

POINTS OF VIEW

Middle-of-the-packing it in

Saturday run a victory for more than winners

I make a point of running in at least one of these a year. You've seen me or others like me on a Saturday morning, running along the side of the road, sweating as we slog our way along a road race course.

So, although it was my first Cops for Kids run in Farmington Hills, it was not exactly a new experience. In fact, as my waist and butt have increased along with the time it takes me to complete a 5K or 10K run, it seems harder to motivate myself.

Motivation came easier in years past when the newness, distance or challenge of runs like the Old Kent River Bank Run, The Ludington Lakeshore Half Marathon, the Pictured Rocks Road Race, or (gulp!) the International Marathon de Montreal were the runs I trained for.

Now, like a lot of other participants in this year's Cops for Kids, I was in it for the event and some company for my Saturday workout.

And like many less famous runs, this event is centered around a good cause, raising money for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. The event, in its sixth year, has raised more than \$16,000 for the cause.

Unlike a lot of runs that also promote or raise money for good causes, this one featured one of the beneficiaries of the event. Brett Marquardt, the 7-year-old MDA Michigan Goodwill Ambassador, delighted the runners and organizers.

As it turns out, Brett is more of a baseball fan than a follower of running.

"Pitcher and batter" are the positions he likes best, he told me. But being the center of attention at the run, being carried around by the police chief and handing out awards to runners wasn't bad either.

"It's fun," he said.
That was also the assessment for most of the runners. The 5K and 10K



BILL COUTANT

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courses were hilly, but not grueling. The only complaint seemed to be the slight incline coming up to the finish line. And the canopy of trees in the surrounding subdivisions provided some cool relief on one of the few recent sunny days.

It was in that spirit that I set off alongside veteran firefighter Bob Rebo, who like myself is not a threat to break the land speed record. But give this man credit for turning over a new leaf on a lot of leaves — as in four packs of cigarettes a day — which he used to smoke.

As we pushed off, runners had to choose to turn and follow the 10K (6.2 miles) course or the 5K. This year, it was an easy choice to take the shorter way. And the water I would have grabbed on the fly in past years was taken as I stopped briefly to grab a cup.

"You don't have to stop," said Hills police Officer Chuck Rozum with a grin. I drank, laughed and moved ever slowly on.



Cops for Kids: Darlene Rothman, district director for the Muscular Dystrophy Association, praises runners and organizers of the sixth annual Cops for Kids run at OCC. Farmington Hills police Chief Bill Dwyer, left, holds Brett Marquardt, 7, a Hills resident and MDA Michigan Goodwill Ambassador.

At the finish line, there was encouragement, water and some fresh fruit nearby. And after cooling down, drying off and stretching a little, I was ready for the next challenge — consuming pizza and beer at the awards ceremony.

As happens in small races, and large, sometimes because of the number of people it takes to organize, keep track

of finishers, and make sure everyone is accounted for, there will be mistakes. In this case, a few racers were not pointed in the right direction and missed a turn.

Race director Marty Bledsoe said those who missed the turn took their misfortune in stride, especially considering the cause for which they ran.

And they were right. About 200 of us had a nice morning's run, shared food, drink and our war stories of runs past, had a good run and helped in a worthy cause. That was not so hard after all.

Bill Coutant is a reporter for the Farmington Observer.

Bilingual question: Are kids learning English?

As long as we're debating incendiary subjects like prayer and patriotism in the schools, we might as well add language. Here's the question at its crudest: How come the state of Michigan (i.e., the taxpayers) spends more than \$4 million per year to teach kids in languages other than English?

One answer: We shouldn't. Sooner or later, kids who don't speak English will simply have to learn, and teaching them in their native tongues is nothing more than an expensive fraud.

Worse, it promotes the fragmentation of the United States of America into a bunch of self-segregated ethnic and linguistic communities. As nations ranging from Canada to Rwanda have demonstrated, at some point there has to be a common language and culture to hold a country together.

Another answer: We should. These kids who don't speak English are facts on the ground. Either we're going to help them along a little in entering the mainstream, or we're going to wind up with exactly the kind of fragmented society that the other side is trying to avoid.

The facts, as usual, don't easily fit either side of the rhetoric.

The state spent \$4.2 million in the 1994-95 school year for bilingual instruction. A total of 99 school districts received \$170 per pupil to teach 23,461 students who can't handle English in their native tongues. The two largest bilingual groups are 11,000 kids who are taught in Spanish and another 3,800 in Arabic.

You'd be surprised how many districts participate in the program, including the Farmington and Walled Lake districts covered by this newspaper.

In order to qualify for bilingual teaching, students are identified through a home study and tested in English. If they score below the 40th percentile, they're eligible. But they're re-tested every year and qualify for program support only up to three years.

In addition, each district which has a population of 25 or more eligible students in a particular language is required to hire an instructor or paraprofessional fluent in that language.



PHILIP POWER

This can be expensive. And it can cause trouble.

Last year, for example, an Albanian parent complained that the Farmington school district wasn't hiring certified teachers fluent in Albanian rather than the less-expensive paraprofessionals. For a district that provides bilingual programs in 17 languages for more than 600 eligible students, that complaint seemed a bit extreme.

And there's a legitimate question about whether three years of bilingual instruction are really enough to give a kid a firm basis in English. Three districts — Southfield, West Bloomfield and Walled Lake — have combined to write a grant application to the U.S. Department of Education for extra-long funding.

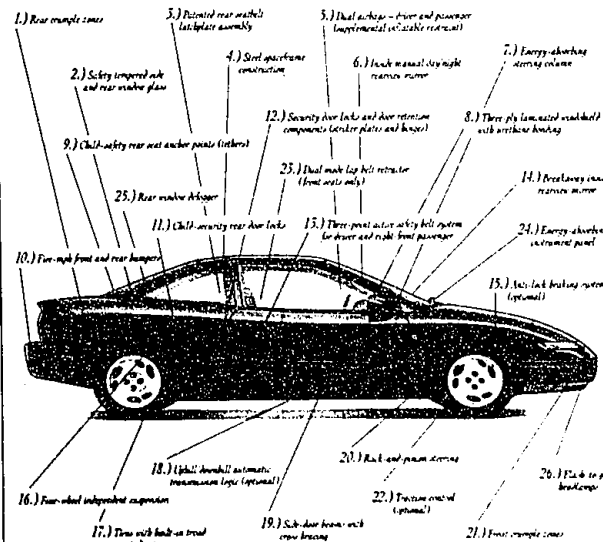
Moreover, bilingual programs are quite different from "dual-language" activities, in which teaching is done partly in English and partly in kids' native languages. Despite passionate advocates, most of the research done on this system suggests it simply doesn't work. Kids who receive instruction in their native languages never really face the fact that English is necessary for success in America.

My own view in this debate: If the purpose of bilingual education programs is to give kids a short-run jump start into learning English, that's fine. But the fact is that English is America's tongue, and any program that doesn't recognize the fact is out of line.

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