

Skill center all ready to greet students

Tuscola county's newest school cost \$4 million and doesn't even have a football team.

Those in charge of the new facility, however, are aiming to turn out lots of winners — winners in the world of work.

Two-and-a-half years after county residents approved a

1.75 mill levy to help finance its construction and operation, the Tuscola Area Skill Center is scheduled to open Wednesday, Sept. 3, for 11th and 12th graders from the nine high schools in the county.

They will be enrolled in one of 22 programs where they will learn the skills

needed to go out and get a job when they graduate, although it is expected some will continue their schooling. A 23rd skill area, cosmetology, will continue to be taught at Howard's Beauty Academy at Caro, under contract with the Tuscola Intermediate School District (TISD).

The center has a capacity for 925 students, enrolled in either the morning or afternoon session. The students will attend their regular high school the rest of the day. Students will go to their respective high schools each day, and board buses to and from the skill center. The morning session will be from 9-11:30; afternoon, from 12:15-2:45.

Opening of the center could be delayed if intermediate school district employees go on strike because of lack of a new contract. (See story, page 1.)

The center is on Cleaver Road, on the east edge of Caro.

AS OF LAST WEEK, enrollment was 726, considered "really good for the first year," according to Bill Pratt, vocational-career education director for the TISD, which runs the center.

The reason 726 is considered good the first year is that interest lags in many of the skill areas because potential students aren't familiar with them.

Students readily sign up for such "glamour" trade programs as auto mechanics, cosmetology and data processing, but shy away from others because they aren't as familiar with them.

Once the center is in operation, potential future students can visit and see the classes. After the first year, Pratt doesn't expect to see many empty seats in classrooms, though he admits that could happen in a few skill areas.

Counselors will be employed at the center to help would-be students through tests and other means to determine what skill areas they would be best suited to learn.

PRATT ANTICIPATES enrollment once the center opens will be more than 726, as students who didn't sign up for programs last spring will still be able to do so in those areas in which there are still openings.

As of last week, those were building maintenance, building trades, commercial art, drafting, food management, general merchandising, graphic arts, horticulture, machine shop, stenographic and welding and cutting.

The skill areas in which enrollment is filled, and in some instances, there are waiting lists, are agricultural mechanics, auto mechanics, cosmetology, auto body repair, electrical and electronics occupations, health occupations, child care, food management, heating and air conditioning, nursing aide and business data processing.

Some programs are for one year, others for two. One planned program, agricultural production, was cancelled due to lack of enough interested students.

and inability to find an instructor certified to teach it and horticulture.

THE CENTER WAS DESIGNED for a maximum of 22 students per class because that is the maximum number of students the state will provide reimbursement for per instructor. For subjects offered in morning and afternoon, that means a maximum of 44 students.

The number of students each school district can send to the center is based on the percentage of 10th and 11th graders it had the previous year out of total enrollment for those grades in the county. The same formula applies for students in each class. Any vacancies remaining from unused allocations are filled by lottery.

The Cass City district was allocated 124 positions, according to Wayne Dillon, its vocational-career education director, but as of last week, only 42 were going.

Four students are on the waiting list because the classes they wanted are filled.

Some who did sign up last spring have since changed their minds about going, but he anticipates some who didn't sign up will do so once school begins.

As of now, Dillon said, Cass City High School will be offering all the same programs that it had in the past. The intent all along had been that Cass City would continue to offer its vocational office block (secretarial) and vocational agriculture.

Whether there will be some changes in industrial education programs, such as drafting, remains to be seen.

As of now, Kingston High School will be sending 48 students to the skill center, according to counselor Jim Priestap, although he expects before the school year is very old, the school's full allotment of 50-52 students will be going.

One of Pratt's tasks as vocational-career director for the county intermediate district, will be to coordinate local programs so that when the student gets to the skill center, he or she isn't repeating what was already learned.

IN CHARGE OF DAY-TO-day operations at the center will be Principal Gary Martin, who held the same job as did Pratt for the Sanilac Intermediate School District before coming to Tuscola and before that was assistant principal at the Sanilac Career Center, which performs the same function as the skill center.

