

Opinion

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Child care Solutions require cooperation

WHEN WE put together "The Child Care Puzzle" series, it became clear that this major societal change affects more than just working parents and their children.

And solving the child care problem will require a cooperative and coordinated effort to ensure our children receive the proper care and development they need and deserve.

Hopefully, this series illustrated the concerns faced by all those involved and made more people aware of the child care dilemma and its effect on society.

A few years ago, a Harvard survey found that 90 percent of the top officers in big companies were from households where the wife stayed home.

These corporate leaders then assumed a majority of their employees came from similar households. In fact, only 13 percent of the employees lived in that type of home situation.

The people we talked to for this series indicated this attitude is changing and that people are more aware of the problems of affordable and adequate child care.

NOW THIS awareness must be transformed into action by having all sectors of society — education, business, government, parents, employees — work together to fit the child care puzzle together.

The need for action is obvious. By 1990, more than 60 percent of metro Detroit women with children younger than 6 will be working. But there is not adequate space or facilities for these children.

Maybe a good place to start is requiring parental leave. The United States is the only western industrialized nation that does not require parental leave.

A proposal in Washington, D.C., would address that concern by requiring leave for companies that employ 50 or more people. That's a start.

That may send a message to business leaders who argue that legislation is not needed and ben-

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efit decisions are best resolved between employees and employers. But considering the realities of child care, their argument is weak.

Statistics show only 3,000 of the nation's 6 million firms have some sort of child care benefits.

SO INSTEAD of fighting the legislation, business should band together to show the government it can and will do something to solve this growing concern.

The options are plentiful and include on-site day care, financial assistance to employees for child care costs, flexible benefit packages that include provisions for day care; cooperative efforts with other firms to create or support local child care agencies or centers; and more flexible working conditions to name a few.

Education also will play an important role in determining the quality and availability of child care through preschool and latchkey offerings.

Parents, too, can work together in co-op arrangements to care for their children.

Because all of these people have a say in what happens, a long-range plan must be developed to examine the situation and recommend solutions.

Representatives from all walks of life could be brought together to create a comprehensive child care program in Michigan.

So far, everyone involved has struggled to solve the problem in a piecemeal basis.

But eventually all these puzzle pieces must fit together to make sure the children, our future, have all the tools necessary to develop properly.

Good idea

Bill seeks to toughen penalties on crime motivated by hate

MEMBERS OF a predominantly black church in Detroit were enjoying a picnic in a county park in Redford Township earlier this year when a group of white youths poured gasoline on a crudely constructed cross and set it on fire.

The message was clear. The message was racial hate.

State Rep. David Honigman, R-West Bloomfield, is the sponsor of a bill that would stiffen the penalties handed down to purveyors of racial hate. This legislation must be passed.

The bill would allow judges to slap an additional two-year sentence on anyone convicted of a felony motivated by hate against race, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation.

THE BILL would allow victims of such heinous crimes to recover increased monetary damages in civil suits, an element considered most important. It would allow victims to put hate groups out of business, according to supporters.

The House of Representatives passed HB 4113 in October. Now it's the Senate's turn.

This state needs to take a strong stand against such crime. This bill needs to become law in Michigan. Eleven other states have adopted similar laws.

Honigman considers the legislation "an additional safeguard" to existing state and federal law.

He gives this example: If a racist tore up the lawn surrounding a black family's home and burned a cross on the lawn, the perpetrator could be convicted of malicious destruction of property.

ty. The bill would allow a judge to add an additional two years to the sentence if it is proven the crime was motivated by racial hate. The sentencing aspect is similar to the state's felony firearm law.

The bill would also allow victims to recover treble damages, or a minimum \$2,000 and attorney fees in civil suits. Honigman said the bill was inspired in part by the Vincent Chin case, and by another ruling in which the Ku Klux Klan was ordered to pay \$7 million to a Mobile, Ala., woman whose son was abducted, beaten and hanged from a tree by Klan members.

CLOSER TO HOME, the Anti-Defamation League reports that anti-Semitic violence is on the rise in southeast Michigan. Equally disturbing, the Detroit chapter of the NAACP reports that racial incidents have increased across the state this year. Slurs and violent acts against homosexuals seem equally on the rise, in one case coming from a public official in northern Michigan.

Such incidents are motivated by ignorance as much as hate. That they occur with any frequency at all is disturbing news to residents of metropolitan Detroit and the state of Michigan.

The state needs a clear and unconditional stand that such violence, ignorance and hatred will not be tolerated. Passage of the bill would put the state and its citizens on the side of right and justice. Passage of the bill would send a message that needs to be heard.

State Rep. David Honigman, R-West Bloomfield, (right) is the sponsor of a bill that would stiffen the penalties handed down to purveyors of racial hate.



Park's Estate House merits public support

MUCH ADO about nothing?

Hardly. What becomes of the 62-year-old Estate House in Farmington Hills' Heritage Park is significant.

We're talking about saving a historic farmhouse in a public park dedicated to spotlighting the city's heritage.

No one is promoting demolishing the house — yet. It's simply one of many options as the Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Commission wrestles with a recommendation for the picture-postcard site.

