

\$131,000 Spent

School Board Attempts To Cut Surplus Funds

By WILLIAM LEE

Concerned that the county commission may appropriate any surplus funds from this to include in next year's budget, the Madison County Board of Education went on a small spending spree, allocating a total of \$131,295 in repairs and replacement of desks and equipment.

Topping their shopping list was the replacement of student and teacher desks at six of the county's elementary schools. Allowing for a discounted ten percent, as purchased through state contracts, the total bill came to \$89,800 for desks at Mars Hill, Laurel, Spring Creek, Walnut, Marshall, and Hot Springs. Mars Hill proved the most expensive single school to outfit with new desks, requiring 486 desks at a cost of \$36,400.

School Superintendent Robert Edwards, in making the recommendation to the board, told them that most of the desks were over twenty years old, and marked and carved up over the years. He produced a list of needed improvements or repairs provided by each of the school principals over the last four months.

"Each one, with the exception of the two new schools (Madison High and Marshall Primary) have expressed the need for new furniture," Edwards said. "As long as we're being forced to spend our money, we might as well remedy this problem first."

The school board also approved the spending of \$25,596 to repair and replace the atrium windows along the Madison High School library. The estimate, submitted by Britt and Tilson Company, also included installing two airlock doors to the atrium. "The doors and window frames will be made of bronze. Britt and Tilson also made an estimate for \$300 less if done in aluminum, which the board declined as a less sturdy material for the job, according to Gerald Young.

The board also approved \$2,935 for paving of the parking lot at Marshall Primary. Mars Hill Elementary had two repair jobs approved. After three months of deliberation and study it was determined that the light fixtures donated from the courthouse were not sufficient for the six upstairs rooms at the school, and Ron Martin's bid of \$5,570 to replace the lights and switches was approved. The board also allocated the expenditure of \$3,694 to Smith Flooring and Tile to replace the tiling in the girl's bathroom.

The school board also approved the purchase of two, used 15-passenger vans for \$3,700. The school surplus vans are a 1981 Dodge for \$2,000, and a 1977 Dodge for \$1,700.

In compliance with an ordinance passed by the town of Marshall, the board also gave the go ahead for the construction of grease traps at Madison High and Marshall Elementary. The board also anticipated another grease trap for the Mars Hill School once hookup to the new sewer treatment plant is completed.

The traps are designed to hold the grease and other food particles from the cafeteria drains so they do not enter the sewer system. Construction of the first trap at Madison High has already begun. Although no exact funds were allocated, Franklin Anderson estimated the three traps would cost approximately \$15,000.

The board of education expressed a desire to work out a compromise with the county commissioners about future administrative offices for the school board. Although the commissioners extended their eviction from their current courthouse offices until July 1, the board asked for another 30 days to find a new location. They instructed Supt. Edwards and school board attorney Larry Leake to approach the commissioners in order to reach an amiable solution.

"We have only three alternatives at our disposal," Edwards said. "There are no rental properties available in the Marshall area, so we must either buy an existing building, or find a site to build upon, or move upstairs here in the courthouse."

"If this was known a year in advance, we could have made plans for an administration building and submitted our budget to include it," Edwards added. "As submitted our current budget had no allocation for even rent, which it seems we may now need."

Asked what form of compromise he hoped to work out, attorney Larry Leake said they would first have to discuss readjusting the budget accordingly and determine where a central administrative office will be located.

"What the board of education is trying to work out is a solution that is satisfactory to everyone," Leake said.

Leake, who serves as legal counsel to both the school board and the county commissioners, added that the commissioners were not obligated to provide monies for office rental, beyond allocated adequate funds for the general school budget. For the past 40 years the county commission had provided office space rather than adding appropriate operating costs to the school budget.

In other business, the board of education heard from Leigh Dudasik and Cassie Pavone of the Rape Crisis Center. The Rape Crisis Center had first approached the board about

teaching classes to children on self-protection, rape and abuse prevention, in April but were turned down.

The two representatives from the Rape Crisis Center demonstrated to the board the intent of their classes and the materials covered.

"Our purpose is to involve the children with these concerns, but without raising their fears," said Leigh Dudasik, outreach coordinator for the Madison County Rape Crisis

Center. "We instead attempt to gradually explore the types of situations where a child is most vulnerable."

