

## OUR VIEWS

### Global class should have more review

It's not difficult to understand why Farmington school officials decided to realign their social studies curriculum. Thanks to the federal "No Child Left Behind" program, adequate yearly progress on Michigan Educational Assessment Program tests isn't just a political football, it's critical to school funding. If ninth-graders are being tested in the area of American government, they should be taught American government.

Officials say their strategy, aligned with state standards, is to provide a firm grounding in grades eight-10 for later courses in global studies. Additionally, a 12th-grade American government course, "The Individual in a Political World," remains as an elective.

To us, all this makes sense. What does not make sense, however, is that the new "International Affairs" course was on the 2003-04 menu of classes even before it appeared on a school board agenda for public review.

The most cursory glance through the content makes one's head spin. In one semester, students will go through seven units; the four required have such weighty titles as "Human Rights and the United Nations" and "Formulation of U.S. Foreign Policy & Its Global Significance."

Even the optional classes - "Religious and Ethnic Conflict" and "Terrorism" - seem far too broad for the three weeks allotted each, never mind the politically charged topics.

Parents also expressed concerns about biases inherent in the materials. They made their case eloquently; some did review the course and made suggestions for change in the interest of fairness and balance. All they wanted was to slow down the process, to allow for more careful, comprehensive review.

Still, school officials owed it to parents to air this course fully before offering the class - instead of setting up a vote that would either disrupt students' schedules or anger parents who see the move as pre-determined.

Parents who researched and spoke on Section 105 open enrollment, school start-time changes and many other issues have long complained board members don't take their input seriously. Nobody's asking officials to do everything parents suggest.

But would it have hurt to take a little extra time to consider what they have to say?

### Compromise needed on road funding plan

Gov. Jennifer Granholm set off a case of legislative road rage with her "Preserve First" plan to delay 34 road expansion projects until 90 percent of Michigan roads have been repaired.

Last week the state Senate voted unanimously to follow the House in restoring funding to the projects, many of which are already in the planning or preliminary stages.

The Senate vote is a victory for Sen. Shirley Johnson, R-Royal Oak, who has been outspoken in her opposition to the governor's plan.

In a media release last week, Johnson said she objected to the process used by the governor and Department of Transportation Director Gloria Jeff in placing the projects on hold indefinitely.

Granholm took a back step last week and said she was willing to consider restoring some projects.

The governor made her initial decision in light of the state's tight budget and a shortfall in expected road funding.

While we generally endorse the governor's position that repairing existing roadways is the top priority, it is clear that she will have a hard time convincing the state Legislature. The governor should hold firm on vetoing the full package of 34 programs and then arrange a meeting with legislative leaders to work through a compromise.

Another voice in this argument has come from advocates for mass transit, who have always complained that mass transit has never received the 10 percent of transportation funding to which it is constitutionally entitled. They argue that funding either the road expansions or full maintenance takes funding from mass transportation.

As we see it, there is a real need for a master plan on roads and transportation. There needs to be a commitment to a transportation plan that takes into account what people want and also what that state needs to limit sprawl, cut pollution, reduce traffic deaths and provide service where needed.

Short term: Gov. Granholm must sit down with legislators and hear them out on the proposed road expansion plans and together make some tough decisions.



A big thanks to Gabriella Difore, Sara Fields, Vicky Lencione, Jenny Lang, Michele Ring, Nicole Spencer, Emily Wilkins and Ashlee Wilkowski, members of the Our Lady of Sorrows sixth-grade Girl Scout Troop #2048 for putting up bat houses. Their concern for the community should translate into fewer mosquitoes this summer, at least in Shiawassee Park.

## LETTERS

### Keep helmet law

As a survivor of both cancer and science classes, I strongly oppose the idea of dropping Michigan's requirement that motorcycle wear helmets. I wouldn't want anyone else to have to deal with either of these major medical problems.

We cherish the idea of a free society in which informed adults can make most of their personal decisions, but we also establish limits for the benefit of society as a whole. My cancer experiences have made me much more concerned about the harm done by other people's tobacco pollution (even though I never smoked). Likewise, having made adjustments in my lifestyle because of seizures (including not driving for eight months), I became interested in the educational program and legislative goals of Epilepsy Foundation of Michigan.

Although most people dealing with epilepsy have not done anything to cause the condition, many others have experienced it because of a traumatic event - especially closed head injuries. Along with many other health groups, EFM is strongly against dropping our motorcycle helmet requirements. Epilepsy cost over \$12.5 billion in this country in 1995 - and probably much more in the years since.

Medical insurance and public funds for medical care continue to escalate. Especially in this economic downturn, why should the public as a whole have to pay more taxes and more insurance premiums for situations that often can be avoided?

The emotional toll on victims and their families can be even more immense. Perhaps if the anti-helmets get better acquainted with people with epilepsy and other long-term medical conditions caused by closed head injuries, they may get a different perspective.

