

## Neglected season?

### Winters should be celebrated

**W**e've said it before, but we guess it bears repeating every February: Winter isn't always well-managed around here. It isn't only the nitty-gritty stuff like attention to snowy highways and sidewalks and cars that won't start.

It's snowing outside. That's right... as these words are being clickity-clicked into a Digital LK201 computer terminal, the white stuff is coming down like... well, like flour from the business end of some cosmic sifter.

Yes, snow fell and the mercury plunged into single digits Monday night and, lo and behold, the next morning there wasn't a single story on the front pages of the big-town newspapers about how the weather clobbered poor old southeastern Michigan — again.

Oh, well... we guess the editors have more compelling fare to dish up now that basketball legend Michael Jordan has decided to try his hand at baseball.

We just know that the boob tube weather wimps will be all warnings at 6 and 11. The only thing more predictable than winter in Michigan is the media's reaction to it.

Even if not one flake fell this winter, there'd still be a massive snow job blowing in from our daily newspaper front pages and television screens every time a storm threatened from the west.

So encouraged, a lot of people will be content to take part in the three great wintertime pursuits — eating, sleeping and... watching TV.

But, come on now, this is winter and we are in Michigan. It's supposed to be cold, and it's supposed to be snowy. In this part of Michigan, there will be, on average, 10-16 times every year when the old mercury sinks below zero, and we can expect about 36 inches of snow, according to the planning director of an Oakland County

community.

So winter will be with us, even though the past few have been easy. You've got to go back to the late '70s — when the "experts" were telling us that a new Ice Age was dawning — for the last really big blow.

Now it's fashionable to talk about the Greenhouse Effect and the general warming of the Earth's climate.

And, as we said, winter just isn't celebrated in most of our communities.

If there's anything going on in, say, Farmington or Farmington Hills to make the dark, cold days and nights of winter a bit easier to take, we've not heard about it.

But there are places in the northern latitudes where they do more with winter than just curse it, or dump thousands of tons of road salt on it, or ignore it if a basketball legend is changing sports.

Such places stage huge festivals during which participants lose their wintertime woes with merrymaking, while the cash registers merrily beep and chirp away. Plymouth, Mich., to the south and west of us, seems to be one such place.

Plymouth has become known for its ice sculptures and winter festival, which have put January near the top in sales, according to merchants there.

There's no reason why, with the proper condition and planning, communities like Farmington and Farmington Hills couldn't have the same thing going for them.

A big winter festival right here... maybe on the Orchard Ridge Campus of Oakland Community College, or along Grand River Avenue in downtown Farmington.

That's something to think about on these long, cold winter nights.

## You gotta have hearts, darts

**W**ith Valentine's Day approaching, we make our third annual hearts and darts awards to warm our spirits and prod the appropriate consciences.

■ Openly wearing his heart on his sleeve is new

Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer who receives our respect — and a heart beating rapidly in anticipation — for reaching out to suburban leaders on such issues as mass transit and restoration of the Eight Mile corridor.

■ A "heart smart" award goes to everyone in multi-cultural organizations in Livonia, Southfield, Farmington and Birmingham for working at bringing people together.

■ One heart marked "red badge of courage" goes to the Birmingham citizen advisory committee charged with developing the city's sewer retention basin project. The members took a lot of heat but did their job professionally and stuck by their decision on an issue faced by communities all along the Rouge and Clinton River basins.

■ Livonia schools earn a heart for finally going "public" and approving cable television coverage of board meetings — something most other governmental organizations did long ago.

■ Westland reaps a heart for volunteers acting as the life blood in the Youth Assistance Program by serving as mentors to help troubled youths get on the right track.



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**QUESTION:**  
What's your favorite subject in school?



'Gym... because it has all the games.'  
Jenna Gime  
second grade



'Math. It's fun. There are fractions. We don't get much homework.'  
Candice Sexton  
fifth grade



'Science. It's interesting. You learn a lot of things. We're studying the human body. We're getting a skeleton.'  
Melissa Bryson  
fifth grade



'Science. We get to do experiments. The school nurse is going to dissect a lamb's heart.'  
Holly Feege  
fifth grade

### COMMUNITY VOICE



### LETTERS

#### Thanks for the story

I want to thank you for your usual fine work in regards to our annual article on Quakerstown DAR's Good Citizen celebration.

The current article Jan. 6 was super. We give a copy of the article to each of our 10 kids and their families. They really appreciate it, as six of the students are not from the Farmington area.

Thank you again.

Rebecca Davis, PR chairwoman,  
Farmington Hills

#### A great show!

Kids... I don't know what's wrong with these kids today...

Those words are from a great song from the recent Farmington High School production of "Bye-Bye Birdie." Well, I can tell you what's wrong with the kids that put on this play — not a thing.

What a joy to watch talented teenagers put so much heart and hard work into a production and get such a professional result. The whole school literally gets involved in this activity.

We are blessed here in Farmington with parents and community that support our school activities and our great kids... and it shows.

Kathy and Bruce Hall, Farmington Hills

#### 'It's here now!'

**W**hat a great idea: "A districtwide, reading program with some punch and bang to it" as described in your Feb. 3 editorial.

How about one that uses a pre-selected list of, say 14 books, of which top prizes go to those who read 12 in a space of six weeks? More than just reading, the kids would have to conference on each book with the media specialist or trained parent volunteers before credit is given.

Conferencing would not only assure the book was read, but well-read, and it could extend the understanding and experience of the book.

Prizes could be awarded along the way — a pencil for four books, a ticket to a special assembly for six books, and a hard-covered book for the top prize.

The assembly could be with a renowned children's author, perhaps the author of one of the selected books.

We may want to involve only the fourth and fifth graders because the response would be overwhelming and the time to conference with all the students is somewhat limited by the other obligations of the job of media specialist.

The public library and bookstores could be involved by notifying them of the selected titles in sufficient time to order books for loan or sale

during the event.

Maybe this program, "If it were run right, could grow and become an important part of the Farmington school year." How about nine years and still growing? It's here and now.

The "school tidbit" on Page 13A of a past issue reverts to just such a program. Please visit one of the Farmington Elementary Schools and note the theme Books, The Other Channel. Any of us would be glad to share the figures from past years and let you visit with the students.

Come, see for yourself the excitement and the energy this program inspires.

Barbara Lanigan, media specialist,  
Beechview Elementary

#### Let's vote on it

**T**hank you for your story on the ice arena proposal for Farmington Hills Jan. 27 giving points of view, both pro and con.

This issue should be referred to a ballot of the residents, particularly since it could be included on the August primary ballot at no extra cost for a special election.

Mayor Larry Lichtman is concerned that a skewed vote could defeat the proposal. How can the vote be skewed if all concerned residents go and vote as they see it?

Perhaps what is skewed right now is reliance on the report compiled by a special interest minority supporting its own views.

The majority of citizens have not been heard, but would be heard by placing the issue on the ballot.

Perhaps council members fear the public (all of us) would turn down the proposal. Joanne Smith said, "If you don't keep in step, eventually you're behind." Behind what?

Residents who take their children to nearby ice arenas probably travel no farther than they do to shop at their favorite malls.

The council should put this on the ballot to learn the views of the people who elected them, rather than be unduly swayed by a vocal minority, however well-intentioned.

Mary K. Hurd, Farmington Hills

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.

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