

# What's in store?

## Local DDA was right to ask

**W**ell, good for the DDA. They bothered to ask the community this time — and, the way we hear it, the community is responding in a most positive manner.

"They" in this case are the people who run Farmington's Downtown Development Authority. They've been asking, through a Farmington Observer clip-and-mail coupon, what sort of new businesses readers would like to see in downtown Farmington.

Apparently, a lot of people bothered to comment, clip and mail, and that doesn't surprise us one bit. Farmington folks usually enjoy telling you what's on their minds.

We remember the time about a year and a half ago when the Great Masonic Temple Sign Debate was raging in Farmington. The Observer set up a telephone survey on the subject.

We expected a few phone calls about the controversial green sign at Farmington Road and Grand River. What we got was a veritable Niagara of opinion — at least 40 calls in about 30 hours — with most callers trashing the sign.

Maybe officialdom should have asked the community for its thinking before attempting to tinker with that corner. Perhaps a couple of acrimonious debates could have been avoided.

But that was then; this is now. We're pleased that the DDA is (a) concerning itself more with the business climate of downtown Farmington, and (b) asking the community for input on the subject.

**■ The economic salvation of suburban downtowns like Farmington's lies with the small business people, the so-called entrepreneurs.**

As we've said in this space before, enough with the fancy signs, clock towers, 100-pound pumpkins and go-cart races. Let's have some going businesses in these store fronts and strip malls.

The DDA, the city, the Chamber of Commerce and, yes, even the Realtors and landlords must work together to get as much business as possible downtown.

Most people understand that the economic salvation of suburban downtowns like Farmington's lies with the small business people, the so-called entrepreneurs.

Let's make it as easy and pleasant as possible for such people to be in business here. Let's not make them jump through hoops with nagging sign ordinances, unrealistic rents and other restrictions.

No many suburbanites — especially those living in subdivision cities like Farmington Hills and Livonia — seem to be looking for a point of identity and a sense of community that are so often associated with an old-fashioned city center.

Downtown Farmington is that point for tens of thousands in this area. It will continue to be as long as officials take care of business and listen to the people.

## Drug tests' focus: saving lives

**L**ocal school boards no doubt will be pressured to act in the wake of the recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling allowing student athletes to be tested for illegal drugs.

Even though the "Just Say No" era is past, it's still politically popular to target drug abuse.

Drug abuse remains a major problem, especially among young people.

Yet, school officials need to think the issue through clearly. Young lives are at stake here. A drug policy based on punishment, or worse, on inconsistency, can cause more harm than good.

One question demands answering right at the start: Why should society limit it to athletes?

Certainly, there is a legitimate cause to test student athletes for steroids. Steroid abuse not only poses a serious health risk to the users, but also poses a serious injury risk to non-users as they compete against these artificially bigger, stronger and swifter foes.

Steroid abuse, though, isn't really the issue here.

This is really an attempt to change student behavior by holding out athletic participation as a reward for those who forswear illegal substances.

Again, it bears asking: Why athletes? The high court holds them out to be role models, but are they any more so than Academic All Stars?

Why should students face a drug test to bounce a basketball but not to take a tuba? Why should the football team be subject to drug testing if the chess team isn't?

More to the point, what do we do with

those athletes who fail their drug tests?

Professional sports have provided a dubious example at best. The New York Yankees' signing of admitted drug abuser Darryl Strawberry is just the latest example of professional teams being more than happy to give second, third, fourth and fifth chances (or more) to talented, but troubled, athletes. The same shifting standards should not apply to student athletes.

Even the loosely enforced professional rules require athletes to enroll in treatment programs as a condition of their return.

It's even more important that school guidelines offer ways for students to get professional help.

Schools have an obligation to help troubled students. Kicking a drug abusing student off the track team does nothing to help. Directing that student into treatment does.

That brings another question: Who pays for treatment?

If the student's parents are covered by health insurance, and if that health insurance policy covers drug treatment, it's not an issue. But, remember, we live in a country where millions of adults are uninsured, let alone children.

What will be done to encourage the uninsured into treatment?