Says commission chairman Dennis Fitzgerald, not known for mincing words: "We're not recommending that we bulldoze, that we tear down, that we renovate, that we gut, that we do anything other than what's prudent to make sure that this site doesn't lose its importance to the park."

A concrete recommendation will likely come sooner than the two to three years projected by commissioners. At least two city council members want a decision within six months so they know the house's fate before budgeting more money for it.

THE COMMISSION ruled out renovating the house into new offices for the Department of Special Services because of prohibitive costs. Commissioners ruled out turning the house into a community center because that would put it in competi-



Bob Sklar

tion with its neighbor to the south, the Farmington Community Center.

They ruled out making the house a nature center, pointing out that one of the out-buildings might be better suited for that.

After two years of blood-letting, the commission determined the site of the house should definitely serve the park, perhaps as a reception area because it commands "a panoramic view of 211 acres of pretty nice looking land."

Says Fitzgerald: "If you're trying to showcase this city, I can't think of a better place to do it than on a 4,000-square-foot deck on the back area, when the sun is setting in the fall, and you have dignitaries out there enjoying their first glimpse of this city."

Using the house as a reception area seems to make sense, provided that costs can be kept reasonable.

Just to improve the house so it meets building code and municipal liability requirements would cost \$150,000, based on early projections. That's before any structural im-

provements to accommodate specific uses.

But councilwoman Jean Fox, who formerly chaired the Farmington Hills Historic District Commission, is wary of the costly projections. "The historic district commission has moved six other buildings and none of these approached any of the figures you are talking about," she told Fitzgerald.

POINTING TO affordable restoration projects throughout New England, Fox strongly urged the parks and rec folks to reinvent feedback from the Farmington Hills Historic District Commission.

Councilman Joe Alkateeb put the fate of the Estate House in perspective when he said, "My constituents out there haven't been pounding on my door asking to keep it or not keep it. It's their house, really. It belongs to the people of this community."

Private contributors of money or labor also might rally around the Estate House, although I'd be wary of any fund-raising tack that raided support from the Farmington Community Center.

As proposed uses and projected costs grab headlines, it's likely Alkateeb will get the feedback he wants.

I know I agree with Mayor Ben Marks, who said: "I'd like to see the house stay. That's my personal feeling."

Farmington readers' forum

Letters must be signed, original copies and include the address and telephone number of the writer. None can be returned. Names will be withheld from publication only for sufficient reason. Letters should be limited to 300 words in most cases. We reserve the right to edit them. Send letters to Readers' Forum, Farmington Observer, 33203 Grand River Ave., Farmington 48024.

Their lives served us

To the editor: 1988 marks the 20 years since the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Sen. Robert F. Kennedy.

There were those that hated them. But to others, they were symbols of hope. The torch which was lit by President John F. Kennedy was also carried by Martin and Bobby.

Many people had faith in them. When Bobby was shot, he represented that last ripple of hope.

To many, these were not good people, yet to those who believed in them and in hope, they were the greatest.

John, Martin and Bobby. Did hope die at Bobby's graveside? Or will someone decide to carry it on?

When you honor one, you honor all. They stood as one. They died for the same cause.

Vernon C. Kleplinski
Farmington Hills

Center head gives thanks

To the editor: The community of Farmington/Farmington Hills has extended a very warm and much appreciated

welcome to me since I assumed the role of executive director of the Farmington Community Center, Dec. 1.

I would like to thank Observer reporter Joanne Maliszewski for her initial coverage in the Nov. 30 edition followed by the update of Farmington Community Center by Bob Sklar on Dec. 10.

As part of my initial observations, I would share with the community the fact that the volunteers who serve as trustees of the Farmington Community Center board are committed and dedicated local citizens.

Their generous dedication and hard work are exemplified in their desire to provide this community with an independent, non-profit, historic facility offering up-to-the-minute cultural, educational and special services.

I hope that in the weeks and months ahead, the community will visit their community center and experience that added dimension of quality, the reason you probably chose to locate your home or business here.

As I settle into my surroundings, I will sincerely endeavor to manage the operations of Farmington Community Center giving the community what it wants in a financially healthy setting.

Dorothy Pfaff,
executive director,
Farmington Community Center

Muslims: yes to celebration

To the editor: In response to your articles on the "December dilemma," Muslims have no objection to the celebration of Christmas.

In fact, Muslims hold Jesus in the highest reverence since the belief in Jesus and in the Bible is an integral part of the faith of Islam.

Muslims have never tried to represent Jesus, Moses or Muhammad (peace be upon them) in any materialistic figure, form or picture. Muslims, like many Christians, understand that the occasion of Christmas has been commercialized.

Also, it is widely believed that the tree, mistletoe, lights, etc. have been acquired from the pre-Christian paganistic era.

However, Muslims have a genuine complaint that the calendars of the world do not list any Islamic events and that the general population considers Muslims as anti-Christ.

While in fact, Muslims hold firmly that Jesus — most revered — is alive and will return as Messiah.

With these remarks, I hope that I have made the position of Muslims very clear about the December dilemma.

Dr. Syed S.A. Razvi, president,
Islamic Association
Farmington Hills

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