

## No mandate

### Service proposal needs study

There are several reasons for having a "community service" program for Farmington-area high school seniors. We'll list them further down.

Community service simply means helping others on a non-paid basis. In some districts, it's like a course a student has to complete before he or she can graduate.

We urge the Farmington Board of Education to study carefully the proposal for mandatory community service made recently by teachers at North Farmington High School (Observer, March 13).

The matter needs serious thought. There need be no rush to institute obligatory community service. And, we have to ask, what's wrong with North Farmington's present community service plan that's on a voluntary basis? Perhaps that program could be enhanced.

The school's plan would require North seniors, beginning with the Class of '97 (today's sophomores), to complete 30 hours of community service as part of graduation requirements.

The board is expected to vote on the proposal at its March 25 meeting. Before then, however, some fine-tuning of the plan should be done and some ground rules established.

Community service is an idea that came to the Bloomfield Hills Schools in the late 1980s. We think such a requirement might work with certain students in other Oakland County districts like Farmington.

By adopting such a program, a board of education would be sending a message that would say: ■ Young people who live in an area with a high standard of living have an obligation to

help those who may not be as fortunate.

■ High school students do have the ability to make a difference in the lives of others.

■ High school years are a time to establish lifelong patterns and values.

That's a message that academically oriented school districts do well to consider for their students. Still, as we mentioned, there will be problems with mandatory community service.

It might interfere with students who need to hold part-time jobs. And, of course, there are always the kids who are hard-pressed to handle the basics — reading, writing and arithmetic. They'll need to forget the extras like community service and concentrate on the books.

Then, too, we'd hate to see business use free student labor to make money in the name of community service.

We like what we've heard of North's voluntary community service program. It's 60 students strong and growing.

Volunteer efforts have included working for Habitat for Humanity, helping senior citizens at Baptist Manor and teaching physically and mentally handicapped children horseback riding at the Tollgate Center in Novi.

Well, whatever the board of education decides, we hope the service stays in the community. There's no need for students to go running down to the piney woods of Mississippi — or even south of Eight Mile to Detroit — for their do-goodery. Plenty of folks need help right here in the Farmington area.

When it comes to student community service, our opinion is: Encourage it, applaud it, reward it . . . but don't mandate it.

## Time for Oakland Board to act

Marie Antoinette, France's queen until 1789, is said to have looked upon Paris' hungry mobs and sniffed: "Is it bread they want? Let them eat cake!"

If she lived in western Wayne, Oakland or Macomb counties in 1995, Marie Antoinette would say: "Is it transportation they want? Let them ride stretch limos."

That puts into perspective the entire public bus question. One can quibble that the solution is a multi-county system, an extension of Detroit's DOT bus lines, a western Wayne authority, separate community bus systems, or privatization.

Quibbling won't get anyone to the stores, either to shop or work, along Plymouth and Ford roads or at Twelve Oaks Mall and Laurel Park Place. Quibbling won't get anyone to the expected new jobs at Willow Run International Tradeport or the Tech Park in Auburn Hills. Quibbling won't get elderly folks to medical offices.

Many good people in public office disagree over solutions to a problem they all know exists. They aren't the enemy. But they need to unite to fight the enemy.

The enemy is Marie Antoinette's survivors. Some look on the single-passenger automobile as "the best form of public transportation ever devised." Some are obsessed by taxes, taxes, taxes — as if taxes never contributed one iota to public safety and the quality of life.

Some have ideological agendas saying government can do anything good; that anyone who becomes involved with government instantly loses his or her soul and brain. Some just don't want to be bothered.

In the last 30 years, western Wayne and Oakland counties have seen a series of falter-

ing private buses, then a seven-county regional system called SEMTA, and now a three-county system called SMART.

None ever had a local (that is, regional, county or multi-county) base of revenue. SMART is about to go belly-up — by April 10, acting general manager Michael Duggan tells us.

SMART's leaders are having trouble agreeing on what kind of public financing to ask voters for. Uncle Sam and Lansing won't gallop to the rescue.

So the Wayne County Commission has come up with what appears to be the only option left. It voted 10-3 on March 9 to form a suburban Wayne regional authority under Public Act 196. The three-member board would have power to put before voters a 0.33-mill, three-year property tax proposal.

Wayne County commissioners did the right thing. We applaud Kay Beard, D-Westland and Bruce Patterson, R-Canton, for voting yes.

We add one thought to formation of the PA 196 authority board. SEMTA's and SMART's boards have been deficient because they lacked women. Two-thirds of bus passengers are female.