"It is of the utmost importance to us that we not raise fears in the children," added Cassie Pavone of the Buncombe County Rape Crisis Center. "We don't talk of sexual assault in early years. We talk instead of rules children need to learn to follow in dealing with strangers."

-Continued on Page 10



MARSHALL PRIMARY holds kindergarten graduation. Children from three kindergarten classes participated in graduation ceremonies June 5. The program consisted of song and dance performed by the children.

Marshall Turns Pool Over To Committee

The board of aldermen of the town of Marshall spent most of this past Monday's meeting batting back and forth the possibilities of opening the Marshall pool and recreation center. They ultimately determined that the costs of liability insurance had become too high for them to take on the responsibility.

The board spent two hours of its meeting listening to citizens offer suggestions for opening the pool before arriving at the solution that, if the pool is to open, it will have to be operated by an independent committee willing to pay the operating costs.

A proposal had been made by Tom and Angie Simpson to select a volunteer director and board to oversee a Marshall Recreation

Center, yet would have the town retaining all liability.

"The cost of liability has skyrocketed," said Ed Niles. "If we could get liability for the pool, we'd be all for it."

Niles went on to say that Marshall has checked with a couple of insurance companies and very few want to provide such coverage. "Only one offered to cover the pool, at a cost of \$1,200 for three months."

Simpson told the board that he didn't see how an individual could operate at a profit with liability insurance. Faye Reid reminded him that any individual or group that uses town property is responsible for providing their own liability, pointing out

-Continued on Page 10

MADISON COUNTY LIBRARY
GENERAL DELIVERY
MARSHALL, NC 28753

Community Calendar

Women Democrats To Meet

The Madison County Democratic Women's Club will hold a meeting on June 17, at the Western Steer Steak House in Mars Hill, to discuss new business matters and elect new officers. The meal will be dutch style beginning at 6 p.m. with the meeting to begin at 6:30 p.m. A meeting room has been reserved. For more information call 649-3211 or 649-3241.

Roberts Family Plans Reunion

All decedents and kin of Bob and Nancy Massey Roberts are invited to a family reunion at the Beech Community Center, Reems Creek, near Weaverville on Saturday, June 21, from 11 a.m. until 4 p.m.

The family is looking forward to a wonderful time. Please come and bring food, and join in the fellowship and fun,

Alcoholics Anonymous Group Meets

The Mars Hill Group of Alcoholics Anonymous meets every Thursday at 8 p.m. in the Mars Hill Methodist Church.

Anyone with an alcoholic problem may attend. There are no fees or dues. For more information call Doug at 689-2941.

Laurel FVD Holds Flea Market

The Laurel VFD will hold a flea market on June 21 beginning at 8 a.m. at the Fire Hall on Hwy 212. Everyone is invited.

Future Of Mars Hill's Water Supply In Doubt

The Mars Hill Board of Aldermen have been left in a state of uncertainty as to the costs of repairing its spillway at its watershed, or even if the state Department of Natural Resources and Community Development will even accept such repair.

Because of that uncertainty, the board had to pass up the possibility of a water supply improvement grant through the Appalachian Regional Commission. In a special meeting called by town manager Darhyl Boone last Saturday, the board was forced to let a June 13 application date go by because application would commit the town to accepting and matching the ARC funds.

The grant would force the town to come up with \$200,000 for the water supply improvements. Even with \$75,000 from county resources, Boone told the board that the town could not expect to have such funds available in the near future. The town, with its construction of its sewer system, is close to its state regulated limits for bond monies.

"Even if federal funds were available," said Augusta Jenkins,

"we'd still have to replace lines and repair spillway."

Mars Hill is hoping, through a study provided by the engineering firm of McNamee, to convince the DNR to allow them to repair the spillway. There is a strong possibility that the DNR may reject the study's determinations and require Mars Hill to completely rebuild its reservoir.

The town has also been informed that environmental legislation currently before Congress may soon require all surface water supplies to have filtering plants installed. If passed such a filtering plant would cost between one million to two million dollars, according to Boone.

