

points of view

Unjust rule strikes out on rights

BASEBALL IS AMERICA'S game. And the belief that a person is innocent until proven otherwise is an American's right.

But the South Farmington Baseball Club, a Farmington area little league, is undermining both those tenets by overreacting to an understandably upsetting incident.

James William Stoller, a South-field resident, is awaiting trial on charges of sexually molesting boys between the ages of 10 and 13 whom he coached in the Garden City Youth Athletic Association. Stoller, a teacher and coach in DeWitt, was previously convicted for gross indecency involving young boys which was apparently not discovered until the Garden City incident. He, unlike the majority of sandlot coaches, happens not to be a parent.

South Farmington Baseball Club officials are worried that such an incident could occur in their league as well. But in their haste to reduce that possibility, they struck out — by passing a blanket rule prohibiting anyone who doesn't have a child in

the program from coaching or managing a team beginning next season.

STRIKE ONE: Many other sports beat the bushes trying to get non-parents who love the particular game and who are unfettered by having to react to their own child to serve as coaches.

Strike two: Whether or not you have a child isn't pertinent to whether or not you would molest or abuse a child.

Strike three: The move casts unfair aspersions on all non-parent coaches in the league.

If this off-base play is allowed to stand, there could be further reverberations. Schools could be asked to terminate all teachers and extracurricular advisers who aren't parents; camps could eliminate all counselors who aren't parents; and how about the military eliminating all training officers who aren't parents.

IN WESTLAND recently, a pastor pleaded guilty, along with his wife, to abusing their two eldest children.



Judith Doner Berne

But they are parents, so under the South Farmington league's criteria, they still might make it as coaches or managers.

South Farmington baseball officials are very clearly out in left field. It is they, not the non-parent coaches, who need to be pulled out of the line up and replaced with solid, non-hysterical leaders.

Stop flogging your bats at the non-parent coaches who give of their time and expertise. And start carefully reviewing your procedures in signing up coaches — parents and non-parents — to make them as fail-safe as possible.

Although local police can't check out individuals on a routine basis, the Michigan State Police can. Back-

ground checks can be conducted on prospective paid workers or volunteers at the request of individuals or organizations.

The background checks can be conducted with a response in a week to 10 days.

"IF WE MADE a rule that looks like an injustice to someone, we're sorry but we didn't do it to hurt anyone," said Roxanne Fitzpatrick, commissioner of the South Farmington league. "I'm having a difficult time understanding why they can't see the good in us. They're only seeing the bad."

What we're seeing is an ill-thought out decision made in panic which undercuts what we are trying to teach our children — about fairness and freedom.

Instant replay shows that it needs to be immediately reversed.

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

from our readers

Reader says, ban smoking

To the editor:

How sad.

This morning I went out to my local Hardee's for breakfast. While there I observed four women sitting in the smoking area with two little children who appeared to be under two years old.

I couldn't believe my eyes as I watched all the women light up their cigarettes and blow smoke in the children's faces.

We constantly read about the horrors of child abuse, but what these ignorant women were doing is just another area of abuse.

We are trying to protect the lives of the unborn, but let's also do something more to protect the little children as well as non-smoking adults from having to breathe in cigarette smoke.

I say ban smoking from all public places.

Virgil E. Thill, Farmington Hills

Let's keep supporting Hills parks

To the editor:

On behalf of the Say Yes To Parks committee, please allow me to express our appreciation and thanks to the citizens of Farmington Hills for their support of the Parks and Recreation half mill renewal on May 7.

The funds generated by this tax will allow the city to move forward with its parks and recreation master plan at a cost to the average household of less than one dollar per week.

It gives our community the opportunity to purchase land for family parks and sports fields, develop nature and hiking trails, expand the programs available for our seniors, begin a system of bike paths linking our city facilities and much more.

I urge all citizens to continue their participation and support beyond the ballot box. Stay involved in the process. We need your time and talents.

Join the discussions at city council meetings. Volunteer for planning committees. Offer your advice and constructive criticism. Working together, there is nothing we can't accomplish.

We have the means at hand to make Farmington Hills a premier city in which to live. Let's do it.

Michael Horner, chairman

Say Yes To Parks

Reporter has 'the touch'

To the editor:

Your May 6, "Street Scene" by Larry O'Connor was very well done. He has what the Irish refer to as "the touch."

In the article O'Connor stated that after Ireland's 1916 Easter Rebellion to end British rule several of the leaders were imprisoned and then executed, including a wounded James Connolly who, unable to stand, was propped up in a wheelchair and shot by the British.

All the men thus executed were, however, in the true sense prisoners of war. Eamon DeValera, who later became president of Ireland, escaped the same execution 75 years ago because he had been born in the United States.

Patrick Costello, Birmingham

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.

Letters should be mailed to: the editor, The Farmington Observer, 21698 Farmington Road, Farmington 48336.

Crowded classes hinder good learning

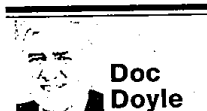
QUESTION: My daughter was so excited about being accepted to the University of Michigan last fall. Now she is not so sure. Some of her freshman classes had more than 450 students. Can 450 students in a class be a good learning experience?

ANSWER: This is not an educational experience. Some might say it is a play to earn big money fast.

The worst case scenario I heard of at the University of Michigan was a freshman psychology class of 650 students.

Students were told (I am told) that the 650-student class would be reduced in size. It never was. Some students walked out in disgust and enrolled in other schools the next semester.

THIS SEEMS to me almost a



Doc Doyle

white collar holdup by a university that knows it can get as many freshmen as it wants, so take it or leave it. And be advised this is not just the U-M. It is a common practice at MSU and other very large major universities.

A teaching station with 450 to 650 students is not a quality educational experience, especially for those who are more visual than auditory learners.

Indeed, many students skip the sessions, and have their buddies take

notes or tape the sessions, especially in classes where no attendance records are kept, which is most common. If attendance is taken, students often sign in their friends.

IT MIGHT be better to videotape the lectures and hand students copies when they pay their tuition rather than go to class. At least then the students could review and re-review what was said in the quiet of their rooms.

Furthermore, many of these "cat-in-the-hat" learning experiences are taught by graduate assistants, those with little or no previous teaching experience, some who just graduated themselves.

The more experienced and tenured professors generally teach the juniors and seniors or graduate students.

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durable Workbench quality, they sit down, put their feet up and enthusiastically nod off.

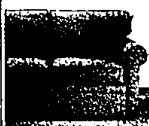
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