

Opinion

21898 Farmington Road/Farmington, MI 48024

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Recycling Schools should show the way

TRADITION calls for students to learn from teachers. But the reverse also can be true.

Such is the case with the Farmington school district's fledgling recycling study committee. It's the product of strong student encouragement to make recycling an integral part of school life.

As Superintendent Mike Flanagan readily acknowledged: "Today's generation of young people has given us a challenge in taking this seriously. They're way ahead of us in a lot of ways."

We're pleased the school district is flirting with a determined push to reduce the solid waste flow.

But the obvious question is, What the heck took the schools, supposedly a community leader, so long in making such a vital commitment?

With a new administration at the helm in the district nerve center atop Shiawassee Hill, the blame falls squarely on the school board. It's the district policymaker. But we vigorously support its stepped-up commitment to recycling, however belated.

GARBAGE ISN'T something you pay much attention to — until it piles up. Then it's a potent concern. Solid waste disposal isn't a major problem in Farmington or Farmington Hills yet. But it's a crisis in the making.

Americans generate more than twice as much waste per person as residents in Japan or West Germany. We throw away a ton of garbage a year per person, the experts say.

Tipping fees at landfills, long the destination of dumpster trash, are skyrocketing as older sites fill up.

New landfills are rare. As Debra Larson, Farmington Public Schools food services supervisor, put it: "No one is thrilled with garbage being planted in their back yards."

Besides bringing recycling to the forefront in

the schools, Farmington students have shown compelling interest in one of the most dreaded fears of any community — having a ton of trash and having no place to put it.

East Middle School's Earth Care Fair, High Meadow Common Campus' Trash Bash, Duncker Middle School's loaner tray boycott, Fairview Early Childhood Center's recycling center visit, Farmington High's Rouge Rescue effort — consciousness raisers all.

WHAT ELSE can the school district do? Recycle, re-use, reduce. And share the students' enthusiasm.

The schools should be committed to educating the public by quelling rumors and spreading facts. And they should practice what they teach, to recycle computer paper, polystyrene trays and other recoverable materials, to compost grass clippings, and to use recycled and recyclable goods.

We applaud their commitment to recycling engine oil, fryer fat and household batteries.

But they also should take a cue from Novi. At lunchtime there, students, for example, put the polystyrene trays in one place and plastic utensils in another. A specialty company later turns the trays into pellets, from which manufacturers make a variety of products. The schools are looking for a source to recycle the collected plastics.

Meanwhile, Farmington Public Schools should seek out new markets for recyclables. And it should help cut waste at the source by trying not to patronize firms with excessive or unrecyclable packaging.

Why not make "recycled and recyclable" a factor in the bid/purchase process?

When it comes to recycling, our schools should boldly exercise their role as a community leader. They should be pro-active, not just reactive.

College grads There's more to life than money

MEMO TO OUR area's recent college graduates:

Congratulations. You've worked hard, at least some of the time, and now stand ready to reap the fruits of your labor. After all, you're the ones who, according to surveys, list acquisition of material wealth right at the top of your post-collegiate goals.

Welcome to the real world — where those fruits may have to ripen on the vine a good long time before harvesting.

For years, all you've had to worry about was your grade point average. Now, we're going to tell you about the number that really matters — the bottom line.

LET'S TALK wheels. We know you've had your eye on a shiny new Porsche. Admit it. But you can't get a Porsche, even used, for much less than \$45,000. Now, doesn't that fully loaded compact car look like a steal at less than \$10,000?

Everybody can own a Porsche, that's true. But everyone can look like they do, right?

Consider this. List price for one of those short-sleeve cotton shirts, with the famous polo player monogram is about \$50-\$65. List price for a short-sleeve cotton shirt, without polo player monogram — about \$15-\$25.

Wait a minute, you say. You'll have plenty of money for both the car and the fancy shirt with the kind of take home pay you'll be getting.

Well, you're starting salary, if you're lucky, might reach as high as \$25,000. That's the rough average of all workers in Michigan.

Just for comparison, Lee Iacocca's recent annual salary was \$3.7 million according to one survey — and he only ranked 12th among big time CEOs.

Maybe you'll be among the lucky ones who learn that there's more to life than rapid, and rampant, acquisition of material goods.

Worried about your rapid entry to the board room? Maybe you should first worry about current and future debts.

Your college education cost somewhere around \$19,000, based on four years at a public university, including room and board.

YOUR KID'S college education will likely cost three to four times that, so start saving.

We haven't even mentioned housing. The price for a cozy three-bedroom home in one of our area's growing suburbs: at least \$100,000, give or take a thousand or two.

Dear old mom and dad would have probably paid at least half that for the same house 25 years ago.

What about your future, you say? You'll probably have more than one. Your life expectancy is about 72 for men, 78 for women. The good news, that means you have at least a half-century left. The bad news, you'll probably have to work for at least 40 of those years — and probably more.

We don't want to rain on anyone's parade. But life is for learning.

Who knows, maybe you'll be among the lucky ones who learn that there's more to life than rapid, and rampant, acquisition of material goods. And that acquisition often involves sacrifice.

Welcome to the real world.

Rouge cleanup Army, volunteers are good combo

USING THE Army Corps of Engineers to clean the Rouge River is a good idea.

But it shouldn't mean the end for the annual Rouge Rescue.

This month more than 2,000 area residents returned to the Rouge for the annual volunteer cleanup.

U.S. Rep. Carl Pursell, R-Plymouth, would like to expand the cleanup into a year-round event. He's proposed legislation to that effect.

THAT'S A GOOD idea, especially in light of Michigan's traditionally low rate of return on the tax dollars it sends the federal government. The corps' new commitment to environment-preserving projects is also a welcome sign.



