

points of view

Skill-building brings a diversity to life

IF IT weren't for a great co-op program and a couple of basic typing classes in high school, I might not be writing this column today.

It would be a hunt-and-peck situation on my keyboard, and I may never have learned to deal effectively with people — in any job.

Those job skills learned in high school have played a major role in how my life has progressed, and in the various career choices I have made.

I'm sure voc ed programs have done the same for thousands of students since such programs began in the 1960s. Some 20,000 traditional

high schools and 2,500 trade schools nationwide are offering some type of vocational/technical education program.

Medical skills, drafting, marketing, floral design, food services and auto shop are just some of the courses offered to Farmington-area students.

And a nine-course life-management program, with courses such as personal finance, child development, teen issues and nutrition, is the modernized version of what used to be home economics. Even a course in greenhouse management and landscaping is offered.



Casey Hans

THE LIST goes on and on.

Students can fulfill their academic requirements and still diversify their lives, with other classes. They might even develop an interest they didn't realize they had.

Earl Baumunk, director of Farm-

ington's voc ed program, is right on when he says "well youngsters who graduate should have a marketable skill."

All is the key word.

Students can take all the academic courses offered from A-Z, and still not become well-rounded. Perhaps they are accepted into a prestigious college, and even make their way through, but how will they fare in life? A good balance includes both the academic and vocational classes.

"Academic and vocational education are not in conflict; each has an importance of its own," said Marvin Feldman, president of the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York

City, in a speech in 1984. "They are complementary. It is not a question of either/or; it is a question of both/and. Each serves different functions that sometimes overlap."

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION classes teach more than a basic skill, although they perform that function as well.

They give a person skills that can be integrated into his or her life and used in a variety of ways. Because you learn how to repair a car, or design flowers or take a cosmetology course does not mean that is exactly the direction a career will head.

And that leads us to the real is-

suess: whether high school students can make their own decisions, whether they have foresight and motivation to see just what their interests are, and whether they can plan for the future by developing those interests.

If they see themselves for what and who they are, with guidance from counselors, when necessary, they will enroll in a variety of classes to ensure an interesting future.

Diversity, dealing with people and learning to cope with a changing, growing world — that's what life's about.

That's what must be learned.

Fear of rape compelling

There is reason to be frightened in Birmingham, Bloomfield Township, West Bloomfield Township and Farmington Hills.

All these affluent communities have attractive homes, well-kept neighborhoods, shiny cars in the driveway and one thing else: a rapist in their midst.

Since April there have been nine attacks in seven homes in a 16-square-mile area bounded by 13 Mile, Maple, Farmington and Cranbrook roads.

It's impossible to say that the attacker has always been the same man, but the similarities are frighteningly similar. He wears a ski mask and carries a knife. He attacks women in their home, once returning to the same address to attack a separate victim. He either gains entrance to the home or surprises women in their garages. The victim has almost always been alone. One exception: A Farmington Hills attack in which two women were raped.

IT'S FRIGHTENING to say that the attacks appear to be both random and calculated. There appears to be no common bond among the victims other than geography. Although the victims may be randomly



Rich Periberg

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chosen, it is hard to believe that the attacker moves by chance. By always catching the victims alone, he most certainly stakes out his prey beforehand. There is no way that such knowledge cannot strike fear into the hearts of women and those who love them.

The fear was evident in the people and their anger at a community meeting in Birmingham last week. Officials prudently called the meeting to offer information and advice to a worried populace. But people wanted more. They wanted someone

to do something. They wanted someone to catch this guy.

HYATT EBY, a neighborhood activist, said he had heard all this advice after the first rash of attacks in Birmingham and Bloomfield Township last April. No more advice, he said. He wanted action. He wanted an arrest.

Well, of course. Everyone wants an arrest. It is difficult to tell how well the police are pursuing this case. But one thing is certain. Most of us have an unrealistic idea of what police can do. They can investigate crimes, they can locate known felons, they can react to eyewitness accounts. They can try to fight crime by long-range efforts such as community awareness programs, increased patrols and development of neighborhood watches.

But they can seldom stop a specific crime from happening. If you can't stop an intruder from breaking into your home or lurking in your garage, what makes you think a handful of police can?

Such talk does nothing to ease the fear. As one woman told me, "This is Birmingham. We don't even lock our doors here." They should be locked now.

Some plans just naturally make a body wary.

That's the way suburban Detroiters should feel about the "gambling" committee being established by the big city's mayor Coleman Young.

Frankly, setting up a study committee is an age-old political ruse to get what you want by having other folks reaffirm your wishes.

The cleverest part of the plan, of course, is to plant some opposition members on the committee. So when all is said and done and the committee does come out with a proposal approving casino gambling in Detroit, the mayor can always say, "see the unbelievers on the committee have seen the light. So should the rest."

Not a bad play. It often works. But fortunately for those opposed to casino gambling, the mayor is having a tough time finding opposition which is willing to serve.

In this town casino gambling packs the same kind of emotion as the abortion debate. You are either for it or against it. No middle ground in this forum.

MAKE NO MISTAKE, casino gambling is something with which



Steve Barnaby

every suburban resident should be concerned. Its adoption would change the foundation of this community for as long as the roulette wheels spin or the dealers shuffle the cards.

Despite the fact that the casinos would very likely be located on faraway Belle Isle, the impact would be the same as if they were built in the next subdivision.

Remember, that people contemplating moving their businesses and families to this area don't distinguish. Nationally, Detroit is Detroit to those folks, whether it be Livonia, Plymouth, Farmington or Birmingham.

If Detroit is a gambling city, so are we.

Besides, Atlantic City has learned all the tough lessons about casino gambling. We should learn from it.

The only entities to benefit from gambling in that city are the casinos. The city still has many of the problems it had before the first gambling house popped on its lights.

Sure, we've got crime in metropolitan Detroit. But little sense exists in inviting in more. And it doesn't take much investigating to learn about gambling's link to organized crime. They have been partners in this country for longer than any of us can remember.

And if even all the crime associated with casino gambling remained within Detroit's boundaries, we know the scam who control it will live outside the cities. And those kind of neighbors, no matter how polite they may be, we don't need living next door.

Most important to remember is the kind of metropolitan area we want to leave behind for our children.

So by chance, if you're asked to sit on Coleman Young's gambling committee, cast your vote by saying "no thanks your honor." It's your safest bet.

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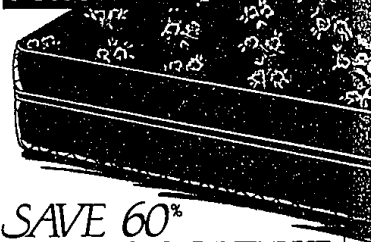
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