

# Opinion

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## Home day care Permit it but also regulate it in Hills

IT'S FAST becoming cloaked in controversy. Newly formed Parents to Legalize In-Home Child Care claims hundreds of members across Oakland County, many recruited through spokeswoman Darlene Feldman's media crusade to make professional baby sitting legal.

With the cost of suburban housing straining the typical family budget, having room and dad both work is no longer a rarity.

That's why the zoning ordinance in Farmington Hills — home to more than 4,000 preschoolers — should reflect the changing times.

On Feb. 19, planning commissioners will hold a public hearing on a proposal that would allow state-regulated day care homes in single-family zones.

Such homes now are limited to large lots and major roads — just like day care centers even though they're clearly different.

**THE PROPOSAL** — broadly written until community sentiment can be measured — would allow residents to care for up to 12 children after being licensed by the state and registering with the city.



**Bob Sklar**

Farmington Hills has 25 state-regulated day care homes, Oakland County nearly 1,000. Predictably, divergent ordinances from community to community have spawned an underground network of unregulated day care homes.

When proven benefits are contrasted to perceived drawbacks, allowing family day care homes of up to six children on interior subdivision streets doesn't seem irresponsible.

But whether group day care homes of up to 12 children should be allowed is a different matter. More kids could mean more traffic and more noise, although in many homes the additional children are Latchkey youngsters.

Group day care homes also allow the hiring of a second caregiver. No one would argue the merit of having a second adult around when 12 children are together, but an employee gives a group day care home a perceived commercial air.

The public hearing no doubt will elicit either ally or reinforce these fears.

**TIME MAY** well dictate that reasonable controls on day care homes — controls on lot size, landscaping and distance between homes — are pivotal to protecting the residential character of neighborhoods.

Granted, home day care is a business in the sense money is exchanged and liability insurance is paid. Skeptics contend the providers run cottage industries. But the truth is, most providers aren't primary wage earners.

Beyond that, a home day care provider is far different than a lawyer or a beautician who works from home. Day care home providers baby sit kids — a clearly residential characteristic.

What's more, regulated day care homes are more conducive to personal attention and an extended family setting than commercial day care centers — although parents should carefully evaluate even legitimate home day care providers.

Allow home day care in Farmington Hills, but regulate it. The safety and welfare of many of our community's kids are at stake.



## Child deserves both parents

**THE IMAGE** never quite goes away — a lone figure sits in a cell, jailed for wanting to see his child.

The scenario is always the same, a desperate father, wanting only to see his child, takes a step that is unconscionable — kidnapping.

You see, many of the children in this country who are classified as missing, really aren't missing at all. They're with a non-custodial parent. And in this country, non-custodial means dad 90 percent of the time.

In America we have become a family divided. But if the family as an institution is to remain strong, adults must stop turning on one another — even after they are divorced.

**IN THE COMING** weeks and months you will be reading about a court case taken on by the Women Lawyers Association of Michigan.

It involves an Oakland County couple who are in dispute over the amount paid for child support. We should leave the merits or demerits of that case up to the courts, where it belongs.

But while the court mulls over its options, there are some other matters the Women Lawyers Association should think about when presenting its case.

Most importantly, shared custody should be the norm, rather than the exception. Each parent should be responsible for raising a child, both economically and sociologically.

Divorced parents are still parents — obligated to raising their children. This should not be an issue of men against women.



**crackerbarrel debate**

**Steve Barnaby**

Most divorced couples want to remain parents. But the laws of the land make it difficult, if not impossible.

**NON-CUSTODIAL** parents who "kidnap" their children, are people who have reached wits end, frustrated by a legal system that offers them nothing.

No matter what the courts mandate about visitation rights, a non-custodial parent is at the mercy of a non-responsive system.

While the laws are, and rightfully so, stringent about payment of child support, the system is nearly impotent in doing anything to ensure the rights of non-custodial parents to see their child.

It usually takes years to resolve visitation disputes. By the time the court has ruled, the child is alienated, grown and off to start his or her own life without much regard for either parent.

Neither do the laws provide any assurance that child support payments are being spent on the child — certainly a necessity if it's the child's welfare about which we are concerned.

CHICKEN



HEY, THAT COMBINATION'S HIGHLY COMBUSTIBLE!!

## Libertarians

They're back, chicken soup in hand

**YEARS AGO** there was a Borscht Belt comedienne whose remedy for everything was chicken soup. Colds, flu, gout, change of life, a broken leg — take chicken soup.

