

School of choice deadline nears

BY SUZ BUCK
STAFF WRITER

The deadline to submit applications for the Farmington Public School of Choice program is Jan. 24 for the 2003-04 school year.

All Farmington Public Schools are part of the School of Choice Program. Acceptance is based on the availability of open slots in each grade level. In March 1993, the Farmington School Board approved a School of Choice program for all district residents.

Applications are available at each neighborhood school. There will be no sibling priority.

"One request for a transfer to a School of Choice may be submitted per student, per year," according to information provided by Jan Colliton, assistant superintendent for instructional services. Applications are required for each level: elementary, middle and high school.

The student must remain at the selected school for that entire educational level, grades 1-5, 6-8 and 9-12. For example, a student who enters Beechview Elementary in first grade is expected to remain at that school through fifth grade, explained Helen Hill, who is Colliton's secretary.

After completion of each level, a student will return to his home school, which is determined by district school boundaries.

No action is needed if a student wants to remain at the school he is attending or is planning to progress to the assigned school in his home attendance area.

A student need not re-apply for School of Choice if he is presently attending a School of Choice school and will be attending that school for the 2003-04 school year.

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HIGHMEADOW COMMON CAMPUS

This school, located at 30175 Highmeadow in Farmington, offers an alternative educational opportunity for children in first through fifth grades. There will be 75 openings in the first grade with some openings in second through fifth grades, based on availability.

Applications for the Highmeadow lottery are available at the school from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Jan. 13-17. From 7-8 p.m. Jan. 13, staff will present an overview of the school's program in the gym.

"This meeting is extremely important for all parents to attend if you are considering this educational choice for your child," Colliton said. Applications will also be available at this meeting.

The Highmeadow lottery is Jan. 21. Parents are welcome to attend to hear the results. Otherwise, the lottery results will be mailed to all participants the week of Jan. 27.

For more information, call Highmeadow Principal Beverly Miller at (248) 785-2070.

PRESCHOOL/KINDERGARTEN

All kindergarten registrations must be at the neighborhood school. Kindergarten registration is 9 a.m.-4 p.m. March 3-7. Bring two proofs of residency, an original birth certificate and immunization records for registration.

Applications are available at the home school for those interested in School of Choice at the kindergarten level. Preschool information is provided at Alameda, Farmington Community School and

Fairview Early Childhood Centers. Preschool registration at all three sites begins Feb. 3.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

School of Choice openings are based on space availability. Some elementary schools may be closed due to enrollment in their buildings. Call Colliton at (248) 489-3227 to find out which ones following a meeting today, Thursday, Jan. 9. She also has handouts available.

Transportation service is not available for elementary School of Choice students.

Applications, which are available at neighborhood schools, must be received by Jan. 24.

MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOLS

Openings will be determined after all applications have been received. The number of students requesting to leave their assigned school will determine the number of openings available.

"Once the number of openings are identified, that number does not change," Colliton said.

If there are more students applying than available slots, a lottery will be held to determine students who will be allowed to transfer. The application deadline is Jan. 24.

If a lottery is necessary, it will be held from 9-10 a.m. Friday, Feb. 7, in Room 1 at the Farmington Training Center, 33000 Thomas Street.

Transportation to school is not provided for secondary School of Choice students in the morning. However, transportation is available via shuttle service from school in the afternoon. Applications are available at the home school.

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COURT

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are doing detail and finish work."

Since it was decided last year to scrap an underground prisoner tunnel from the police station to the courthouse, which plans had to be redone, said Walsh. The city also added a parking lot west of the police station, further delaying the project while new plans were drafted and approved and utilities were moved.

The delay is not unexpected, considering the number of changes, Walsh said.

"We don't want to rush to get

in," he said. "We're just as willing to wait until the job is done."

Two elevators will be devoted to transporting prisoners from the basement to holding cells in the upper levels of the building, Walsh said.

The \$12.6 million courthouse is being built behind Fire Station No. 5 off Orchard Lake Road, south of 11 Mile.

It will finally allow judges, staff and the public decent accommodations while making sure prisoners are secured at all times, said Walsh. Some prisoners have to walk through the public hallways of the current courthouse, a renovated elementary school on 10 Mile.

The new building will have four courtrooms, three for judges and the last for the magistrate.

While the 47th District only has two judges, a third will likely be added in the future based on the volume of cases handled, the court administrator said.

The size of the building will also eliminate crowded conditions in the current courthouse, Walsh said.

There will be a jury lounge that will also serve as a conference area and a private room for the public to view court records.

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CONTEST

FROM PAGE A1

Orin Jewelers plans to make an album of all the entries for future customers in need of wedding proposal ideas. Your words - from "Hey, babe, wanna get hitched?" to "May I have thy petal-soft hand in

marriage?" - will forever be immortalized. Sigh.

Now for the contest rules. They're simple: You must be at least 18 years old, limit your entry to 100 words or less and send your Lessons in Love entry to us by Friday, Jan. 24. Entries must include name, age, address, phone and/or e-mail. And, of course, you must be very romantic or very funny

... or both! Winners will be announced in your hometown newspaper Thursday, Jan. 30.

Send entries to: "Lessons in Love Contest," Cathy Young, promotion manager, the Observer & Eclectic Newspaper, 3625 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150; e-mail: cyoung@oe.homecomm.net; or fax: (734) 953-2232.

BENCHMARK

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which is currently occupied by Bargain Books under a short-term lease, said Farmington Downtown Development Authority Director Brent Morgan.

He's also looked at locations in Bloomfield Hills, West Bloomfield, Northville and Novi.

No decision has been made yet.

The Benchmark store marks the eastern boundary of the DDA district. The company has been in business since 1970.

The move isn't expected to affect the store's participation

in the Adventure Outdoor Leadership class, which finished its first semester at Farmington High School. Students experienced the rock climbing wall in the store as well as a ropes course, kayaking and backpacking.

"I have had some conversations with Mr. Lilley, and it is my intention to meet with him and see what assistance the DDA can provide to retain his business in downtown Farmington," Morgan said. "It is my recommendation that the board consider the possibility of establishing a short-term, low-interest loan program for businesses relocating within the DDA district."

Benchmark is the second long-time business in the downtown area to announce a

move in the past few months. Marco's Restaurant, which was located on the east side of Grand River, closed New Year's Day and is also hoping to relocate.

"Unfortunately with the closing of Marco's Dining, downtown Farmington has not only lost a fine dining establishment, but may lose a liquor license as well," Morgan told DDA board members Jan. 7. "It is my understanding that the liquor license which Marco Conte holds may be transferred within Oakland County. This will all depend on whether Mr. Conte reopens his restaurant at a new location in Farmington/Farmington Hills or sells his establishment."

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VAGNOZZI

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him about the state closing all but three of its unemployment offices and reverting to a telephone system that doesn't seem to work yet.

While he helps get word to state administrators that the problem needs to be fixed, Vagnozzi said he hasn't received his committee

assignments yet. He has asked to serve on the Mental Health, Education, Local Government and Senior Citizen committees.

He said the House will not meet in its first session until later this month.

"I plan to spend the time getting acclimated," he said. The former Farmington Hills mayor also said he can't wait to introduce a bill to

raise the state income tax rebate from \$1,200 to \$1,500 and focus on legislation that stops Canada from importing its waste into the state.

After the ceremony Wednesday, though, he had a little time to savor the moment of being sworn-in.

A bottle of champagne awaited guests at his office upon his return.

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