There will be 20 teachers. An intensive effort was made for the best instructors, Pratt explained, with three hired from out of state. A requirement for them to be certified is that they must

have worked at least two years in their skill area, as opposed to only having experience in teaching it. Preference is given to those who also have teaching experience, but that is not mandatory.

In addition to the principal and teachers, there will be directors of student services and instructional services (each equivalent to an assistant principal), counselors and consultants, placement specialists, teacher aides, maintenance workers and secretaries, for a total staff of about 40.

As mentioned, total cost of the facility is about \$4 million, of which a little over \$1 million is for equipment.

The cost for the bare building was \$35 per square foot, of which federal funds paid \$12.50, which works out to 35.7 percent. Washington paid 42 percent of the cost for equipment.

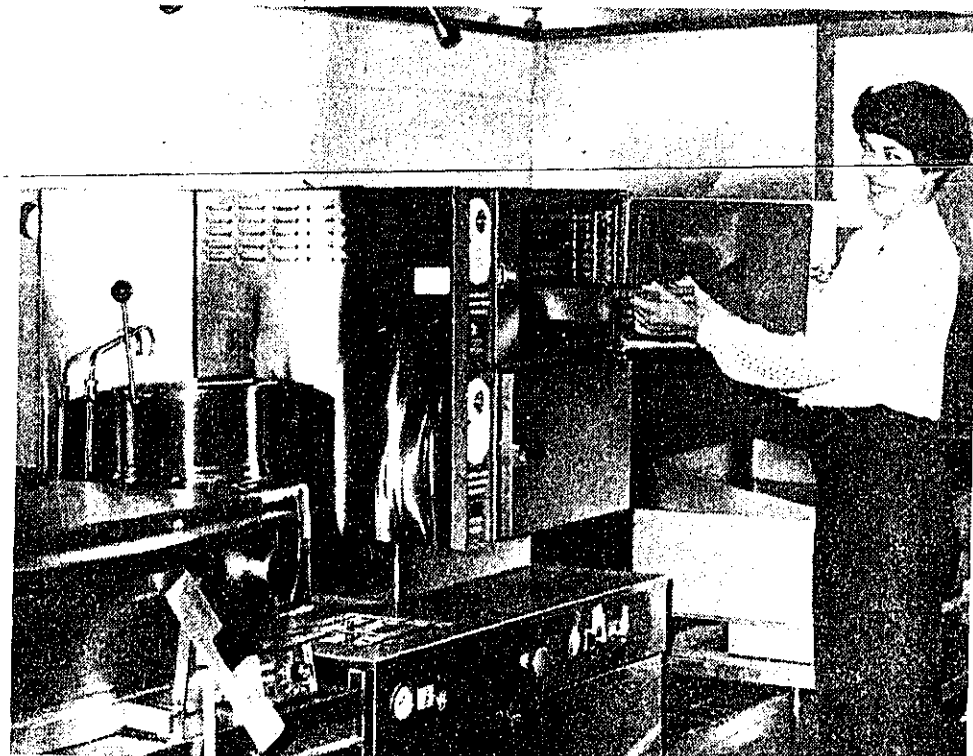
State funds pay a portion of the operating cost (staff salaries, etc.), through a complicated formula that pays from 25-40 percent.

What the state doesn't pay in construction and operating costs, the intermediate district pays from the 1.75 mill levy approved by voters. Once the construction bonds are paid off

