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today's hot line

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what's inside

Arts Councils

The first of a three-part series on Observerland art councils begins today with a look at what members of the Farmington Arts Council are doing. Don't miss it on

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Ethics Discussed

The organizational meeting of the Farmington School Board brought discussion on several issues which have been hot topics in the past.

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Field Trips

Got a bored youngster? The Farmington area recreation program is still open for registration. The trips planned for the next few weeks are listed on:

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Sports Columns

W. W. Edgar's "In The Pocket" and Doc Minard's "Turf Tips, Quips" are unequaled in the state for bowling and turf chatter. Both appear on

Page 9A

Exciting Lady

A woman who's definitely not a libber stirred up a lot of excitement in a recent Baptist conference. The report is in Religion Update in our Church Section.

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Local Singers

A large number of Observer area residents are participating in a sacred concert in downtown Detroit Tuesday. The details are in today's Church Section.

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Dr. Ross Pledges More Open Meetings, Unified Board

By DAN McCOSH

Dr. Mervyn Ross, newly-elected president of the Farmington Board of Education, promised open board sessions and "total board involvement" as he takes over the new job.

Ross was elected to head the new board Tuesday, replacing Kenneth Perrin, defeated for re-election.

Dr. Ross is the first president to preside over a "liberal" board formerly dominated by a conservative majority.

One of the first actions of the new board was to unanimously adopt a policy of open board meetings

including study sessions, with the exception of personal matters and land acquisitions.

The former policy on study sessions indicated "sensitive issues" would be discussed in private.

"As far as I am concerned, any issue sensitive to this board is sensitive for the community, and the community has a right to hear it," Ross said.

"I was a little overwhelmed," he said.

"The vote for president was totally open and spontaneous, for the first time there were no back room deals."

The board also voted to reinstate the committee system, a strong point of contention for the old board.

"My plan is to involve the total board," said Dr. Ross, who will be making committee appointments.

"In no way will I arbitrarily pick names so the majority dominates nearly every committee."

He expects to work on the appointments within six weeks, after sessions on special education and a new reading program are over.

Ross was elected president at a meeting which named Ron Emmitt, normally identified with the conservatives on the board, as vice president.

Mrs. Emma Makinon was named secretary and William Corliss, treasurer.

A Dream School?

"The curriculum should be taught so the children can relate to it."

—Mrs. Joan Dudley

By DAN McCOSH

Many teachers, frustrated at the shortcomings of the public school system, may dream of running an independent school.

Mrs. Joan Dudley has gone further than dreaming.

With backing from her father, Richard J. Marki, the Farmington Hills councilwoman has purchased the 9.8 acre estate formerly owned by the William F. Brennans at 23965 Drake Rd.

With applications for zoning approval and certification from the state board of education still pending, Mrs. Dudley plans to turn the old house into a private school incorporating her personal philosophy of education.

A former Detroit teacher, now a substitute, she makes many of the familiar criticisms of public education — "it is impersonal, irrelevant, sometimes undisciplined."

She intends to change all that if she can open her school.

She hopes to open a year from September with about eight teachers and 100 students — aiming at 15-student classrooms for grades kindergarten through sixth.

To achieve her goals, she feels a small, personal atmosphere is very important. "We're never going to have 800 students," she said.

"The public schools don't offer a personal education," she said.

The school will emphasize "self-discipline" and the curriculum will be taught by specialists for each subject.

"I don't believe in the self-contained classroom," she said.

She is critical of many public schools as "irrelevant," admitting that seems like a cliché.

"The curriculum should be taught so the children can relate to it," she said.

She envisions a curriculum based on a solid foundation of basic skills: reading, writing and numbers. Beyond that, she sees little point in "memorizing lists — the important thing is to be able to find information if you need it."

As an example of "irrelevance," she cites a personal memory of a chemistry class she took in high school.

"What's the point in memorizing the biochemical cycles in the body, for most students?"

While the school itself is apparently under development with the purchase of the land and property, it has several major zoning obstacles yet to overcome.



MRS. JOAN DUDLEY looks over the spacious home which she expects to turn into a private school. (Photo by Ralph Evert)

The school, as a residential zone, would qualify for a zoning variance under the city zoning code. But as a profit-making school, it is apparently not allowed in that zoning.

Attorney Robert Kelly told the planning commission.

The planners are presently reviewing the proposed site plan, which includes a new building on the property.

"There has been some misunderstanding about a new building," Mrs. Dudley said.

"We will have to see if we can be successful in the old building before we could even begin to build a new one."

Any addition would be small, she added.

"Also, some people are under the impression it would be tax exempt. As a profit-making school, we would be adding quite a lot to the tax rolls."

