## **POINTS OF VIEW**

# Are gangs a problem or is the newspaper?

eaders were asked to call The Farmington Observer and let us know if they thought youth guings were becoming a problem in the Farmington area. Here are some of the

"Well, I go to Farmington High. I be lieve that gauge have gotten way out of control Just today there was writing all over our school pertables. I feel it's just a bunch of kids trying to be grownips." grownups

"Gangs very well could be a problem have children who attend the Farm-

ington Public Schools and they know the gangs. They know the Square Boys and the symbols and the gang signs. I think now the gangs are formed for in-timidation purposes only. If a gang member is picked on, he knows that the rest will back him up. But when that changes over into criminal activi-ties, who knows?"

"Yeah, gangs are going to become a problem in the suburbs if you gays continue to highlight it. In the Farm-ington Observer you put on the front page a picture of some gang graffiti on

a wall. If I was in a gang and I saw my graffiti on the front page of the newspaper, I'd think it would increase my popularity and I'd want to do it some more. If you guys would just quithighting these people, they would just go ahead and fade away. This isn't Detroit. They're just a bunch of kids who are acting unruly. If you make it more than that, they're going to live up to it. So let it rest."

"My opinion on gangs? I recently read a book that talked about gangs in

like that. It really was kind of a dawning realization to me. We think of these gangs as being so horrible in today's society, but we have always had them. They've just been a different form. In the '20s we had the rumrunners and those guys were very young, as young as the people involved in gangs today. And they were just as violent and they carried weapons and they were as mean as we say the gangs are today. I think we will never not have gangs. I don't mean that they're a good thing, but I also think that they're a society thing and that they are not going to go away. I think that we have had them

'I don't think there's a prot if these newspapers keep talking with it, there will be a problem. You'll these kids an idea. You'll give these something to do. Thank you."

"I think the gangs in Farminga, terrible. And there are gangs in Far-ington. They're destroying eventhing. The The writing all over everything. The should do something with these

# Art should be more than an add-on in curriculum

uestion: I have been an art teacher for 22 years. I have followed your column for some time but have never seen a column regarding the legitimate role of art in the school curriculum. Although I love my job and am not bitter, this is typical of the attention given to arts in our schools. It is often an afterthought in our culture, as opposed to Japan, France, Germany and other countries where historically art has been required in the curriculum. Do you agree?

Answer I agree, and all the reasons to rationalize the issue away fall short. A National Arts Education. Research Center survey found that instructional time devoted to art at the elementary level declined between 1962 and 1980. And a 1988 study by the National Endowment for the Arts found that only half of all students in grades 7-8 took a visual-arts course. The participation in visual-arts course strops to 21 percent in grades 9-10, and then dwn to 16 percent in grades 11-12.

in grades 9-10, and then down to 10 percent in grades 11-12.

Let's look at the reasons, justifiable or not, as to why, our art programs do not receive the national attention in this country that they do international-

iy.

The notorious 1980 "A Nation at Risk" school reform study did little to help any aesthetic movement in this country for those who cherish and believe in the lifelong value of a comprehensive arts program. The "Nation at

Risk" report's major focus and concern was basic skills, improving test scores and world-of-work opportunities for youth. Indeed, the "Nation at Risk" re-port vaguels addressed the arts, which are considered to be music, the-which are considered to be music, theiter and dance as well as the visual

which are considered to be music, the acte and dance as well as the visual arts.

The lack of respect for the arts was then reintorced by former President Bush and the nation's governors when they pre-ented their national goals for education in 1900. The major goal was that students should demonstrate competency in mathematics, science, history, ecography, and English; the arts were completely ignored.

These facts still do not negate the responsibility of local educational leaders to encourage, support and promote a comprehensive arts program. But the pressure for generating good MEAP scores, having students who perform well enough on the SAT and ACT to enter college, the strengthening of vocational and industrial education, computer training, and the like, sometimes seems to overshadow the legitimate role of arts in our schools.

Other cultures view art differently. They cherish art and, indeed, infuse art into their everyday curriculum. For instance, in Japan and in other cultures, a child often writes a story using beautiful calligraphy, then illustrates with drawings. Stories are told on

beautiful calligraphy, then illustrates it with drawings. Stories are told on canvas, on dresses, on school walls in many countries. Art in Italy, the Scan-



■ The lack of respect for the arts was then rein-forced by former President Bush and the nation's governors when they presented their national goals for education in 1990.

dinavian area, Greece, the Arab coun-tries, Israel, France and other countries is deeply ingrained in their culture, a living record of their ancestry and his-

ory. We, in America, are such a melting We, in America, are such a metring pot of cultures, we don't seem to have that same educational commitment to art that other cultures have main-tained throughout history. But be assured, I can point out nu-merous school districts in this reader-ship area which have excellent art pro-

grams, programs in visual arts, music, and dance second to none in the country. I am not sure this is true on a national basic

tional basis.

All this notwithstanding, what in-structional area is the first to be cut in a budget crunch? At the elementary structional area is the first to be cut in a budget crunch? At the elementary level it is always art, music and physical education. Why? Because the school district can shut down the "pull out" classes for art, music and physical education during a budget crunch, but must always have a teacher in each classroom to greet, monitor and teach children. That's reality.

On the high side, the arts' national leadership now seems to be becoming more aggressive. Leaders have moved into the political arena. Strong, persistent lobbying for understanding of the benefits of a sound arts program is transpiring, according to John O'Neil, a leader in the field, in his January 1994 article in "Curriculum Update." I have often wondered if educational leaders in the arts have been too passive, scornful of or just feel distasteful in dealing with the politics of single-issue promotions — the arts, in this case. There is little beauty or aesthetic value in wheeling and dealing with politicians; it is a tough arena. But that would be stereotyping artists — or would it?

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women:
Nevertheless, Congress is revisiting
the arts and is now considering legislation that would include student competence in the arts as one of the nation-

al goals. Art educators are saying

al goals. Art educators are saying is about time.

Although not an art authority, is always remember being in Washes. D.C., in the 1970s, and to get out grain I ended up the National Gales. Art. At age 41, the Irishman's faur experience in an art museum T was an exhibit on religious art,

The entire history of what I was taught as a child became alive and for the first time — Moses and Der St. Francis of Assisi, Peter and Ped St. Francis of Assisi, Peter and Pal everything my religious tradia had exposed me to as a child. The beauty of it all was overwhelmig, a other area focused on Washingsa, ferson, the signing of the Declantia Independence, and a visual history early America. Events I had ready came alive in stunning beauty, think, "lan't it a shame I waited and 41 to capture this experience?"

Indeed, I am all for trips to these Indeed, I am all for trips to the ence museum, and the zoo for your school children. But I believe wers the boat when we don't exposs you ones to art museums, and when at treated as an add-on as opposed to integral part of a school's curicular

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