

Opinion

Robert Sklar editor/477-5450
Kathleen Moran assistant managing editor

33203 Grand River Ave./Farmington, MI 48024

Philip Power chairman of the board
Richard Aginlan president
Dick Isham general manager
Steve Barnaby managing editor
Fred Wright circulation director

O&E Thursday, December 5, 1985

14A(F)

Worth having Form an area foundation

"What we do for ourselves dies with us. What we do for our community lives long after we are gone."
— Theodore Roosevelt

CREATIVE FINANCING has become a buzzword in municipal affairs as local governments struggle to stay financially strong amid cries of relief from weary taxpayers.

A byproduct of this alternate financing approach has been the non-profit, tax-exempt foundation. It's intended to stimulate interest and cash for worthwhile public projects.

Within this framework, the Farmington Hills City Council has approved the concept of teaming with the city of Farmington and the Farmington Public Schools to set up a foundation to support development of the Spicer property — a picture-postcard, 212-acre tract that's both a wildlife refuge and a nature preserve.

A "Spicer Foundation" would generate grants, gifts and donations from businesses, organizations and individuals for development of the ecologically sensitive land, which lies north of the Farmington Community Center near Farmington Road and 10 Mile.

ALTHOUGH The Farmington Observer supports restrained development of the creek-traversed site, we wonder whether a "one-theme" public foundation is the way to go.

It would seem wiser to set up a communitywide foundation. A "Farmington Area Community Foundation" would be overseen by a board of trustees made up of respected community leaders who would manage contributions.

The Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce could sponsor the foundation.

And Farmington Hills, Farmington and the Farmington Public Schools could work closely with the foundation to promote the value of private and charitable giving as an alternate source of community-project funding.

A community foundation would hold in trust and administer restricted or discre-

tionary contributions of money, securities, bequests or property. Beneficiaries would include charitable, cultural, artistic, civic, recreational, scientific or educational endeavors.

A community foundation could also administer smaller foundations — including ones for the Spicer property, the Farmington Community Center, Farmington Families In Action, the Farmington Community Band, civic beautification and inspiring artists.

FARMINGTON PUBLIC Schools sees the Spicer property as a key source of educational enrichment. And what better way is there to give something back to the community than by helping enrich its schools?

As emphasized in the National Commission on Excellence in Education's critically pointed report, "A Nation at Risk," it is a "traditional belief that paying for education is an investment in ever-renewable human resources that are more durable and flexible than capital plants and equipment."

The report pins the primary responsibility for school financing on state and local officials.

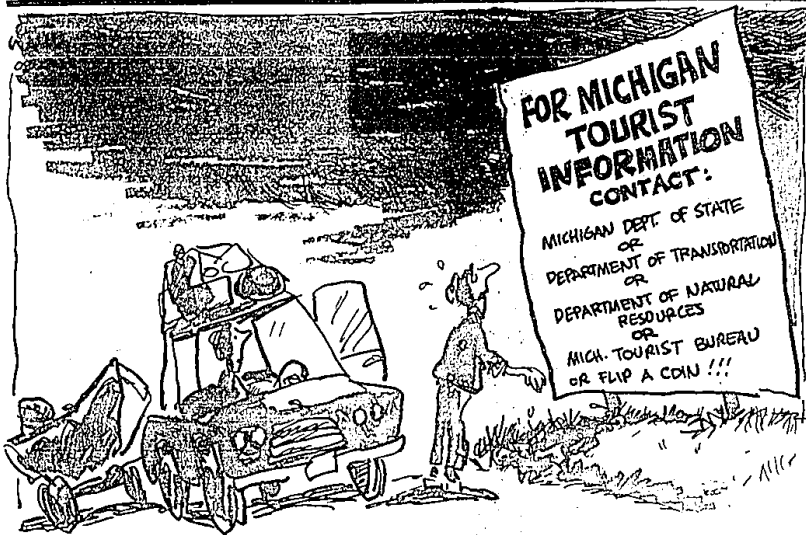
Although it argues the federal government should help meet the needs of gifted, disadvantaged, minority and handicapped students, it calls upon citizens to provide the financial support necessary to:

- Prevent the nation's educational foundations from "being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future."
- Reverse the trend of "the average graduate of our schools and colleges today not being as well educated as the average graduate of 25 or 35 years ago."

