

from our readers

Thanks for your help

To the editor:

Please accept our heartfelt gratitude for the Observer & Eccentric's help in promoting the Holiday Hunger Appeal of the Food Bank of Oakland County. The 80 emergency food pantries, shelters and soup kitchens we supply will be better stocked throughout 1991 because of your public-spirited participation.

I want also to thank your readers who opened their hearts even more widely this year in spite of or because of the uncertainties of today's economy. At this time the drive is running 10 percent ahead of last year's effort.

People do care. Given the information about our neighbor's need and the opportunity to respond, we do reach out in compassion and concern to comfort and support one another.

James Macy,
executive director
Food Bank of Oakland County

Headlee ad disappoints this reader

To the editor:

I was disturbed to see the ads run by Richard Headlee's company which contained misinformation. Based on my own query to the Farmington schools administrative offices, it seems there are three important points that must be clarified.

First, the Farmington board may not act as proponents of the upcoming millage propositions and by law may not participate in a debate as Headlee's ad requests.

Secondly, the \$14 million mentioned as the fund equity balance as of June 30 no longer exists. Approximately \$5 million was already allocated toward legitimate school system expenses, and of course, \$5.8 million was recaptured by the state recently.

I hate to think of the predicament our school system would have this year had Superintendent Michael Flanagan and the board not planned the budget with such superb foresight.

Thirdly, while the total budget has risen faster than the number of students, the mix has been such that middle or high schools could have been eliminated. However, the growth at the elementary level has required additional schools.

Undoubtedly, Headlee dislikes the thought of an increase in taxes for his company and is willing to promote misinformation in order to see the millages defeated. Headlee has been a political hero to me for many years, and it disappoints me that he has resorted to this tactic.

We are thrilled with the education that our two children are receiving in the Farmington schools. My son attends Highmeadow, and my daughter attends Alameda. Actually I had the option of sending my children to any of the private schools in the area. I instead chose the Farmington Schools.

I understand why the millage proposals must pass. I urge the Farmington Observer to endorse passage of both.

Mark F. Mokris,
Farmington Hills

Tax dollars not used well

To the editor:

In the Jan. 3 and 7 issue of the Observer, average SAT and ACT college entrance exam test scores were reported for students in Farmington Public Schools.

It is not acceptable that our students performed less than one point above average on the ACT test and actually below average on the SAT test.

It should also be noted that not only are these scores quite mediocre, but they represent a decline in performance from these tests.

The SAT results dropped below last year's results and the insignificant gap between Farmington ACT results and state average ACT results was narrowed to less than one point.

This does not bode well for students in our district trying to gain admission to the better colleges and universities.

In view of the fact that, with or without the passage of the Feb. 5 school tax increase proposals, Farmington spends one of the highest amounts per student in the state and most of our students come from relatively affluent homes, it is unreasonable that our test scores are only at or below state average.

Our tax dollars are not being effectively used by our school administration. Taxpayers are paying top dollar for mediocre results.

Before the community votes itself another tax increase for the school system, it should ask the district to make better use of the taxes it already receives.

I encourage people to learn the facts and vote on Tuesday, Feb. 5.

Richard DeVries,
Farmington Hills

The price of war too high

To the editor:

As the father of a 24-year-old daughter, I wish to express my agreement with President Bush's statement that "no price is too heavy to pay" to force Iraq out of Kuwait (New York Times, Jan. 3). The restoration of Kuwaiti sovereignty through war is simply not worth the loss of life it would entail.

I have read many articles on the crisis and have concluded that a strategy of long-term containment and embargo is the proper course of action for the U.S., its allies and the United Nations.

An aggressor such as Iraq, an oil exporter and regional power, must be isolated from the world community and be made to pay a high price for its acts but with comparatively little cost to the rest of the world. The price here is destruction of the Iraqi economy through embargo. I urge you to counsel the president not to go to war.

William J. MacQueen,
Birmingham

Time is most valuable gift

To the editor:

I've heard all the excuses, because I've used them all. They range from, "I don't have time to visit Aunt Mary at the nursing home." "I don't think she would remember me anyway." "I hate the smell of the place." "I don't like to be yelled at by the other residents when I walk down the hall" to "I don't like to see her roommate's twisted toes and bedpan when I'm there."

Who could argue with this. It's true. But... it still matters that you

go, maybe not to you, but to Aunt Mary for sure.

I remember years ago, I called my grandfather at his nursing home in Ohio and told him we were coming to visit. He said that he didn't know who I was. Discouraged, I told my husband that at least he will know he had company and we went.

When he saw me across the lobby, his face lit up. I still don't know if he remembered my name, but after he dragged out his photo album and showed us pictures of his two wives he outlived and other relatives, I decided it only mattered that we were there. It was obvious he had a good afternoon.