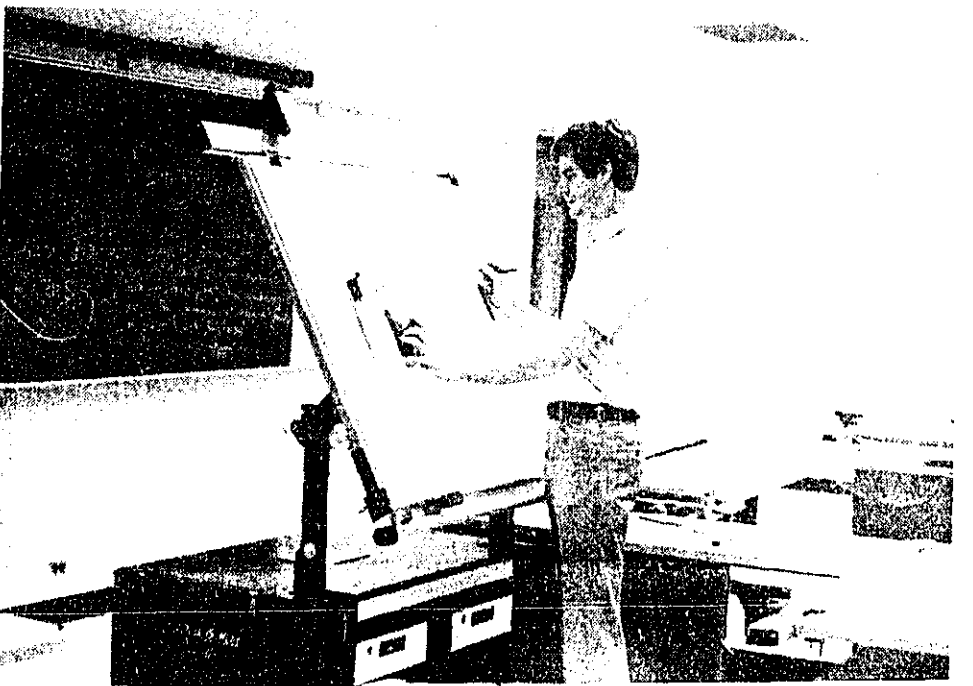
in four years, it is anticipated the 1.75 mill levy will be reduced.

Taxpayers will have an opportunity to view what they are paying for at a dedication and open house on a yet-to-be determined date.

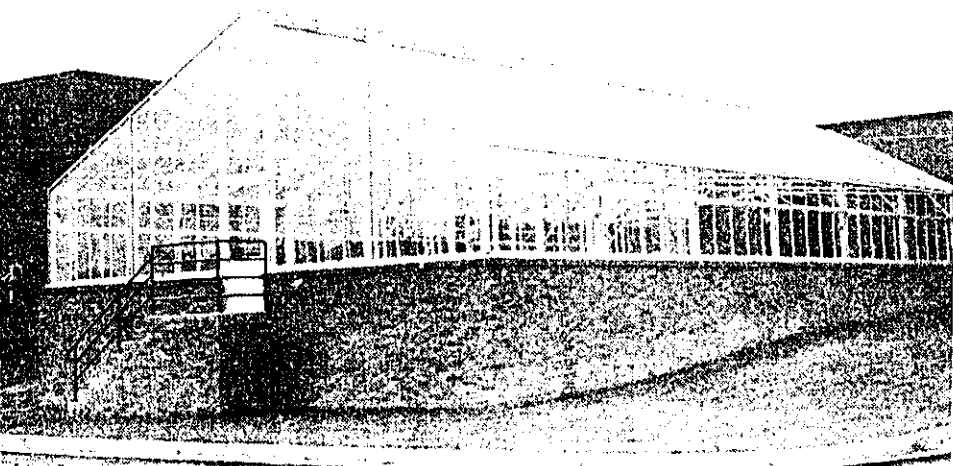
Some of them will also be able to use the facility. Evening classes for adults may begin as soon as the second semester, Pratt said, depending on how smoothly the daytime program is operating.



