

points of view

More letters to the editor. . .

Change must be from heart

To the editor:

I was very upset when I read the "Derwin Success" article on the front page of the Observer. I do not consider myself to be racist, so please do not misunderstand my views here, but I am sick and tired of hearing about how black's think they are treated so badly by other groups of people, namely whites.

I think it's a shame that such incidents, such as that which happened to Derwin's family could still happen in 1989, but that's a reality of life, violence, marches, public awareness, etc., won't change how people feel or think unless they truly want to change from within their hearts.

I think it's wrong for the City of Farmington to let this man walk in and demand changes, such as he is requesting. Adopt a proclamation for Martin Luther King, his birthday is already recognized as a national holiday in January, I don't think we need to have two celebrations for him.

Success' request to designate February as Black History Month in Farmington, come on Derwin, give us a break, why don't we then designate March as Italian History Month to recognize my heritage. April could be Polish History Month, and so on.

Derwin wants to create a "biracial" task force to create racial harmony in Farmington, who is he kidding, I can count all the blacks that live in Farmington on one hand.

Another request is to create a curriculum on the diversity of culture in the school district, again I say, let's also recognize Italians, Polish, Germans, Jews, etc. that built this country, and made it great.

And finally, Derwin wants Farmington to hire one black person to work in the city hall, how about you, Derwin, are you qualified?

Again, please do not misconstrue my comments. I merely wish to comment on how ridiculous this whole situation is getting. Derwin, I'm sorry you are having a hard time in Farmington, and that some people are giving you problems. But let's not put the whole blame on Farmington, or the suburbs, or condemn a race of people as bigots or racists.

You are inviting trouble; think about the actions you are about to take. Do you really think people are going to change the way they feel, or that you are going to bring racial harmony to Farmington, a city that is 90 percent white? If you want to march, why not try Southfield, Oak Park or even Detroit?

Vince Chiaravalli,
Farmington Hills

Takes issue with claims

To the editor:

In regard to "County officials reject Clarenceville recall petitions" (Sept. 21):

It should be made quite clear that the Clarenceville school board's attorneys fees are not paid with tax dollars. These fees are paid by individual board members.

When Susan Gonzales said she filed a "bogus petition, knowing it would fail," then why did she file it in the first place? It is my understanding that there is no such thing as a "bogus petition." Is this not a waste of the county's time, not to mention money?

I attended a school board meeting on May 25, at which Susan Gonzales and Tammy Iaconelli and several of the members of the "Community to Dissolve Clarenceville" also were present.

At this meeting, the district's attorney spoke in great detail on the procedures of consolidation and annexation. There was also a letter available to the public that explained the procedures on this same issue. So I do not agree that there has been poor communication within the district.

And let's not forget who passes the millage, which seems to be the pro dissolution group's biggest reason for dissolution. It's not the school board.

When Susan Gonzales said, "Let the community decide," I feel in April of this year the community did decide. The community passed a millage and a Headlee override. This community has always passed a millage. Does this tell you anything?

Wilson Bowden,
Livonia

Teens missed Bush's talk

To the editor:

In September, President Bush announced he would address all seventh through 12th graders in this country via a TV message on school time.

This was the first time in American history a president addressed teenagers specifically. The message — drugs and drug abuse.

High school principals across this country received advance, specific information regarding this planned address.

President Bush, in fact, delivered a powerful, 20-minute message that held the several hundred high schoolers, where I teach, hushed and attentive. Unfortunately, Farmington middle school and high school students were not even told of the address, let alone allowed to watch it.

I FIND it upsetting and inconsistent that a school system, which has recently announced a stepped-up, aggressive anti-drug campaign with active support from our chief of police and our local newspaper editor, would deny teens the opportunity to hear our president's message.

What kind of message are we adults sending to these young men and women: that their daily school schedule cannot be adjusted for a mere 20 minutes? That flexibility is a dirty word? That they are to race through life, uncaring of themselves and others, in order to "get ahead" and "be on time"?

PERHAPS THIS kind of tension, tunnel vision and lack of communication is a major cause in turning our teens "on" to drugs and "off" to us.

I feel the administrators of the Farmington middle schools and high schools made a major mistake in not providing for our youngsters to hear the president's message.

Respect for our chief executive and his timely message should be modeled by you, the adult leaders in their lives at school. In this case, . . . I think you blew it.

Janet Whitecomb Friedrich,
Farmington Hills

Collegians reject booze, drugs

THE KIDS were out there just waiting for the adults to give them the opportunity.

A total of about 1,500 students entering the University of Michigan, Oakland University and Eastern Michigan University opted this fall for alcohol-free rooms.

That breaks down to about 10 percent of the incoming students at U-M, 21 percent of all dormitory residents at Eastern Michigan and 45 percent at OU.

This is the first year that all public universities in Michigan — with the exception of Michigan State and Wayne State — offered students living in their residence halls the choice of a roommate who doesn't drink. Wayne State will implement the option next fall.

The numbers make it obvious that MSU is out of sync — as are Michigan Tech, Lake Superior State and Saginaw Valley State, all of which offer the option only to students 21 and over. And Ferris State, too, must revise its housing form, which now only offers it to students who acknowledge they are chemically dependent.

Those kinds of limitations are hogwash.

