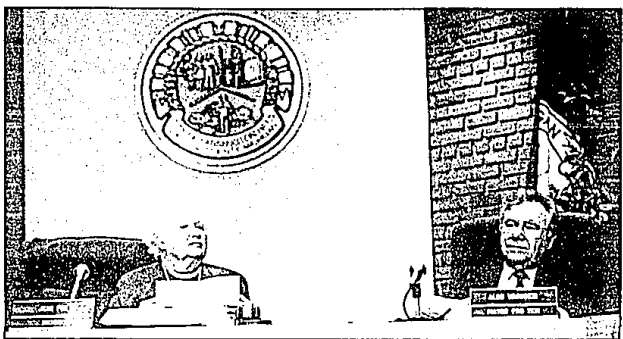


Opinion

21898 Farmington Road/Farmington, MI 48024 Robert Sklar editor/477-5450

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RANDY BORST/retail photographer

Fiercely independent

Farmington Hills Mayor Jean Fox (left) and Mayor Pro Tem Aldo Vagnozzi, sworn in last Monday by District Judge Margaret Schaeffer of Farmington, have the wherewithal to serve the city well in their new ceremonial posts. Both are outspoken, streetwise, free thinkers — and fiercely independent. They boast years of civic in-

volvement and achievement. What's particularly notable is that they sit side by side even though they come from different ends of the political spectrum. Fox is an active Republican, Vagnozzi an active Democrat. We wish them well as they take the hot seats, front and center, in the Farmington Hills City Council chambers.

Drop in grades signals a classic underachiever

I have a son who did well in elementary and high school. He was always an A/B student. Now, in high school, he is not doing as well. His grades are dropping to Bs and Cs. When I talked with his counselor, he told me that his test scores indicate he could be an A/B student. The counselor said he is underachieving.

Obviously the drop in grades is an indication that he is underachieving. How do you identify if he is an underachiever?

It sounds as if you have the classic underachiever.

The boy was very bright, very verbal with outstanding grades throughout elementary and middle school but now is suddenly losing momentum.

The number one indicator of underachievement is they are disorganized and they start playing games. They forget homework and make up excuses, they lose assignments, misplace their books.

Underachievers I had in class daydream. They pretend they are listening to you but really are looking right through the teacher like a window, thinking of other things.

Some classic underachievers talk a good game but produce little. Their study skills begin to dissipate and when they do study they review materials very briefly and consider that sufficient. Oftentimes they are more concerned about being the first student done than with the quality of the work. As a result their papers contain many, careless errors.

In some cases they just become lazy — but maybe that would be too

Doc Doyle

sweeping a generalization.

A second way to identify if your child is falling into the underachievement pattern is he/she will start saying school is boring in middle school and not relevant in high school.

Grades become less important because they have terrible teachers. Oftentimes sports, music, their social life, drama and other activities become more important than the school work. Besides that, their education is more a goal of the parents so let the parents worry about it. Why should they carry an emotional burden? These rationalizations ease their minds but underachievers are not happy with themselves.

Of course there is always the story of the super underachiever who comes back to the 20-year reunion and has done great things. This is called the "late bloomer." But from my experience for every one of these stories I can give you many others where the down cycle of not performing resulted in goals never obtained.

A neighbor of mine literally was emotionally sick because his son was and is bright but performing at a C/

D level. The father lectured, grounded and did everything he could to make his son turn around. It was a Mexican standoff, with no winners in sight.

Indeed, this was a way for the son to strike back at the father for some real or unreal animosities that had grown at that tender age between 15 and 18 when the father became dumber every day while the son perceived himself as a Rhodes scholar.

The father, an executive at General Motors, asked me what to do. I suggested the following. The boy wanted to go to Arizona State University. He had been to the campus before and saw Tempe as his Mecca. I suggested the father invest some money and fly to the campus with his son and have a meeting with the admission officer. The admission officer made it clear the high school sophomore the grades he would need to enter the university.

To make a long story short, the boy's grade point average moved to a 3.6 in his junior and senior years.

I am not saying this will work for everyone, but it is better you have your son view his own future from a real life experience. Let him carry his share of the emotional baggage that is presently pre-occupying much of your life.

Dr. James Doyle is the former assistant superintendent in the Troy School district. Questions for his column should be sent to Doc Doyle c/o the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 30251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

from our readers

Take limits from center

To the editor:

I have been affiliated with the Community Center for many years because I believe in its important role in the community.

I question the justification of the complaint filed by four people, who have turned a tempest in a teacup

into a major problem that threatens the very existence of the center.

Unfortunately, noise pollution surrounds all of us — rowdy kids, mechanized equipment, loud radios, ever-increasing traffic.

The amplified summer music at the center was at reasonable hours and of limited duration. It is, therefore, appalling that the complaint filed by four neighbors and the resultant complications can be justified.

How can we rationalize the attack on the center, which has a history of doing so much good for so many people in the community?

Phyllis Welch, Farmington Hills

Many need a helping hand

To the editor:

During the holiday season, it was a pleasure to pick up a paper and read about warmhearted, charitable people reaching out to help those less fortunate.

Church groups, unions, schools, business, neighbors, and our staff here at the Social Security office, were all busy helping to make Christmas just a little merrier for those in need.

However, it seems that once the

holidays are over, we often forget that the disadvantaged still need our help.

The homeless, the mentally ill, battered women and children, the unemployed, the disabled, the elderly, may have special needs for assistance all year. I hope the Observer & Eccentric readers now will think about how we can help the needy year-round.

Social Security may be able to help. Nationwide each year, there are estimated thousands of people who are unaware they may be eligible for Social Security benefits.

Supplemental Security Income pays cash benefits to people of all

ages who are in need. SSI is paid to individuals who are aged; blind or disabled at any age (even children) with low income and resources. In some cases, people who are unable to work due to depression, alcoholism, drug addiction, and learning disabilities can qualify for monthly SSI disability benefits.

Social Security benefits are paid on the work records of wage earners who are retired, disabled, or deceased. The family of the worker can also be entitled to monthly cash benefits. The dependents include (but are not limited to) spouses, children under age 18, disabled "children" over age 18, divorced spouses, and

even disabled survivors.

In the spirit of giving this season, let us extend a hand up, rather than merely a hand out. Be aware of possible sources of assistance. Refer someone who may be eligible for benefits to Social Security. Call toll-free, 24 hours a day, seven days a week for additional information about Social Security benefit programs. The phone number is: 1-800-234-5772.

Help us meet our goal, that everyone who is eligible for benefits is receiving them. Robert Clevenger, district manager, Social Security Administration Health and Human Services

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