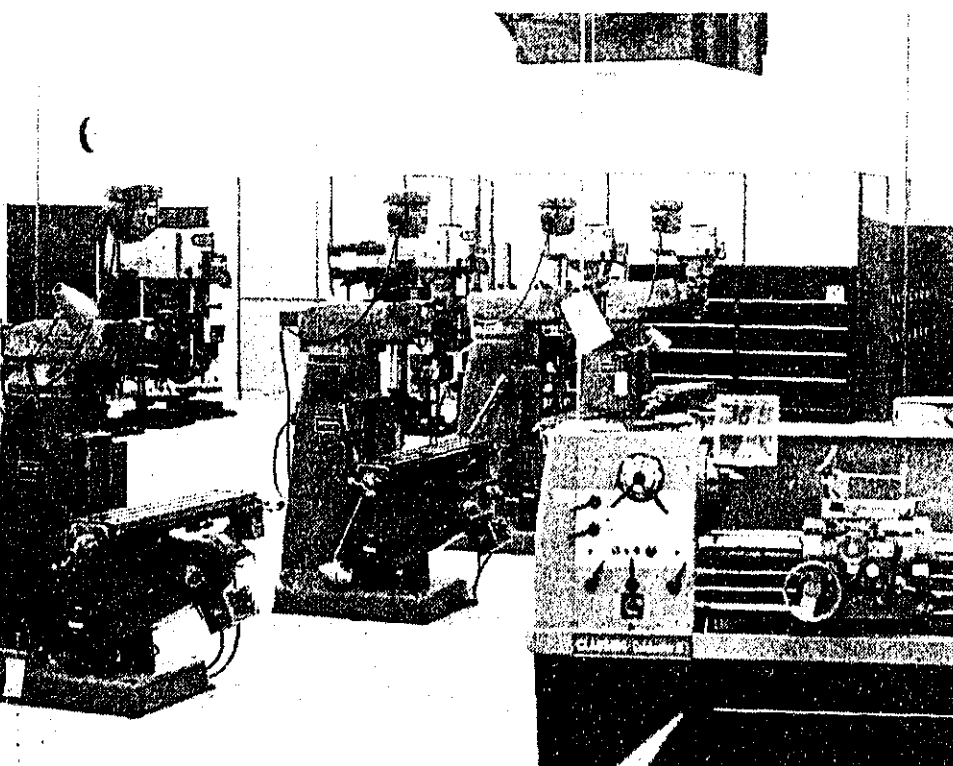
A HAPPY CHEF is food services instructor Marie Durish, who was food services education coordinator at Flint Osteopathic Hospital before assuming her position at the skill center. Her students will learn their skills by preparing lunch for students in the new special education building next door, which opens in October, for a restaurant in the skill center, open limited hours, and for banquets.



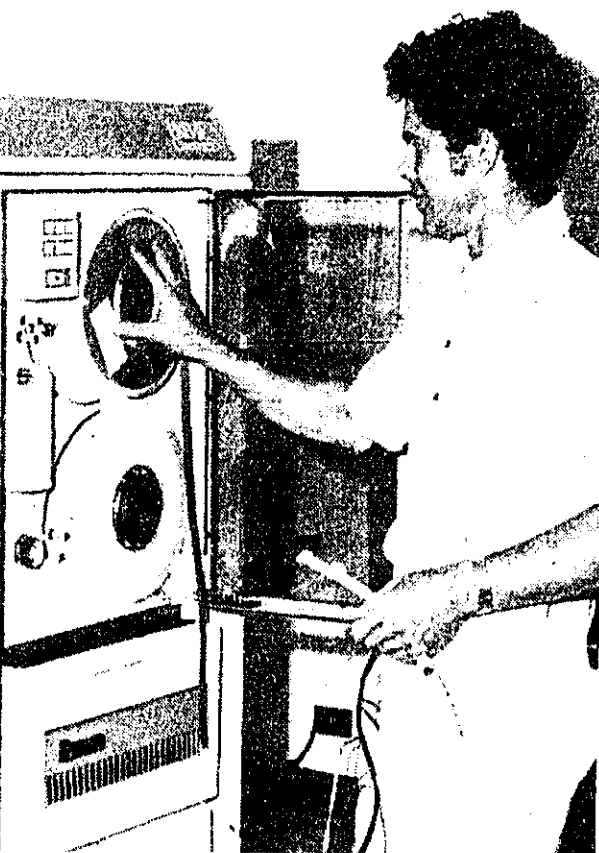
DRAFTING instructor Dan Derfny at one of the many drawing boards in the drafting room. Derfny taught the subject at Cass City High School until a couple of years ago, when he went to work in the Walbro engineering department.



HORTICULTURE students at the skill center will do much of their learning in this 32-by-63 foot greenhouse which adjoins their classroom.