Such prohibitive costs had the board giving more serious attention to alternatives such as the joint water project being studied by Weaverville and Woodfin for the Big Ivy River. Boone also told the board that studies indicate good aquifers are located in the California Creek area and the town might want to consider a well system in the future.

-Continued on Page 8

Josef And Betsy Vandermeer

Sharing Their Blessing With Children In Need

By WILLIAM LEE

"How many people do you know who would take in seven kids, including handicapped and biracial, and treat them like their own?" one neighbor replied when asked about Josef and Betsy Vandermeer of Weaverville.

Indeed, how many would? But the Vandermeers have taken in 27 children over the past 18 years, enough to raise three generations of children and watch them grow into adulthood.

"Most people their age are at that stage of life where they feel they have earned some time off," said Father John Solari, pastor of St. Eugene's Catholic Church in Asheville where Josef Vandermeer also serves as deacon. "The Vandermeer's feel their time of service to the Lord is increasing."

"I think they see this as a particular ministry from the Lord that he and his wife are able to fulfill," Solari added.

"We've never been ones who believe you can just preach the gospel, you have to live it," said Josef Vandermeer. "We had three kids of our own, believed we had a warm, loving home, so my wife and I decided we wanted to share that with another child who was not so fortunate."

Josef and Betsy Vandermeer decided to see what children were in the most need of the supportive environment they wished to provide. Their research showed them that it was the physically and mentally handicapped and biracial children that needed homes the most.

They ended up adopting a seven-year old biracial girl named Sarah. That was in the late 1960's, a time when whites taking in black children was totally unheard of in North Carolina. The open doors and open arms of the Vandermeers have been there ever since, welcoming their new family into the new arrival.

"We're not flagwavers, we didn't mean to be," said Josef Vandermeer. "We just wanted to provide a good home and help those kids who needed help."

An art teacher at the University of North Carolina in Asheville, Josef Vandermeer's generosity and self-sacrifice is not limited to adopting and raising children. He also is a volunteer counsellor for the Mountain Area Hospice, visiting with terminally-ill cancer patients and their families.

"The hospice group tries to help the terminally-ill to die with dignity," explained Father Solari. "Through their counselling they hope to help these people meet death with a more serene and peaceful outlook in their home environment."

Vandermeer, an ordained minister, also works for the Asheville-Buncombe Christian Ministry, an inter-denominational assistance organization that counsels and ministers to prisoners at Craggy Prison and the Asheville City Jail.

As deacon at St. Eugene's, Vandermeer serves as a spiritual minister for widowed, divorced or separated people at Asheville Catholic Family Services.

All this has earned Josef Vandermeer the 1986 Jefferson Award for public service. Established in 1972 by Samuel S. Beard, the award honors those demonstrating the highest ideals and achievement in public service.

Nor has the Vandermeer's dedication to family values, as shown through the love they extend to the children, go unnoticed. Two years ago Josef and Betsy Vandermeer visited the Reagan's in the White House as one of the Outstanding Families in America.

"Nancy Reagan told all of us something I think we strive for in our home," said Betsy Vandermeer. "She told us children

need roots and wings. The family is rudimentary to the child's development, but it gives them independence so they can go on their own."

Overcoming the scars left behind, however, is never an easy task, especially when dealing with children who have been physically or sexually abused, abandoned by their parents, or lived in unsuitable homes where parents were alcoholics or drug abusers. Everyone of these children have made their way to the Vandermeer's home, along with the handicapped, burn victims, and those with birth defects or mentally deficient.

"They do test you, especially in the beginning," Josef Vandermeer explained. "We had a 14-year old who really didn't believe genuine love could exist. She had never experienced that."

"She probably thought we were fake and two months down the line it would all fall apart. It takes a lot of time to overcome the barriers."

For some children coming out of foster care love is only shown in terms of material gifts. Abuse or neglect from their parents was often followed by gifts given in regret of what might have transpired.

"It's a very unbalanced signal they receive," explained Betsy Vandermeer, "of I love you, I hate you."

"It's the only form of love they can at first accept, is gifts. Discipline can not be discerned as ever being done out of love."

It is one of the reasons the Vandermeers usually adopt rather than serving as foster parents. They believe that providing that stabilizing influence brings something out of the child that otherwise would not be possible.