Years later with my mother now in a nursing home and my daughter now with a driver's license, I asked my daughter to go visit her one day. I remember my daughter feeling bad that I wasn't ready to let her drive my mother to her favorite drug store to get her favorite candy bar. When my daughter returned home, she said, "Grandma doesn't need to go anywhere or even get a candy bar. She just wants to talk. We went out to the gazebo and sat together. She was just happy that I came."

Again I was reminded, as if for the first time, that the important things in our lives are sometimes the simplest or the most ordinary. Your time may be someone else's most valuable gift. It matters.

Joel Gardner,
Livonia

Opinions are to be shared

Opinions and ideas are best when shared with others.

That's why the Farmington Observer encourages its readers to share their views with others in the From Our Readers column.

Submitting a letter to the editor for publication is easy. Letters should be typewritten or printed legibly and kept to 300 words. Letters 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 should be mailed to: the editor, The Farmington Observer, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48336.

Books frenzy sweeps nation

QUESTION: Is there a textbook burning frenzy going on in this area? It seems articles are appearing more and more in local newspapers and on TV about parents organizing against what they believe to be too much child exposure to violence, sex and Satanism themes in schools. Is this occurring in just our area or nationwide?

Answer: It is nationwide! There is an all time high of 244 major confrontations between parent groups and local school boards regarding this issue in 38 states, according to a recent study entitled, "Attacks on freedom to learn." People for the American Way, a non-partisan constitutional-liberties group that leans strongly toward an American Civil Liberties Union orientation, completed the study.

The primarily "fundamentalist" Christian parent groups in those 39 states have major concerns about certain textbooks, certain school plays, some supplementary readings and some video movies.

One of the saddest situations is in the Ridgeview Elementary School District in Yucalpa, Calif. Teachers recommended a supplementary reading series entitled "Impressions," a whole language, literature-based approach to reading.

OPPOSING CRISTIANISMS viewed this as a departure from the fundamental basic skills mastery approach to reading that they preferred. And the opposing parents also saw violence, sex and the devil popping up too frequently.

The Yucalpa teacher chairman who recommended the series had their houses egged, broken glass thrown on their driveway, nails driven into their car tires and neighbors who wouldn't even say hello to them or their children. These attacks, to me, are by a few extremists found in any group and do not reflect on those who have a sincere interest in expressing their viewpoint.

More than 150 parents attended a Ridgeview board meeting wishing to do away with the "Impressions" series. However, at the next meeting, with 1,200 in attendance, a review committee made up of teachers, administrators and parents from every school building gave the series a clean bill of health.

The "Impressions" series, depending on one's view, is a treasure of children's literature, classic fairy tales, nursery rhymes and short stories by writers such as T.S. Elliot,

Doc Doyle

C.S. Lewis, Beverly Cleary and other talented authors

HOWEVER, SOME believe the "Impressions" series subliminally espouses violence, death, the occult, total sexual freedom and does not reflect the "fundamental beliefs on which this country was founded."

For instance, there is one story in which a little boy gives another little boy a valentine card. On the next page, an old traditional rhyme called "Lavender's Blue" has a line that goes, "And we shall be gay, dilly dilly, and we shall both dance."

Some of the parents opposing the series interpreted this children's rhyme to be a class endorsement of male homosexuality.

One parent, according to the Los Angeles Times, tried to make a case that one could see the face of the devil in one illustration.

On the other hand, Forrest Turpen, executive director of the Christian Educators Association International said, "Teachers get defensive...humanism gets in the way of what we should really be looking at, which is, what's best for boys and girls."

TURPEN'S GROUP believes the reading series should have greater emphasis on traditional Judeo-Christian values. Stories of personal courage as opposed to stories emphasizing despair, gloom and hopelessness.

However, the People for the American Way group director Donna Fowler said, "They are straight forwardly pushing a Christian agenda. You've got somebody there who's on a witch hunt, and you bet they will find a witch...their main thrust is to get members selected to local school boards."

So yes, there is a national movement to review and challenge what is being presented to children in the classroom. Right or wrong, it is democracy in action.

Where is all this going? Is it another group pushing for schools of choice where tuition money is given to the parents and they select the educational environment they want for their children. It's coming whether public education likes it or not.

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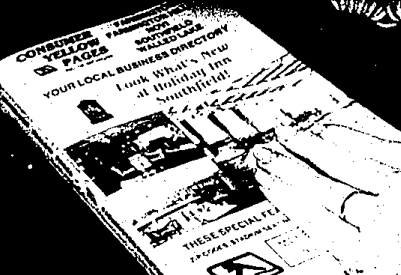
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