She is anticipating tuition of less than \$2,000. "With no one tuition-free."

The Farmington Zoning Appeals Board and the city planning commission have been critical of the project for several reasons:

• The profit-making nature of the proposal apparently makes it illegal in that zoning category, although Mrs. Dudley's legal advice is otherwise.

• Neighbors in the high-priced residential area around the school site have objected.

• There is some question whether the old building can meet state school construction standards, although Mrs. Dudley is sure it can.

She says the state certifying agencies have been "very cooperative," and expects to finish an engineering study soon to satisfy the Oakland County Board of Health.

Although the major financial backing is currently her father, she says several local people "are interested," declining to mention names.

Getting teachers is no problem, with the current surplus, she said, and some are calling even now.

"The state board has been very cooperative." Some of the so-called "free" schools have had trouble — but that's the furthest thing from what we plan.

Touring the grounds around the spacious old home, she waxed enthusiastic about the project.

"Look at this," she said, "Wouldn't this be a great place if you were a kid?"

Area-Wide Problem

Burglary Rise Demands Solution

(This is the first of a series telling of the increase in home break-ins in Observerland communities. Articles following will tell of steps individual homeowners can take to aid in checking such crimes.)

Burglaries in the suburbs are increasing rapidly, to the point where it is one of the top subjects of citizen concern.

Although the Farmington area appears to be somewhat of an exception, burglaries in surrounding suburbs are at record levels.

Records show a slight decline in 1973, following about an 18 per cent increase the year before in Farmington area burglaries.

But most of the drop was in business break-ins, and homeowners still are threatened.

Southfield recorded 1,307

break-ins in 1972, a sharp jump from the 879 the previous year. Westland saw a 33 per cent increase in the same period.

Theories explaining the big jump in suburban crime are as numerous as anguished homeowners demanding action to stop it. Interviews with local police officials indicate three major factors:

• Detroit's controversial STRESS police units which use disguises and other methods to lure criminals out in the open, have been highly successful, driving criminals out of the inner city to the suburbs where the pickings are thought to be easier.

Redford Township's Chief of Police, Edwin Gleza, for one, thinks that STRESS has just made Detroit too hot for many criminals, and he cites statistics linking the start of the STRESS program in the

inner city with the beginning of the rise in suburban B & Es.

• Use of hard drugs such as heroin has moved to some degree into the suburbs, creating expensive drug habits in suburbanites which must be supported by stealing goods from homes and then selling the stolen goods to fences.

Local school officials, although anxious to avoid discussing individual cases, began indicating their concern about increasing heroin use among suburban young people as long as three years ago. Some school authorities feel heroin use is now on the decline (although cocaine seems to be still going up), but that there still exists a core of heroin addicts living in the suburbs who steal close to home to support their habit.

• General loss of respect for private property is often cited by local ministers who are concerned about deteriorating morals.

Although such a notion is difficult to prove as a cause for increased suburban crime, most observers feel that changed attitudes toward private property cannot be merely dismissed.

The seriousness of the rising wave of break-ins is revealed by figures compiled from local police reports.

Livonia reported 1,606 B & E incidents in 1972, compared to 1,589 a year earlier. Livonia officials, however, concede that the number in 1972 would have been higher had not there been extra enforcement efforts by local police officers and extra burglar alarms installed in most school buildings.

Lathrup Village, where local concern about break-ins runs very high, reported 43 B & Es in 1970, 45 in 1971, and 50 in 1972.

Westland reported 545 home break-ins in 1971 and 753 a year later, with non-residence (i.e. business) thefts climbing 43 per cent in the same two years. Business thefts are also up in Redford Township, showing 127 cases in the first five months of 1973, compared to 272 for entire 1972.

Canton and Plymouth Townships have not escaped, showing 121 homes hit during the first five months of this year, a sharp increase from 1972.

The statistics may be dry, but they indicate a pattern of increasing theft which is costing suburban homeowners a bundle of money.

While it is difficult to derive the value of items stolen from police reports, most police officials agree that the total value of items taken from local homes in 1972 is not less than \$22,000, and probably closer to \$500,000.

Not included in these costs, of course, is the sense of fear and insecurity created in local families as a result of break-ins. Where the suburbs formerly were felt to be safe places, where every man's home was his castle, rising crime has produced a marked feeling of anxiety.

The next article in this series on suburban crime will discuss a program tried successfully elsewhere in the country which has a proven effect in cutting down burglaries and break-ins elsewhere in the nation's suburbs.

FOCUS: Suburbia



Enjoy the post? We've turned back the clock for you in today's FOCUS: Suburbia