BECAUSE YOUNG people obviously are saying something different. A move that was begun on behalf of students recovering from chemical addictions who wanted to



Judith Doner Berne

maintain their sobriety in a college atmosphere is turning out to be something that many others want, too.

They are smart enough to realize they don't want to contend with drunkenness or drugs in their own room, their home away from home, when they want to study or order out for pizza or talk.

How does that hit you, you representatives of the Presidents Council of the State Colleges and Universities? A year's worth of meetings between the small Oakland County group pushing for the alcohol-free rooming and these representatives resulted in the council's collective refusal to do anything.

It can't be done, they said. It acknowledges that we have drinking in our dorms, they said. We simply can't take on that responsibility, they said.

Initially only Oakland University went ahead and offered their students the choice.

It took the pressure of proposed

legislation to make the other schools come round.

Talk about your ivory tower!

KIDS ARE SMARTER than we give them credit for. And those individuals, groups and institutions in our local communities who are working so hard against drug and alcohol abuse can take heart.

It is obvious that for many of these college-bound youngsters, the message is getting across.

State Rep. David Honigman, R-West Bloomfield, is once again proposing legislation so that MSU and all Michigan private colleges and universities also offer that option — and those that already do maintain it.

But the truth is, the numbers alone confirm that's what students want. All along it has been a students' rights issue — right up there with the right to request a non-smoking roommate — in place for some time. Luckily, universities still must compete for students. And students who care about having a roommate who doesn't drink know the schools that offer them that opportunity, now, don't they?

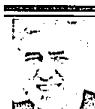
Judith Doner Berne is assistant managing editor of the Oakland editions of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

Slower-paced class spurs worry

Q: My son is a sixth grade student and has been placed in a slower paced math class. I know he is not the best student in the school but I worry about him falling further behind in this class. My question is, "Does a slower paced math class serve a better purpose for my son than a regular math class?"

What you are referring to is typically called a remedial math class in what is called a "tracking system;" a system that divides students into high, average and low ability or low performance levels, each level with its own curriculum. Those in the remedial classes are young adults who may have ability but for many reasons are experiencing a problem mastering basic academic skills.

From my experience, students in these classes tend to be either underachievers, unmotivated or undisciplined toward studying at this time in life. Sometimes acting out or blurring out, sometimes very shy and withdrawn behaviors are by-product



Doc Doyle

of a remedial class. You ask, "Does a remedial, homogeneous class (a class with students who have similar grades and test scores) serve a better purpose than a heterogeneous class (a class setting with students of mixed abilities and grades)?" Depends on who you talk to and what research you believe.

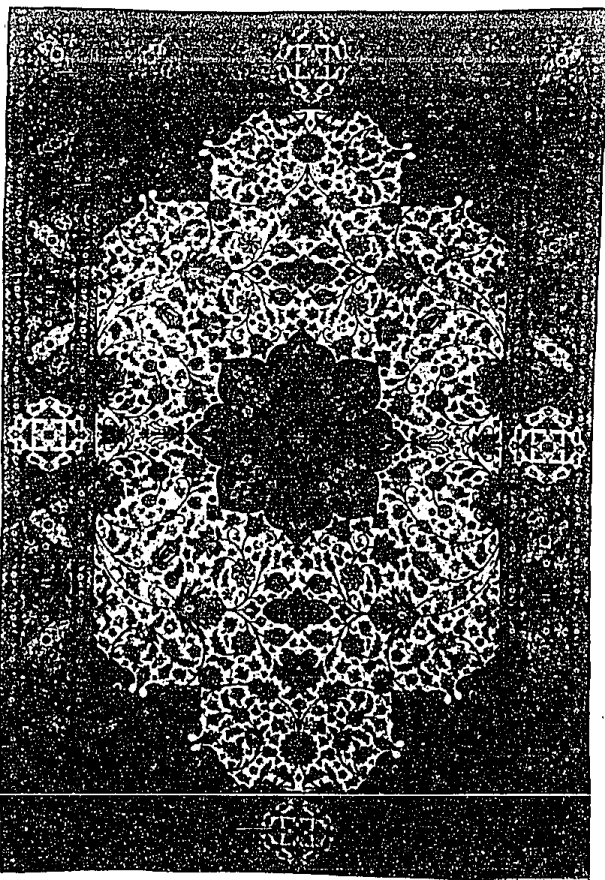
Recent research is quite interesting regarding the remedial, underachieving or sometimes called at-risk student class settings.

John Peterson, Ph.D. of Brigham Young University stated that a number of experts who studied the education of remedial students found

that when given an opportunity in a more mixed, heterogeneous class, remedial students test scores improved. That there was a tendency to teach underachieving students at a slower pace that can put them even further behind their classmates. That when the low achievers were grouped with other low achieving students they knew they were the remedial and their modest work effort became a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy.

Tracking or putting low achieving students together also showed that student self-esteem, which was anticipated would improve by doing school work they could handle, did not improve.

Dr. James Doyle is an assistant superintendent in the Troy School District. The answers provided here are the opinions of Doyle and not the Troy School District. Questions for this column should be sent to Doc Doyle c/o the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.



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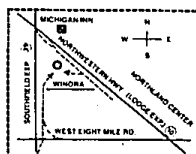
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