

Local Earth Day(s)

Worthwhile events coming up

Earth Day's over, isn't it? Well, yes and no. If you're taking the national view, you're too late. We did hear something about the 25th-annual Earth Day being observed across the nation last Sunday. We can't speak for the rest of the country, but here in the Farmington area Earth Day '95 will be celebrated Saturday-Sunday, April 29-30, with some worthwhile doings at Heritage Park on Farmington Road.

Let's see now, according to articles carried in the last several Farmington Observers, free seedlings will be handed out, seminars on environmental issues will be offered, arts and crafts with environmental themes presented, and quail released with special permission of the state DNR.

There'll also be a contest — Trash To Treasure — that encourages people to intercept something headed for the landfill and make a useful item of it.

Going over these upcoming events reminds us of one very important thing about Earth Day in particular and environmental causes in general: They are best observed at the local level.

Try as they might, the tastemakers in Washington and Hollywood and in the corporate boardrooms never could sell Earth Day to America — not in 1970 when the idea was considered to be a communal pipe dream of dangerous radicals, and not in recent years when they rolled away the rock and tried to resurrect the concept.

Earth Day never caught on with Americans as did, for instance, President Bush's short, successful war in Saudi Arabia and Iraq. But, after all, the Gulf War was about maintaining

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a lifestyle. Earth Day is about changing it.

John and Jane Q. Suburbanite might just scratch their heads and say, "Why change?" It's too bad that so many people feel this way because our planet in the closing years of the 20th Century truly needs our attention.

But there is hope and, as is so often the case, that hope springs from the grass-roots level, from places like Heritage Park in Farmington Hills on Saturday and Sunday.

Hope also comes shining through in the spirit of volunteerism offered up by suburbanites in the annual cleanups of the Rouge River and other communities along that long-polluted stream.

It's an important story when people band together to tackle trash and brave toxins in an attempt to clean up what years of neglect and abuse have caused. It needs to happen more often and on a much larger scale, but it's good to see all the same.

And there's additional hope seen in the willingness of residents to accept a recycling program, even though it means inconvenience and sometimes added expense.

Little things like that make us realize that the promise of Earth Day exists in our communities. The ballyhoo (or lack of it) from Washington, Hollywood or the boardrooms isn't going to diminish that.

Schools will survive ranking

Heads are being held high in certain school districts these days. In other districts, though, heads are hanging. And, in still others, they're being scratched in confusion and perplexity.

The state's "fully accredited" roster came down last week, and some names you'd expect to find on Michigan's short list of exceptional schools were missing. Statewide, only four high schools, none from the Detroit area, were named.

Educators across the state — especially those whose schools failed to make the list or worse, were given unaccredited status — were wondering what to do about their district's apparent academic shortcomings.

Well, these educators needn't fall on their swords — figuratively speaking, of course — over this latest thunderclap of criticism from above. They should be used to it by now.

Yet another state list still another federal report. There've been so many over the past decade or so that they've had a numbing effect on educators, teachers, parents and students.

Remember "A Nation At Risk," the 1983 report that predicted dire consequences for the U.S. if the nation's schools weren't immediately improved? Quite a few people must have done quite a bit for our schools since then.

Consider the number of students who've

used what they've learned in our public schools to launch successful college pursuits, careers and lives. Yes, we survived even "A Nation At Risk."

Now, we're not putting down such statewide tests, the resulting lists of accredited schools and critical reports on education. In fact, we applaud them. They serve as wake-up calls to districts that need them. Ratings are one way to let educators know that they are being held accountable.

That said, though, we have to add that there's so much in education that tests and accreditation plans just can't measure.

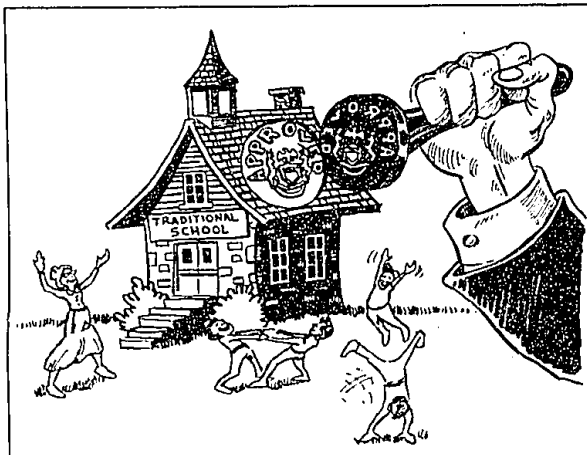
For one, there's the attitude of the parents that's right, the parents. If parents are the type who revere education — and they somehow can transfer that attitude to their offspring — then we have a feeling that the students will be successful.

