

points of view

Think of kids, not yourself, when you vote

By Debbie Cornwell  
special writer

I have always been of the opinion that you are a paper for all people. Unfortunately, the stand you are appearing to make has proven me wrong when it comes to educating the parents and students of Farmington.

Your headline article of Jan. 14, (Headline: Schools should bite the bullet) shows just where your priorities are — with corporations and big money.

Come on, the publicity you have given the representatives from Alexander Hamilton makes it appear as though they have more clout than anyone else in town, including the families that purchase your paper in order to stay informed.

It is one thing for Richard Headlee to print a full page ad in opposition to the school millage, although it would be nice if his information was accurate. That is his right as a taxpayer.

An interview with Headlee certainly doesn't deserve front page headlines. You, instead, should have interviewed parents who are actively involved in the school millage issue, pro and con, the very parents whose children will be affected drastically one way or the other come September 1991.

AS A TAXPAYER and parent of three Farmington students I do have a few thoughts of my own and would like to share them with you.

It would be interesting to know what cutbacks Headlee thinks should be made in our education in order to make up our \$5.8 million loss. At the same time, it would be a more thorough interview to ask an educator from our district what the consequences, if any, would be with the suggested cutbacks.

Transportation has been one of the targeted areas. I understand the schools do not have to provide transportation for our kids, but I can't imagine driving all of my children to

guest column

three different schools daily. The congestion in our parking lots and the safety in our streets would be frightening.

Sports is another targeted area where our kids could be affected. A large number of students participate in school sports, many play on several teams. If we have to "pay to play" what happens to the students who can't afford to participate? Our children need an outlet for improving self-esteem, college scholarships, learning to be a team player. Sports in school is an excellent opportunity for personal growth. How can we penalize those families by shutting down these activities?

SAT-ACT testing: Yes, our scores should be better, but, how

would reducing our education dollar help in raising their scores? Perhaps, a different approach would be to carefully appraise the teaching staff to be sure they are instructing the students as they should be, and yes, I would have to assume this would cost money.

Elective classes: Elementary enrichment classes are a matter I do have concerns about. The talk is to reduce secondary electives. If we will have to do this then by all means the elementary enrichment classes, which are costly, should also be reduced. Especially since the majority of our elementary schools do not benefit from this type of creative teaching.

AS FOR ELECTIVES in the middle school and high school, these classes are vital. In middle school our students have a few elective opportunities which enable them to work with their hands and create. Many of these students will move on to a college prep program in high

school where so many requirements are needed that the "fun" classes become a memory from the past.

Electives in high school are even more vital for a well rounded education. Not all of our Farmington families are in a position to send their children on to college, not all of our students have grade point averages to be accepted into a college.

The electives are a necessity for many of them to learn skills needed to hold productive jobs once they graduate from high school.

For some this is the only opportunity they will have to learn how to swing a hammer, create a healthy dinner, to balance a checkbook — skills needed to survive in the real world.

We must pay attention to these students with the same enthusiasm as our college bound children. The success of Farmington schools lies in all of our graduates.

If we take away basic skills, transportation and after school activities, we are doing a great disservice to a

great number of kids who will soon be adults making vital decisions for our country.

THE FAMILY UNIT is far different from years gone by. The hardships of single parenting, latch-key children and peer pressure are immense. Our kids deserve the best we can offer them, more opportunities to let them be the best they can be.

A millage increase will give all of our students the best, not mediocre as it stands should the millage fail. Our children are our future, what better way to invest our money.

On Feb. 5 we will be asked to take a stand and vote on our school millage. Whatever your vote may be, please be sure your vote is for the betterment of your children, not for yourself.

Debbie Cornwell, mother of three children in Farmington Schools, has lived in the community since 1969.

from our readers

Her words paraphrased inaccurately

To the editor:

In your Jan. 14 article on the new gifted program, I was paraphrased so inaccurately that I can barely relate your interpretation to what I said. Your quotes were, by the way, accurate.

I was paraphrased as saying that "gifted students may be unintentionally pushed aside by teachers who don't know how to deal with them." First of all, "pushed aside" has a negative and aggressive connotation that is completely foreign to me as a description of teacher activity, intentional or not.

There are times when gifted students' needs are ignored or unmet, but I have never thought of them as being "pushed aside."

A comment I had made at the board meeting, which may have been misconstrued, was that with clustering the number of gifted stu-

dents in an elementary classroom may vary dramatically, and a class with two or three gifted kids will be much different than one where half are gifted.

This is not a question of teacher ability or intention. It's basically a question of numbers and how finite resources get allocated.

Also, because clustering hadn't yet been defined, no decision has been made as to whether the cluster classrooms will have gifted and "high ability" (however that is defined) students, or if they will have gifted along with the full range of ability.

Class composition is bound to affect how differentiated the curriculum will be, and how much attention will actually be focused on the needs of gifted students.

Cynthia Zwick, president, Parents Advocating Gifted Education

Let schools cut spending

To the editor:  
Let's face up to reality. Regard-

less of what the Farmington School Board "wish list" is, we all have to face facts.

We as individuals have to curtail spending in order to balance our personal budgets. Why should it be so hard for the school board?

Granted, it is never easy to stop spending, but in reality the supply of money is not endless.

When my children ask me for every toy in the aisles of Toys 'R' Us, I don't tell them, "Well, next month I'll go out and make more money so that I can buy it for you." No, I tell them we can't afford it because that is the reality.

Why is it always that a governing body attempts to fix things by increasing tax revenues instead of looking for spending cuts?

It is not as if our school system has no money. It has been documented that our district already spends at the top level per student in the state and possibly the nation.

How do less fortunate school districts, that have not had the surging revenue that our district has seen in the last few years, make ends meet? They are fiscally responsible, that's how. We must be the same.

Let's stop scaring people with

what might be cut if a millage increase does not pass and start looking hard at what will be cut regardless of the outcome.

We don't need to fix this problem by throwing more money at it, we need to permanently fix it by cutting our spending and living within our means.

Thomas E. Maas, Farmington Hills

Pressure Kroger to reopen

To the editor:

Thank you for the Jan. 10 article on the front page of the Farmington Observer regarding Farmington councilwoman Jo Ann McShane

blasting Kroger for "lack of corporate morality" in closing area Kroger stores.

Every person who has been affected by the closing of these stores should take five minutes to write a letter to Kroger, as well as to their city manager, to express anger.

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 ed-

itor 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.

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