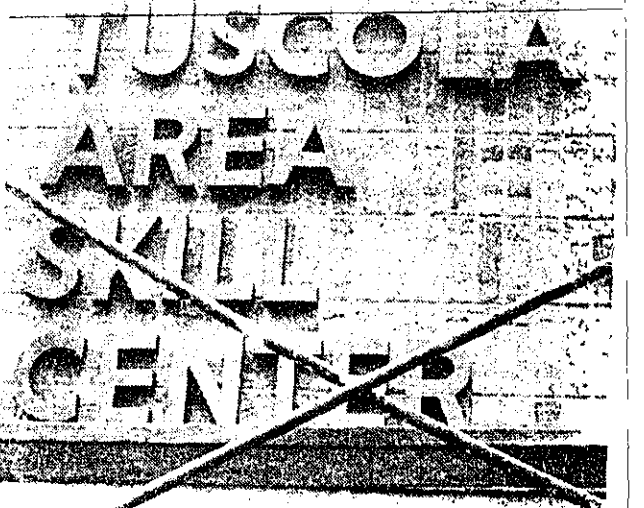


VOCATIONAL EDUCATION doesn't come cheap, as exhibited by the four vertical milling machines at left and the six lathes, one of which is partially shown in the foreground. Other equipment includes surface grinders and drill presses, with the total bill for machine shop equipment more than \$100,000.

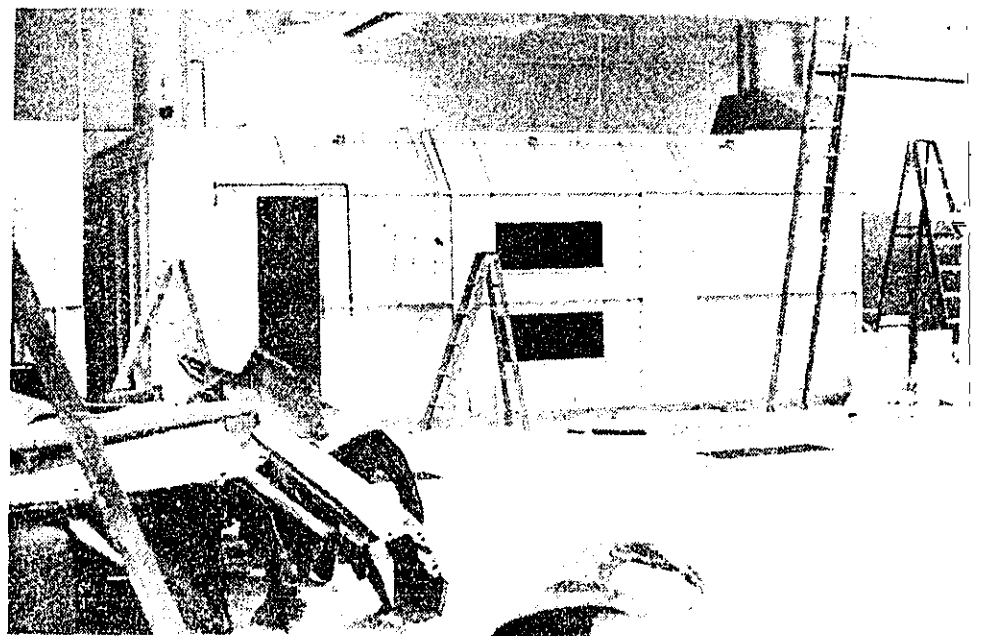


BUSINESS DATA PROCESSING instructor George Horny loads a reel of tape onto the primary computer system to be used in his classroom. A one-time math and music teacher, he was computer operations manager at Morley Brothers in Saginaw, a large wholesale distributor, before coming to the skill center.

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SIGN OF THE TIMES — Scaffold was still in place, used by the worker who installed the letters, when photo was taken.



AUTO BODY SHOP instructor John Sutherland scrounged the fenders in the foreground from Caro auto dealers for use by his students. The enclosed paint booth is in the background. The shop also has a frame straightener.

The Jerry Lewis Labor Day Telethon

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