If, however, too many parents consider the public schools as nothing more than the world's largest (and most expensive) day care center, then heads will be hanging around school headquarters come accreditation time.

Without this crucial factor — good parental attitude — we're afraid the educational equation just won't work out for lots of students.

Hey, maybe there should be assessment tests and accreditation for parents.

MARVIN TEEPLES



LETTERS

'This is serious'

Hank Borgman is getting desperate. He's reaching for straws. Now he says that 59 degrees Fahrenheit was a record high in Antarctica. He cleverly ignores that an average temperature of 32F on the coast during warm months means that it is above freezing roughly half of that time.

OK. Let's assume for a moment that Antarctica won't melt. Let's use Hank's own estimate that the Antarctic ice cap would raise the oceans 200 feet if it did melt. About one-tenth of the glaciers of the world are outside of the Antarctic.

They will melt. The oceans will rise over 22 feet. Tides will amplify this effect. It won't take millions of years. It will be disastrous to wildlife, ecology, harbors, shorelines and millions of people.

This is not just clever little letters in the Observer. This is serious . . . and we must not just stick our heads in the sand . . . like Hank Borgman.

Diek Landback, Farmington Hills

Jokes needed

I am writing to say thanks very much to Phil Power for his opinion as expressed in his commentary in the April 13 issue of the Observer.

I could not agree more that we are spending too much time worrying about everybody else — and all of the minority problems that we have.

I feel that we are no longer a government of the people, by the people and for the people. Instead we are operating our government as a government of a few, by the few and for the few.

And yes, let's get back to where we can have a few ethnic jokes. The whole concept of humor seems to be lost in the current American scene. Humor seems to now be a matter of how disgusting and obscene we are willing to be on public TV or wherever.

Some good ethnic jokes could be delightful. Thanks again. I could not agree more.

Robert F. Bunker, Farmington Hills

York: 'Take part'

On Monday, May 1 from 4-6 p.m., state legislators are coming to the Farmington Training Center to conduct a public hearing on the revision of the School Code. As members of the Farmington Community, we

all have a stake in school reform. I urge you to be heard.

Proposal A increased the state sales tax and converted six mills of your property tax to a state tax to fund public education. The state is considering reducing both the state curriculum and the School Code to reduce their funding commitment of public education.

The state curriculum and the School Code should reflect state responsibilities for a "public education" and students' learning needs. It should not be driven by a dollar sign alone.

The state has the responsibility for the national interest of a uniform minimum level of education of its citizenry. That interest is broadly defined as educating the citizenry on the founding and support of our democratic institutions and on the knowledge and skills required to be productive contributors to society.

The business community has identified the need for problem-solving, interpersonal communication, and applied basic skills of all high school graduates. We know how to test for basic skills.

A uniform state test with a high absolute standard of achievement is required. The testing of higher order skills is not so well known.

Public Act 25, that requires local goal setting, measurement, and reporting with community involvement, is a realistic way for state support of these needs in the absence of a reliable evaluation methodology at the state level.

Finally, as Thomas Jefferson noted, public financing of private interests is tyranny. Public funding must be restricted to public education.

We need a state curriculum and a School Code that achieves these results. Take part and be heard.

David L. York, trustee,
Farmington Board of Education

His solution

I have come up with the perfect solution for our worst career criminals and murderers: Execution. This will solve a few important problems. We save the taxpayers the expense of food, clothing, and the building and maintenance of new jails. They can't commit the crime again. The best part is we could transplant their organs into good citizens who desperately need them, saving many valuable lives.

Leon I. Scholchit, Farmington Hills

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

How do you plan to celebrate Earth Day (April 29-30) at Heritage Park in the Farmington area?

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



"Maybe I'll go plant a tree or something."
Aram Garbooshian
Farmington Hills



"Take out the recycling bin."
Rick Levitt
Farmington Hills



"I just heard about it from you. Oh, I'll plant another tree."
Jason Abeto
Farmington Hills



"Plant a garden with radishes and flowers."
Bettelad Puhver
Farmington

The Farmington Observer

TOM BAKER, COMMUNITY EDITOR, 477-5450
SUEAN ROBERTS, MANAGING EDITOR, OBSERVER NEWSPAPERS, 953-2149
Pete KROSSLER, ADVERTISING MANAGER, OBSERVER NEWSPAPERS, 953-2177
LARRY GOSLER, MANAGER OF CIRCULATION, OBSERVER NEWSPAPERS, 953-2234
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— Philip Power