World champions!

We join coach Dee Krause and Farmington Public Schools in bursting with pride over the world title that Warner Middle School students (from left) James Haynes, Marie Tripp, Jon Krause, Amy Roberts, Samantha

Rowland, Carrie Riordan and Gordon Eick won in the geographic category of Odyssey of the Mind academic problem-solving competition June 2 in Iowa.

SHARON LEMUEX/staff photographer

Public support a key for public education

MORE THAN a century ago, educator Horace Mann pushed passionately for public support and control of the quickly growing network of American schools.

The Massachusetts native also made an impassioned pitch for better-trained teachers and aroused community interest for improving the basic curriculum.

In Mann's time, with public education in its infancy and farming the leading source of jobs, the rudiments of learning often were limited to reading, writing and arithmetic.

But to achieve both professional and personal security in the fiercely competitive world of today, a wider, more rigorous educational approach is crucial.

The hitch is that many property owners are struggling to meet relentless tax demands.

A public financial commitment, which Mann so eloquently championed, continues to be the strongest insurance against a downturn in educational quality.

But taxpayer vigilance is the best way to keep a \$92 million budget from spiraling relentlessly.

Within that backdrop — and at a time when the Legislature is taking a long look at equalized school district funding — Farmington Public Schools voters filled two board of education seats Monday.

The victors, challenger Cathy Webb and incumbent Jack Inch, will



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serve the community well. They know their way around the schools and are in touch with the people.

THE VOTER turnout, 4.46 percent, was better than last year's 2.95 percent. But given the 11,000-student district has more than 50,000 registered voters, I found the turnout appalling.

The Observer dedicated many stories over many weeks to the nine-candidate race.

There surely was no shortage of issues.

As The Observer wrote last week, issues span the education spectrum: class size, drug-free zones, high-tech teaching tools, board goals, test scores, special education, gifted education, schools of choice, facility needs, dual-income families, program continuity, balanced learning opportunities, foreign language, property tax relief.

To that list I would add reading skills, preschool programs, graduation requirements and vocational education.

I'm dumbfounded at the meek vo-

turner, not only because 60 percent of every local tax dollar goes to the school district, but also because a sound education has become so vital.

It's mindboggling why voters wouldn't want a direct say in the district's leadership, in who's setting classroom policy for our kids.

INCUMBENCY DIDN'T mean automatic victory at the polls Monday — as well it shouldn't.

Just as it's good for an incumbent to be challenged, it's even better for an incumbent to face a tough challenge. More of what people need to know to cast an informed vote tends to get out into the open then.

Webb's stunning effort, pacing the huge field with more than 1,340 votes, doesn't just reflect a solid campaign organization. It punctuates her perceived ability to bring the people of the school district together, not draw them apart.

Inch, never one to back down no matter how tough the going gets, fended off a gutsy bid by third-place finisher Laura Myers, a quality candidate in her own right.

With Election Day now past, Webb, Inch and the rest of the school board must re-dedicate themselves to keeping students on a steady course so, after graduation, they have the skills and savvy necessary to compete in life.

Bob Sklar is editor of the Farmington Observer.

Farmington readers' forum

Letters must be signed, original copies and include the address and telephone number of the writer. Names will be withheld from publication only for sufficient reason. We reserve the right to edit them. Send letters to Readers' Forum, Farmington Observer, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48024.

Porn column missed point

To the editor:

I read with sadness your support of the porn-peddlers, who produce garbage strictly for gain, and the power-hungry corporations that also care little for morals or anything except power and greed.

The American Family Association should be applauded for doing something about porn, and not ridiculed.

The managing editor's view is naive and avoids the overwhelming evidence. Porn is a problem and needs to be exposed (no pun intended) for the harm it is causing.

The victimless view held by your editor towards porn refuses to accept that porn is habit forming, can become obsessive and has produced terrible consequences.

In 1967, John Norman Collins murdered a young lady in a cemetery in Ypsilanti, leaving behind numerous porn magazines around her body. The women in the magazine were not accessible — his poor and innocent victim was.

This is played out daily throughout the communities of our nation as sick perverts can no longer get

enough from just perusing and view women as sexual objects for their personal gratification.

The extreme view of the First Amendment by the liberals in the press as well as their obsession with banning nothing short of murder has caused so many to suffer. Do you suppose that the First Amendment writers ever thought their words would have caused porn to be given socially redeeming value?

The former attorney-general's study and many personal testimonies of rapists/murderers like Ted Bundy have told of the part that porn has played in their enflamed fantasy life.

Daily, there are countless crimes against innocent women and children because of these socially accepted instruments of fantasies for power over women and an object to affection by vain diversions of self-centeredness.

Pornography overtly treats women as one dimensional, having neither soul nor personality. The figure is supreme and women an object to be possessed, not a special, caring, loving human being of worth. All sexuality is reduced to a fraud for the sake of amusement instead the ultimate expression in love and affection.

The strength of our country is not

diversity, as stated in the column by Mr. Barnaby, but is goodness. Pornography is a merry-go-round of using people to make money and the dehumanizing of beautiful women and making them objects, not people with feelings and worth.

It is not nonsense or negative to stop something abusive to human worth and personal dignity but uplifting to all concerned.

Michael Dille,
Farmington Hills

Opinions are to be shared

While The Observer expresses its opinions on the editorial page, we always leave space open for our readers to express their ideas.

Submitting a letter to the editor for publication is easy. We ask that letters be typewritten or printed legibly and kept to 300 words or less. They must be signed and include the address of the sender.

Names will be withheld only for the best of reasons, and the decision to do so will be made by the editor.

Letters may be mailed or hand-delivered to our office at 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48024.

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