THE REPORT reminds "that everyone can learn, that everyone is born with an urge to learn which can be nurtured. It also reminds, 'Excellence costs. But in the long run, mediocrity costs far more.'"

If prudently managed, a communitywide foundation should prove an invaluable support mechanism as local school and government officials strive to be frugal without sacrificing quality.

— Bob Sklar



Tourism aid fragmented

A MONTANA pamphlet shows how to do it right.

It divides the Big Sky state into regions — "Yellowstone Country," "Charlie Russell Country," and so on.

Then it depicts several pages to each. For every region there is a single chart listing all federal and state campgrounds, all boating sites, all historic sites, other points of interest.

It doesn't matter whether the site or park is run by the U.S. Interior Department, the Agriculture Department or a state department. Everything a vacationeer needs to know is outlined on one chart.

STATE SEN. Harry DeMaso should wave that pamphlet under the noses of some of Michigan's bureaucracy.

The purpose is not to persuade them to vacation in Montana but to show them it's possible to unify governmental efforts promoting tourism.

The senator from Battle Creek has a cause — to create a 20th department of state government devoted to Tourism, Recreation and Culture.

To do so, his package of bills will have to take away some programs from the departments of Transportation (DOT), Natural Resources (DNR), Commerce, State and possibly others.



Tim Richard

HE CONTENTS — correctly — that Michigan's efforts are fragmented.

Secretary of State Richard Austin, for example, is in charge of historic sites and historical museums. His office puts out a nice pamphlet on those sites. And that's all it does.

DNR puts out a book on state park and state forest campsites. But it fails to list the 80 campgrounds in the three million acres of National Forests. Indeed, there are some DNR pamphlets that are positively misleading — that indicate all of northern Michigan is in state forests and that national forests don't exist.

Nor does DNR material mention the Department of State's historic sites.

MDOT publishes the official state transportation map and leaves off the four National Forests. Not even a green tint. On the other hand, Colorado, Illinois, Kentucky, Montana and Pennsylvania maps do show these great natural resources.

Fragmentation. Each little office doing its little thing.

THE VARIOUS departments of state government are resisting the creation of a Department of Tourism, Recreation and Culture.

Oh, you don't see Austin from State, Ron Skoog from DNR or Jim Pitz from DOT at DeMaso's committee hearing openly arguing against it.

"They send in third-stringers to intone long, abstract statements about functions and priorities. The statements close by asking more money for their fragmented little programs."

DeMaso summed it up: "Ninety-nine percent of those in the travel business want a 20th department of tourism. But from the state agencies, I get only objections — or silence."

MICHIGAN SPENDS \$9.8 million on travel promotion, placing it in the top five of travel budgets in the country. It's still far behind the \$14 million spent by Illinois.

Tourism is an \$11 billion industry — behind manufacturing but just about tied with agriculture as the state's second biggest.

It's an industry that concerns not only resorts and gift shops in the Upper Peninsula but hotels, airlines, golf courses and museums in the metropolitan area.

It's getting only fragmented help from state government. It deserves better.

Right way This parent knows best!

ANY SCHOOL kid could have told the city of Livonia, the Greentrees Civic Association in Southfield and the dozens of governments and groups around the state what the outcome would be.

They tried to keep out group homes for the retarded and handicapped through use of zoning ordinances, or else to restrict them to commercial areas.

It's a textbook principle that local governments are creatures of the state. As creatures, they can't overrule the parent.

Thus, their court battle against group homes was futile from the very beginning. Years, thousands of pages of legal documents and many hours of courtroom time later, the Michigan Supreme Court said no to these transparent attempts to keep out group homes. If the plaintiffs have accomplished anything, it has been only to vent their spleen, to enjoy the cathartic benefits of howling.

Other than that, they accomplished nothing — as any school kid could have told them.

FOR THOSE who believe courts and state government can do something good, we share with you some delightful paragraphs from Justice Michael Cavanaugh's 8-0 opinion:

"Prior to the early 1960s, mentally retarded and other developmentally disabled persons were routinely institutionalized. Institutionalization was initially designed to shelter such persons from the risks of society. By the early 20th century, however, the rationale for institutionalization changed to that of protecting society from these persons."

