

Farmington Observer

OPINION

21898 FARMINGTON RD., FARMINGTON, MI 48336

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Crossed paths

Groups must work together

The two school groups are on separate tracks, but their paths crossed briefly one recent Wednesday evening. We hope members of these two organizations can somehow learn to cooperate and work together. If they do, they could bring about positive change in education here, we think.

The two groups are: Citizens Against Violence in the Schools and the Parents Advisory Forum of Farmington High. What makes them different? Again, it's a matter of tracks.

Citizens Against Violence is definitely on a track that is outside the school establishment. It was formed by parent Joanne LaFleur and others in the wake of several fighting incidents. LaFleur's son was seriously injured in one incident last December at Farmington High School.

Citizens Against Violence was the group that brought in a speaker from SOSAD (Save Our Sons and Daughters) last month to talk on violence — much to the chagrin of some school officials and other insiders.

The Parents Advisory Forum, led by parent Laura Myers, has a more inside track as a supporter of the Farmington Public Schools.

Members of both groups did get together for a meeting March 10 at Farmington High. An article on the confab was the lead story in the March 16 Farmington Observer. "Parents share school concerns," said the headline.

Having covered the meeting and watched the participants, we think that some of the people listened hard, but failed to hear a word the other side was saying.

■ People in both groups have the best of intentions — and some good ideas to boot. They need to look past each other's agendas and realize the impact they could have on the system, if they worked together.

And that's too bad. People in both groups have the best of intentions — and some good ideas to boot. They need to look past each other's agendas and realize the impact they could have on the system, if they worked together.

It could be a winning equation: Citizens Against Violence plus the Parents Advisory Forum, with school officials somehow factored in.

At the March 10 meeting, Citizens Against Violence made a presentation, outlining its program to combat violence in the schools. For example, there needs to be a comprehensive policy for dealing with medical emergencies in schools, a Citizens Against Violence spokesman said.

"We want every student to have a rewarding educational experience," said Terry Fobbs of the group. "The school should be a second home to them."

Certainly members of both groups could agree with a statement like that. We hope they do. And we hope there'll be more interaction in the future.

Bills infringe on our liberties

While the Michigan Legislature isn't planning on handing over absolute power to police and prosecutors, a bill currently in trouble in the House would greatly expand police powers and make it easier to presume guilt than innocence.

Legislators are working on a broad-based anti-crime package. Constituents with an interest in preserving civil liberties still have a chance to make a change by contacting their legislators, asking them for fair and equal justice under the law and asking them to reject giving police and prosecutors an unfair advantage.

Giving prosecutors a trump card, even though it appears to be a politically expedient solution to the polls that show people fear crime, doesn't solve the problem of crime. It only edges us toward a police state. Even some police officials, like Wayne County Sheriff Robert Ficano, oppose the measure.

Some of the initial components include: the resurrection of the previously voted-down "no knock" rule, allowing police to enter homes of suspects without first identifying themselves; give state and local police wiretapping authority in major drug investigations; give prosecutors the power to force witnesses to testify in certain cases; make it more difficult to get evidence obtained in illegal searches barred from court; and shift the burden in an insanity case from the prosecution to the defense.

Many people will think these moves appropriate at first glance, without looking at constitutional history. The reason police and prosecutors have to secure permission from the courts

before conducting searches or wiretaps is to protect people who aren't guilty.

Making people testify is not only a violation of First Amendment protections against compelled speech but also infringes on Fifth Amendment guarantees against self-incrimination. The police and prosecutors should have to build their own cases, rather than having defendants supply them. The American system of justice strongly affirms that people cannot incriminate themselves, and even need not speak out in their own defense because it is up to the jurors and the police to prove that a person is guilty.

Crime and criminals should be punished. The danger lies in giving freer rein that could result in greatly higher prosecution rates but increasing the chance of an innocent person being imprisoned. The one part of Blackstone's law that the United States adopted is that it is better to let a dozen guilty people go free rather than to deprive one innocent person of liberty by improperly convicting that person.

It's called justice. Innocent people go free, everyone has the right to a fair hearing and everyone is presumed innocent until the prosecutor can mount a case that the judge and jury agree finds the defendant guilty of committing a crime.

But the way to do that is to make police operate within the current guidelines and have a sufficient-sized judiciary to handle the cases before them. The end result of quashing crime doesn't justify the means of putting the Bill of Rights down the toilet.

