

# editorial opinion

## Accountability in electrocution is necessary

Incompetence leading to a student's death is unacceptable.

It wasn't a buffer machine which killed 13-year-old Robert Kourjian. It was irresponsible teachers and administrators.

Farmington school personnel are entrusted with the safety of your children during school hours. In last month's electrocution death this trust was betrayed.

Parents should ask themselves how many other school buildings are so ill-maintained as is East Junior High School.

Harsh action needs to be taken so that such a tragic incident never happens again.

An investigation by the Michigan Department of Labor reveals numerous violations at East. The defective buffer machine is only one of many faulty tools at the school. Twenty-five violations

of the state's Occupational Safety and Health Act have been found.

Unfortunately, the state can fine the district only \$558 because the department has jurisdiction only over workers employed by a business. The department has no jurisdiction over students.

Yet we hear a deafening silence from the central board office. The only statement which we find logical from the administration is that the incident is a "total responsibility."

That can be interpreted a number of ways. Hopefully, the total responsibility statement isn't a guise for school district personnel to protect one another from being made liable in the death.

Parents have the right to feel secure when sending their children off to school in the morning. Today, in the Farmington School District, parents don't have that security.

Some hard questions should be asked.

•Was not the shop teacher responsible for making sure the buffer machine was properly grounded? Was he responsible for letting a machine be used which didn't even have an on-off switch?

•Is the school's principal responsible for administering a school building which has so many violations?

•Who had knowledge of the defective machinery before the incident? If someone was aware of these problems, why weren't the problems reported?

•Is someone at the administration level responsible in the death because it was that person's job to make sure the equipment is in safe working order?

•Should board members take responsibility in

the death because they spend more time bickering over political incidentals rather than being concerned with the safety of the district's students?

During a recent board meeting a trustee made mention that the local newspaper was making too big of an issue out of the Kourjian death.

Nonsense.

The question of responsibility for this death must be answered and appropriate action taken. True, nothing can undo Robert's death. But your child could be the next victim of such ineptitude.

Parents will be remiss in their responsibility if they let this incident be swept under the rug. District officials have stalled long enough. Let's have some answers—now.

STEVE BARNABY



## Work together for protection

Is it possible we are moving into a kind of 20th century tribal unity that for so long was lost? The thought is exciting because it seems to come from within each person, a grass roots revival of early man's means to survival.

As surprising as the height of the new buildings in Chicago was the attitude of the people on the streets. Four of us spent a weekend there sightseeing, recently. Obviously out-of-towners, we stared at the 100-story Sears Tower, gawked at the Prudential Building, wandered around the Calder and Bertoni outdoor sculptures.

A college student riding Amtrak told us just before departing to be careful while walking by the alleys between the buildings. A clerk suggested I wear my shoulder bag with the flap toward my side. Another person, hearing us debating a route to walk along Michigan Avenue, warned us of areas to avoid after dark. As we stood puzzling directions on a street corner, a man who identified himself as a plainclothesman asked if he could help.

**THERE WERE** at least four more such occurrences. In each case, they were unsolicited offers of help. Soon, there was a feeling of unity stirring in each of us, a bond with those who took it upon themselves to help and see that we survived. The city was less forbidding, less concrete and glass, more concerned people who cared about each other.

Person-to-person these strangers were saying "Let's help each other." It is that same attitude which has been so successful in Alcoholics Anonymous and other groups such as the breast cancer victims who, on a one-to-one basis, boost the newcomers to their ranks.

Now come the widowed to help others who have faced the same tragedy.

PERRY Price, widow coordinator at the Women's Resource Center, Schoolcraft College in Livonia, says the idea for small local groups of widowed persons helping each other is spreading across the country.

Mrs. Price, a widow herself, will begin a pilot program in Livonia to train volunteer leaders for these groups. Each leader will implement his own local program. Mrs. Price foresees a general monthly meeting of area groups to exchange ideas.

She says, "There are already eight or 10 of these starting up in Wayne County right now."

**LIKE THE CLERK**, the plainclothesman and the student in Chicago, these people care whether someone else makes it.

Mrs. Price also suggests a series of programs. Open Forum, now being given at the Schoolcraft campus.

The second in the series, free of charge and open to the community, will be Thursday, Feb. 5, 8-10 p.m., Room B 200 in the Liberal Arts Building.

The campus is on Haggerty Road between Six and Seven Mile. This meeting will deal with counseling resources.

On Thursday, Feb. 10, Open Forum will be on single parenting. Same time, same place.

Those coming up in the months ahead are Thursday, Feb. 19, Happy Single; Tuesday, Feb. 24, Social Alcoholism; Tuesday, March 16, Coping with Depression; Tuesday, March 23, Childhood Learning Problems; Thursday, April 8, How Are Mature Women Coping?

Those interested in the groups for the widowed should contact Mrs. Price, 591-6400, ext. 217.

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## Drug study reaction mixed

The Clarensville School Board had mixed reactions to a survey which showed that nearly half of 587 high school students polled drank alcohol at least once a week and 35.6 per cent smoked marijuana at least weekly.

The survey among more than half of the school's students also disclosed that nearly 50 per cent have tried some form of alcohol or drugs at least once.

On alcohol, nearly 72 per cent said they tried it with 48.7 per cent saying they drank it at least weekly. The survey didn't indicate the quantities consumed.

ON MARIJUANA, 55.6 per cent of those surveyed said they tried it once with more than a third of the 587 continuing to smoke it.

Supr. David McDowell said the school board at first had negative reactions to the survey conducted by teacher Sheldon Kaye among his health education students.

At first, the board felt that there had been no impact on alcohol or drug abuses despite the education program warning of its dangers, he said.