H. Bruce Carr  
Farmington Hills

### Spicer on Longacre

I write, not with a brief and fleeting interest in Longacre House, but with a twinge of sadness, for it is to purchase a title of Thomas Wolf, impossible to return to one's home ever again or to leave to one's childhood even briefly.

I have before me a map of the Township of Farmington in 1917 - 36 square miles of nothing but farms, with a small village of Farmington nestled at the intersection of Grand River and Farmington Road. All roads were gravel, and a telephone directory of 1940 shows a population in that 36 square mile area of a little more than 1,500 people.

That 36 square mile area is now the cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills. The population of both cities approximates 100,000. All roads are now paved, some being four and five lanes in width. All land has now been developed and built.

I still feel a familiarity in the town of Farmington, where so much has been preserved, but I do not see the old mill where we used to take our crops, the dairy where we used to sell our milk, and the grade and high schools on

the hill by the Methodist Church.

The quest of civilization has always been to rebuild anew. Often, however, the value of our country but lies, not in the new that we build but in the uniqueness of what we preserve.

The most beautiful land I have ever seen is my mother's - the view from Farmington Road of the fields, the valley with the morning mist, and the hills, rising in the distance, surrounded by the forests, always moving in the breeze, and the colors ever changing.

That was my childhood; that was my home. So, too, was Longacre House once my home.

In 1969, my mother, her brother and her sister conveyed my grandparents' home to a non-profit corporation. There are five conditions in that deed. Three are implied; two are expressed:

- 1) that the house and property be kept in good repair and condition.
- 2) that the house and property be maintained and preserved in accordance with the historical designation accorded.
- 3) that there be compliance with all ordinances, and that activities not disturb.
- 4) that the house and property be used solely as a community center, providing cultural, educational, social and recreational facilities and activities for all residents. (It is indeed, the classes, which have been terminated, that were the essence of the Deed).

5) that, if any condition by broken, by financial limitation or otherwise, the non-profit corporation must deed the house and land to the Library, unless declared, and then to the City.

After 34 years of Herculean efforts to sustain a community center, perhaps it is time, whether by Deed voluntarily given (the obligation of the Directors) or by eminent domain properly exercised (obviating all covenants as the to use) that ownership of all 216 acres be with one owner, as, of course, it once was.

The burden of monitoring the Center should not hang, as the sword of Damocles, over the heads of six generations of heirs for the next 100 years.

Nicholas Goodenough Spicer  
Rochester

### Missing piece

I was very appreciative of your coverage of the June 5 press conference involving our community's commitment to "get tough on underage drinking."

However, a major piece was missing from your article. There were few words from the heart. Therefore I wish to share a bit of passion, as executive director of the "Call to Action," a job I hold strictly from the heart.

We held our press conference because communities must be encouraged enough to draw the line between what is and what is not appropriate for our children as well as to maintain health, safety and security for each of us. The Coalition continues to challenge the community to move past blame and denial when it comes to use, abuse, addiction and violence, be it bullying, threats, intimidation, terroristic or domestic assaults. We must be compassionate watchdogs for

one another, vigilant and attuned.

The Coalition has finally united all community sectors under its umbrella of commitment to break the "no-talk" rules. We can no longer sit behind closed doors mocking or judging our neighbors or our neighbor's children. This is about all of our children, each of our lives and the future of our community.

The youth of our community may have interpreted our tough approach as punitive, but the time has come to reveal secrets that are slowly and insidiously stealing precious lives. Many parents are not neglecting their children, however the "no-talk" rule, often enforced in the essence of loyalty among friends, may be the very rule that jeopardizes the health and safety of many.

Isn't it time for a change? Our Coalition challenges each and every one of us to redefine and reaffirm our roles as parents and community members, together and separately. We need to address and to respond, actively, with any issue that threatens the health, safety and security of Farmington/Farmington Hills.

None of us is perfect. So why did we call this press conference? Because leadership is cause; all else is results. All of us need to take charge in an orchestrated effort, with credibility and knowledge, and with passion, concern and commitment... mobilized to action.

We are driving a stake in the ground, because if we don't, lives are at stake.

Estraea Michaelson  
Farmington Public Schools

### Robin Hood today?

Executives take huge sums from failing corporations causing shareholders to lose their life savings and employees to lose their jobs. It is said they have no ethics.

Seniors and low-income citizens vote for prescription drugs, health care and rebates subsidized by taxpayers. These are entitlements.

Robin Hood could be a popular candidate today. He took from the rich, gave to the poor and was rewarded with wealth and a beautiful bride. Maid Marian might be a woman's libber, looking up to him for politically correct photo opportunities.

Hank Bergman  
Farmington

## SHARE YOUR OPINIONS

We welcome your letters to the editor. Please include your name, address and phone number for verification. We ask that your letters be 400 words or less. We may edit for clarity, space and content.

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## QUOTABLE

"The fundamental problem with this district is that there is not (a) focus on basics."

- Farmington Schools parent Stephen Schwartz

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