Her hilarious routine came to mind as I read the Libertarian Party's announcement that it is collecting signatures to get on the 1988 ballot.

The Libertarians have run Ed Clark for president, Dick Jacobs for governor, and Virginia Cropsey for various offices. They campaigned hard, answered League of Women Voters questionnaires, sought interviews and bought ads — but finished so poorly that they couldn't be readmitted automatically to the list of bona fide Michigan political parties without a fresh batch of petition signatures.

**LIKE THE** comedienne of chicken soup fame, the Libertarians have the same solution for every political problem — less government.

On the civil rights side, they are every bit as liberal as the ACLU, insisting government shouldn't intrude into people's lives and liberties. Also like the liberals, they oppose militarism and American intervention into the affairs of other nations.

On the economic side, they are ultra-conservative, fighting for tax cuts, low-



**Tim Richard**

er domestic spending, reduced government regulation, elimination of most social services programs, including welfare. In 1982, Jacobs went to the extreme of proposing to sell Michigan's state parks to private enterprise.

Whether Libertarians were running for the White House or register of deeds, they echoed the same themes in almost the same words. In a way, they are the flip side of the National Education Association, whose remedy for everything is fatter paychecks for unionized teachers.

**AS A NEWSMAN**, I found the Libertarians fun to cover.

All their speeches were of a high intellectual caliber, with none of the rantings you sometimes hear from the other parties. Their audiences were uniformly polite and asked intelligent questions.

And they asked basic questions: Why should government do this or that? They focused on priorities.

It was quite obvious the Libertarians were well educated and even well read. One could disagree with any or all of their platform, but Libertarians were always logically consistent.

**AND YET**, as I said, they fared dimly at the polls — 15,000 votes statewide, half of 1 percent in the 1982 election. Oddball radicals have done better.

It's difficult for news media, Leagues of Women Voters, Civic Searchlight and other voter service groups to justify including the Libertarians in their interviews. They took up a horrendous amount of space and time in proportion to the support the voters ultimately gave them.

Well, the Libertarians are around again. They'll be canvassing the metro Detroit region of Michigan, plus 23 other states, for your petition signature to get on the '88 ballot.

I have no recommendation. I'm just trying to give you both sides so you can make up your own mind.

It's your business whether you want to eat political chicken soup 21 times a week.

**FOR A COUNTRY** whose population only equals that of Wayne and Oakland counties, Nicaragua generates a disproportionate share of publicity.

But too little attention is given to the people of Nicaragua who don't care as much about capitalism vs. communism as they do about feeding their children and staying out of the crossfire.

Carol Peyser has lived with such Nicaraguans. Granted, her two-week journey to Nicaragua hardly makes her an expert, but she's better informed than the majority of us who could quote the Dow Jones quicker than naming Nicaragua's capital.

Nicaragua is a long way from Peyser's home near 14 Mile and Southfield Road. And activism is a long way from the life that led Peyser to a group leader's job at the Oakland County Medical Care Facility.

But she talked to a friend about a nun who was murdered by an El Salvadoran death squad. Her growing interest in Central America led her to the Witness for Peace program, which organizes volunteers to monitor activities in Nicaragua. Peyser returned from her trip Dec. 1.

**"THE THING** that hits me the most is the first-hand image of poverty," she said during an interview this week. "It's a place of being poor 24 hours a day."

Nicaraguan families spend little time reading Consumers Report stories about the best value in home video cameras. Most of the day's energy is spent putting often meager meals on the table.

That bothers some people who feel



**Rich Perlberg**

Central American soil is sufficient to feed its people.

Peyser feels part of the fault is that Central Americans have been encouraged to grow crops such as coffee, sugar and cotton. These are cash crops but not enough cash returns to the farmers who would do better growing rice, beans, corn and other edible crops. She feels the ruling Sandinistas could meet their goal of a self-sufficient agriculture by the year 2000 if the superpowers would quit meddling. That includes U.S. support of Contra rebels.

**PEYSER KNOWS** that her efforts, such as protesting against U.S. Attorney Edwin Meese in Detroit Monday night, are minuscule compared to the size of the U.S. government which, with the help of her tax money, takes a decidedly different approach to Central America.

"I know," she says. "It sometimes drives me crazy. I keep my peace. I have a story to tell."

She worries that American policy will lead to an unwanted import — body bags of American soldiers.

"The Nicaraguans have had a taste of freedom, and they know what it means," she says. "They prize their freedom, and they will fight to the death to defend it."