"By the 1960s, a distinct humanitarian renaissance had occurred, which stressed the 'normalization' of these disabled individuals. According to this approach, disabled persons who were unable to live with their families are allowed to reside

in homes of normal size, located in normal neighborhoods, that provide opportunities for normal societal integration and interaction."

"Such community placement permits disabled persons to reach their full potential and become contributing, productive members of society."

"SOME COMMUNITIES, however, were and are reluctant to allow 'community' group or foster care homes in residential areas. Zoning ordinances and practices have been used either to exclude such homes entirely or to restrict them to commercial areas."

"The result frequently is creation of 'ghettos' of foster care homes, particularly in transitional residential areas, business, or institutional zones. Such concentrations of foster care homes often change the character of the neighborhoods, thus undercutting the purposes behind normalization and provoking negative reactions by area residents."

"Plaintiff homeowners . . . failed to sufficiently allege any deprivation of these property rights. Contrary to plaintiffs' repeated assertions, the issuance of a license (to operate a foster care home) does not restore any property."

IF IT were up to homeowners associations, most cities and townships, there would be no foster care homes in Michigan.

But state government made a tough, but forward-looking decision to create foster care homes. With 68 pages of great care, the state Supreme Court upheld the legality of this banishment of the handicapped.

And as any school kid could have predicted, "Adult foster care facilities remain exempt from local zoning ordinances."

— Observer & Economist

YOU DON'T have to be Jewish to appreciate Hanukkah's most precious gift, one that surpasses spinning tops, sumptuous latkes and tales of the miracle of lights.

Though 2,182 years have passed since the first successful struggle for religious freedom and personal liberty, for some, religious freedom is still a dream.

This year, Hanukkah, which commemorates that first fight, begins on Dec. 8 and coincides quite appropriately with Human Rights Day on Dec. 10.

THERE HAVE been 21 centuries since the Maccabees overpowered the Syrian king, who would have forced the Jewish people to worship Greek idols and renounce their ancient faith.

But even now, people of many faiths, in far-flung parts of the earth, are prevented from practicing their customs and worshiping their deity in their revered traditions.

For Joanne Weiner, chairman of the Jewish Community Council's Soviet Jewish Committee, the religious freedom of Soviet Jews is a personal battle, one that goes on every day.

"The Maccabees were able to return to their religion, to preserve it for us," she said. "I think of those people who don't have religious freedom today. I have to fight for them."

GROWING UP in Santa Fe, N.M., Weiner's Jewish associations were few. She was the first bat mitzvah ever in the



Shirlee Iden

town. Schooled in early childhood education, she came to this community because a sister lived here, worked several part-time jobs and stayed 12 years as a teacher at the Perry Kay Nursery in Southfield, working with both parents and kids.

Married to Dr. Gershon Weiner, Joanne Weiner and her family live in Farmington Hills where her children received a thorough Jewish education at Congregation Shaarey Zedek in Southfield.

"Jewish associations were so much easier here," Weiner said. "By 1978, I was writing to Soviet Jewish families and involved with trying to win their freedom."

In 1982, Weiner visited the Soviet Union, expressly intending to meet with the embattled Jews whose dream is to live freely as Jews.

"I felt if I went to the U.S.S.R. to bring things, meet people and see for myself, I would purge myself of the need to wage incessantly on their behalf."

Since her visit, it has been much easier for Weiner who dreams of the fellow Jews

she met and cannot erase them from her mind.

"Now, they have names and faces and that makes the pain so much more intense," she said.

NOW, WEINER is ever more aware of her own blessings, the right to go to a synagogue if she chooses, or not. "Now, I know I must work to protect those rights."

"Jewish people feel a communal responsibility whether they're in Ethiopia, Israel, or here in Southfield. Now I understand that better."

Recently, when the Jewish Community Council (JCC) had a mass human rights meeting with almost 600 people attending, federal Judge Damon Keith took a prominent part.

Weiner says Keith is as aware of the plight of the Soviet Jews being denied human rights as of the plight of his own people. He remarked to the crowd "that they might wonder what a black man was doing there."

BUT THEN people understood that any righteous man belonged where human rights are valued and fought for.

Those who "light" the Menorah this Hanukkah are being asked by the JCC to "let their own history and keep it dark."

This "mini" Menorah is to be a reminder of the Soviet Jews forbidden to celebrate Hanukkah. Instead, they stand as a symbol that religious freedom must not be taken for granted.

Hanukkah offers special gift