The board also felt that the problem which surfaced in the 1960s still hasn't gone away, McDowell added.

But after looking closer at the results he said, the board took a more positive view of the problem as reflected in the survey.

Although alcohol and drug users say that "everyone uses it," the survey shows that less than half of those polled continually drank alcohol with just over a third continually smoking marijuana.

McDOWELL said the survey was conceived when Kaye's students were discussing alcohol and drug usage and concluded that "everyone uses it."

Kaye asked "how many is everyone?" and the questionnaire was later developed and administered in November and completed by the health education students.

Besides alcohol and marijuana, students polled showed they didn't indulge much in other drugs such as hashish (11.2 per cent weekly usage), speed, 6.5 per cent; mescaline, 3.4 per cent; glue sniffing, 1.9 per cent; and heroine, one per cent.

**THE IMPORTANCE** of "peer pressure" was disclosed in the statistics.

Some 75.5 per cent of those polled said they used the substance in a group with only 3.3 using it alone.

Nearly 22 per cent said they tried the alcohol or drug initially out of curiosity with another 18.7 per cent saying they started using the substances through influence of their friends.

Another 7.7 per cent said they started the substances as a result of personal problems.

The survey showed that with nearly 80 per cent of those polled trying some type of substance, 78.4 per cent said they have continued using it at least one substance weekly or more often.

In a breakdown of the survey results by sex, the poll showed that boys are alcohol and drug users more than girls.

**BOYS ARE** also more likely to remain on the substance than girls, the survey disclosed.

Among 234 girls surveyed, 12.7 per cent never tried any substance. Of the 87 per cent who did, 60 per cent, or 180, said they are continuing to use the substance at least once a week.

More than 43 per cent of the girls surveyed said they drank alcohol at least weekly with 31.3 per cent said they smoke marijuana at least once a week.

Among boys, 92 per cent of the 363 surveyed said they tried a substance at least once with 58 per cent "remaining" on alcohol at least once a week and 48.1 per cent saying they smoke marijuana weekly.

## Diet classes are planned

Botsford General Hospital's nutrition and diet therapy classes will resume on Tuesday, Feb. 10 at 2 p.m. in classrooms 103 and 104.

The first lectures will deal with hypoglycemia, a low blood sugar condition.

The series, which runs until June 8, will also deal with juvenile diabetes, low cholesterol diets, low sodium diets and fat diets.

Persons interested in the classes should call 678-7888, between 8:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m., the Monday before the meeting.

Botsford General Hospital is located at 2850 Grand River in Farmington Hills.

**Philosophy class open to public**

The philosophy club at Oakland Community College Orchard Ridge campus welcomes interested members of the public.

The first meeting will be on Feb. 3, at 8:30 p.m. in D Building, Room 101.

Speakers for the evening will be Dr. Steven Enck, who has recently returned from a trip to Poland; Dr. Enck has written articles for the National Geographic Magazine.

## from our readers

### Brotherton makes reply

**Editor's note:** The following letter written by State Representative Wilbur Brotherton is a reply to a letter from Mr. Mary Andrews calling the new accessway to Grand River from westbound Shawawasee another example of poor planning by the bureaucrats. In her letter published in this paper, Mrs. Andrews said the new construction has created an "awkward traffic pattern."

Dear Mrs. Andrews:

We received your letter to the editor in a recent issue of the Farmington Observer & Eccentric regarding the change in the approach at the Shawawasee-Grand River intersection.

After discussing this matter with the Highway Department, we offer the following explanation for the change.

Shawawasee, in its former configuration entered Grand River at an extremely flat angle. You are correct in stating that westbound Shawawasee traffic had only to concern itself with westbound Grand River vehicles before proceeding onto Grand River. Apparently, what you do not realize is that checking westbound Grand River traffic in volved looking back over your left shoulder almost on bank of you.

There were enough people who failed to turn around far enough or failed to see the vehicle approaching in the blind spot in the left rear quarter, that an abhorrent high number of accidents resulted.

The Department has recognized this fact of driver behavior and for many years has attempted to convert these oblique approach angles into simple 90-degree intersections. This is what we did in rebuilding the Shawawasee approach to make it as easy as possible for the westbound Shawawasee motorist to look both ways before entering Grand River.

Eastbound Grand River vehicles coming from east of Shawawasee formerly had to cut across the westbound lanes and as the accompanying photograph shows, the flat approach angle allowed this left turn movement to take place anywhere within a 200 foot distance.

This factor also contributed to a number of accidents. Reconstruction of the intersection restricts the turns to simple 90-degree movements.

While few drivers would want to make the turn from westbound Shawawasee to eastbound Grand River, there are never,theless, a few. The advantages the reconstruction affords this maneuver are obvious.

While it makes little or no difference in the operational characteristics of the intersection, it should be pointed out that the intersection was revised during construction of the proper utilizing geometrics re-

quested by the City of Farmington. This change involved separating the turning lanes by a wider island.

Contrary to your assumption, we prefer to think that this intersection was designed by competent highway engineers utilizing experience gained by observing the behavioral characteristics of motorists over a time span of many, many years. We hope that this knowledge applied to the Shawawasee intersection will be sufficient to spare you the trauma of an accident at this location.

WILBUR BROTHERTON,  
State Representative,  
Livonia

### Snow clearing is effective

Editor:

I would like to compliment the Farmington Hills Department of Public Works for the great job they did in getting streets plowed after the storm on January 13.

All streets in our subdivision were plowed by 7 a.m., enabling students to get to school and adults to get to work on time.

We appreciate such good service.

DONN C. ACHTENBERG,  
Farmington Hills

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