the Historical Society one instance when the graves were being relocated. They were digging up a grave, but were unable to find a coffin. As the workmen were walking around the site, someone tripped over a container. The container held the cremated remains that had been buried there. There was no coffin.

The West Farmington Cemetery is a Farmington Hills Historic site. It was one of the early church yard cemeteries.

In 1835 the dynamic Rev. Nehemiah Lamb led his congregation to build a church at the current 12 Mile and Halsted Roads. The Lamb family was a family of ministers who traveled throughout Michigan establishing churches wherever they went.

Because of various population moves, the center of Farmington social life moved to the Village of Farmington. A new Baptist congregation had been established in 1857 in the Village of Farmington. A church was built on Shiawassee Road in 1861.

The congregation of the early first Baptist church established the Baptist burying ground next to the wooden church in 1836. At the time sheep kept the grass trimmed around the headstones.

Please see CEMETERY, C6