ARKIE HUDKINS

HUDKINS



LETTERS

Remember us?

I enjoyed your March 11 editorial about the professional theaters in the area. They certainly provide pleasure for many.

I wish you had been able somehow to squeeze in a word about our own local amateur theater — the Farmington Players. They have provided quality entertainment for more than 30 years to thousands in the area.

The Farmington Players must be considered one of the jewels of our community. Kenneth F. Porrin, Farmington Hills

York's running

I gladly announce my candidacy for Farmington Public School Board trustee.

Through my years of service, both at the building and district level, I have come to appreciate and value the vision and the programs of Superintendent Mike Flanagan and his staff.

I have developed a productive working relationship with Farmington Public Schools based on positive support and constructive criticism. Our community and its schools have and will continue to face many challenges. I can serve the community well by facing those challenges as school board trustee.

My educational and professional skills, combined with my established constructive working relationship with Farmington Public Schools, enables me to effectively serve the community. I ask for your support and vote for school board trustee.

David L. York, Farmington Hills

'No offense'

An open letter to all members of the Farmington School District:

On the evening of March 10, Joanne LaFleur and I had the privilege of addressing the Farmington High School Parent Advisory Council. We shared with them our desire to help the Farmington School District become a "Violence-Free Zone."

I want to take this opportunity to publicly thank Laura Myers and the other concerned parents who attended. However, since I had announced my intention to run for the school board, I did not want to attend the meeting to announce that I was using the meeting as a platform to launch my candidacy or for political grandstanding.

I attended the meeting as a concerned parent and as a member of Citizens Against Violence in the schools. When I had departed the meeting early, I felt I would be infringing upon other Parents Advisory Council business had I stayed or participated in a part of the meeting where I had not been extended an invitation.

As a result of that well-intentioned faux pas, I discovered that I had inadvertently offended a number of people. Laura and all members of the

Farmington High School Parent Advisory Council, I am sorry. The offense was not intended.

We know the health and safety of our children is but one important concern. As I have visited throughout our twin cities, I have spoken with other members of the district who share our joint concerns about our children receiving a world-class education so that they can compete and win in our global economy and lead us into the 21st Century; fiscal matters; programs; and last but not least, open communication with our teachers, support staff, administrators, parents, students and our community at large working together for our most priceless resource, our children.

Throughout this campaign and beyond, as I address the concerns of all of us and visit you in our neighborhoods, at our schools, in our homes, in our Parent Advisory Council meetings, and at our Neighborhood Forums, I want you to know I am a leader, neighbor and friend who cares through listening, sharing, doing, learning from mistakes, and working together.

Again, I want to thank Laura Myers and all of you; because of our dedication, teamwork and concern, we'll ensure the Farmington School District remains one of the best in Michigan.

Thanks for your time and I look forward to working with you.

Terry Fobbs, Farmington Hills

Get a sundial

After sitting through the meeting of the mumbblings of the planning commissioners, I think maybe I have a different suggestion to stop that clock tower from spoiling the grounds of the Masonic Temple.

Make a park-like setting where the flower beds are now. Put a sundial on a pedestal on flat ground with benches around it for seating.

The flower beds around the grouping could be either raised or on ground level.

Children could learn a lesson about one of our early methods of telling time. Sundials work by solar energy, not by using batteries or electricity.

With beautiful landscaping around the perimeter, we really would have a focal point that is worth looking at.

Having the sundial and seating on ground level would make it easier for people with a handicap to enjoy the setting and would be a generally more attractive and practical addition to downtown Farmington than an obtrusive tower.

Barbara Butler, Farmington

Opinions are to be shared: We welcome your ideas, as do your neighbors. That's why we offer this space on a weekly basis for opinions in your own words. We will help by editing for clarity. To assure authenticity, we ask that you sign your letter and provide a contact telephone number.

Letters should be mailed to: Editor, The Farmington Observer, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48336.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

Spring's coming. What do your thoughts turn to?

We asked this question at the Farm Hills Doughnut Shop.



'Going up north to our cabin on Lake Huron. We're counting the days.' Shirley Duizo Farmington Hills



'As my wife said, going to our cabin and getting away from this humdrum life.' Art Duizo Farmington Hills



'Spring break from Livonia Stevenson High.' Dan Petrovski Livonia



'Doughnuts... Farm Hills doughnuts.' Nell Nichols Green Oak Township

The Farmington Observer

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