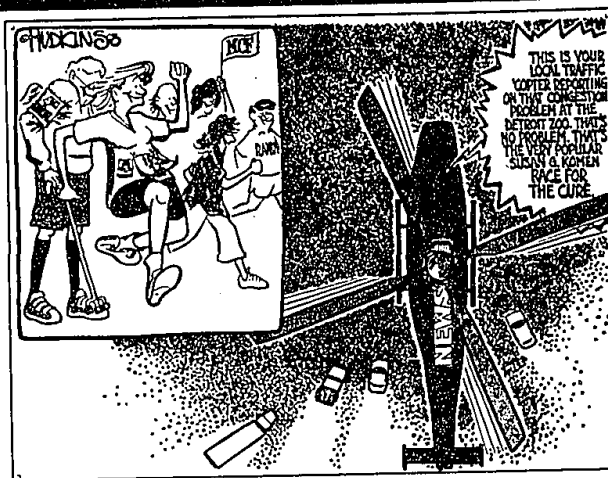
Men, unfortunately, see public transit just in macroeconomic terms: big budgets, big contracts, big economic development numbers.

Women, however, see buses as a way for their kids to get to mall jobs, as a way for an elderly aunt to get to medical treatment, as a way for a destitute single mother to get to a badly needed job.

We urge county Wayne County CEO Ed McNamara and the out-county communities to appoint women to the bus authority board.

But not women who think like Marie Antoinette.

ARKIE HUDKINS



## LETTERS

### No fire at Eagle

To Eagle Elementary School parents: All students were evacuated from the building Monday, March 13, due to the fact that we smelled smoke in the second/third grade hall.

The fire department was called to help locate the source of the problem, and ensure the safety of all students. The problem was detected within approximately 20 minutes.

It was determined that the smoke was caused by a malfunctioning heater motor. There was no fire.

The firefighters inspected the entire building. The children returned to their classrooms after receiving clearance from the fire chief.

Staff and students did an excellent job of evacuating the building quickly and safely. Upon returning to the classrooms, the children resumed their normal daily routine.

Nancy Gorga, acting principal  
Eagle Elementary School

### Why no coverage?

We are disappointed and would like an explanation as to why Farmington High School did not receive any coverage on their presentation of "Fiddler On The Roof."

One of your staff members visited Farmington High to take pictures and interview the director with the understanding that an article about the performance would be featured in your paper.

In reading your paper and seeing that North Farmington High and Harrison High has had press time for their performances, we feel that you have slighted our students and staff.

We would like to inform you and your readers that "Fiddler On The Roof" was a huge success. A fun time was had by all.

Mary Newcomer, Farmington Hills

### A healthy day

On April 1, YMCAs across the country will celebrate the fourth annual National YMCA Healthy Kids Day.

The Farmington Area YMCA will be celebrating by participating with Twelve Oaks

Mall from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Five area hospitals — including the Detroit Medical Center, Sinai, Providence Hospital/Medical Center, the Henry Ford Health System, and Botsford General Hospital — will host the Healthy Kids Day with demonstrations on how to be a healthy kid.

Since the Farmington Area YMCA is so heavily involved with the Farmington and Farmington Hills Schools' latchkey program, these are the kids who will be practicing for the day's events.

As an extension of this program, West Bloomfield and Novi schools have also been invited to participate. For the whole month of March the three school districts' youngsters who are in after-school programming will practice all the elements of being a healthy kid, and then on Saturday, April 1 they will all come to the mall and participate together in Healthy Kids Day.

There will be activities and games designed to educate kids while entertaining them. Although it's Healthy Kids Day, the focus will be on the entire family.

The day will teach families how to live healthier lives and improve the health of their communities. They will learn how to plan more nutritious meals, how to protect the environment, and how to incorporate physical activity into their lives.

Participants will take home a variety of prizes and educational materials from both the YMCA as well as the area hospitals.

Mandi Skeegan,  
Farmington Area YMCA

### Anyone concerned?

The National Association for the Education of Young Children and the Michigan Association for the Education of Young Children were educating Congress about the importance of child care issues.

Mayfair Co-Op Preschool did its part by sending two life-size dolls to Congress to place on their desks and encourage their support for the child care and development block grant coming up.

We would like to encourage people to write letters to Congress expressing concern about childhood funding.

Robin Lenzi,  
publicity chairperson,  
Mayfair Co-Op Preschool,  
Farmington Hills

## COMMUNITY VOICE

### QUESTION:

Are you still interested in the O.J. Simpson trial?

We asked this question at the downtown branch of the Farmington Community Library.



'Answer is: Was I ever (interested)? I do watch every once in a while.'  
Marie Stahl  
Farmington Hills



'I guess I am. I watch every now and then.'  
Oscar Patel  
Farmington Hills



'No . . . get on with it.'  
Linda Lemmon  
Detroit



'I never was interested. It's overplayed.'  
Carl Henricks  
Farmington Hills

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— Philip Power