These are all tough questions, but they must be answered before school districts adopt a drug testing policy.

It's easy to adopt rules, tougher to enforce them.

It's easy to say you've done something to combat drug abuse, tougher to actually do something, tougher still to save young lives. But that is really what's at issue.

ARKIE HUDKINS



## LETTERS

### To a good teacher

**O**n any given day, we can find an article or an editorial in our local newspapers discussing the problems of public education. On the other hand, we rarely see or hear of the successes in our local classrooms.

I was very pleased to write the following note to my son's seventh-grade English and math teacher, Mr. Koponen, at O.E. Dunkel Middle School.

This teacher exemplifies "excellence in education" and as parents we have been very fortunate to have had our son in his class.

"Dear Mr. Koponen,  
Thank you so much for the wonderful educational experiences which you have provided for our son, Erik, this past year.

Your dedication and hard work have motivated the students to go beyond the basics and apply the skills they have learned to meaningful real-life situations.

The endless hours that you spend planning projects, working with students after school, and attending school functions are greatly appreciated.

Have a safe and enjoyable summer."

Walt and Jeanette Bohland,  
Farmington Hills

### Go, Mr. Editor

**T**hank you for your June 29 editorial and letters. Now we citizens of Farmington Hills can see for ourselves, beyond any doubt, the reality of politics, Observer-style: either support this paper in all of its periphery, or "Bull out, Joe!"

Some simple analysis reveals your inconsistencies and contradictions. In fact, your own words, be they couched by readers Guthrie or McKenzie, or the editorial itself, condemn you for the political tricksters that you are.

Examples: Guthrie says Sowerby gave thousands to Knollenberg, but Grant and Vagnozzi gave nominal amounts — if any. McKenzie adds, "Rumor has it" Knollenberg in a "local" race the "climate" of local government "character" of Sowerby.

The editorial says, "Knollenberg's endorsement of Sowerby is a political slapping of Vagnozzi." But nowhere do you admonish Vagnozzi for refusing to resign from Council while running for mayor. Is not such reticence on your part pure political chicanery of even worse degree?

Furthermore, where do you get the effrontery of chastising Knollenberg for "butting in" in Hills politics? Is he not our own representative in Congress with hands-on communication in our district?

I see no political dereliction on his part in supporting Sowerby. In fact, your contention that politics in the Hills is supposedly non-partisan is an asinine assumption. It never was despite ballot designation to the contrary.

You chortle about Vagnozzi's "distinguished" stance on the Timbercrest fiasco. May I remind you that he was part of the "gang of seven" who raised our taxes again recently.

Joyce Sterling's letter, following Grant's rambling mea culpa, falls into your pattern of only publishing letters sympathetic to your philosophical bent. Both writers directly quote "dirty politics" in condemning anyone who differs with them. A remarkable coincidence.

You have committed a great disservice to this community by impugning Mr. Sowerby's integrity as well as engendering bitter animosity between neighbors of differing political hue.

What a far cry from Mr. Power's contention that his mission is to serve "as caring citizens of the communities where we work."

Consequently, Mr. Editor, I say to you, in paraphrasing Mr. Welsh when he admonished the then notorious Sen. Joe McCarthy, "Go, in God's name, go. You have outlived your usefulness here."

Albert Rosen, Farmington Hills

### Great open house

**T**he Farmington Hills Police and Fire Departments should be very proud of the exceptionally fine open house that was held here this month.

The officers and firefighters were very friendly and forthcoming with much useful, informative, and interesting data pertaining to their particular fields.

It's almost unbelievable that these people have so much knowledge and information available to them through their own personal experiences and sophisticated equipment.

There is a knack to every vocation and it seems the officials here know their trade, thoroughly. I learned something about police canine training, fire truck procedure, and firearms. There wasn't really enough time to cover everything, and I wish it were held at least four times per year.

The visiting public seemed to enjoy the display greatly, as I did. When one sees this kind of show involving the public, it makes you kind of glad that you live in Farmington and Farmington Hills. This is a good example of community relations with the citizens living in our area.

Police Chief Dryer, take a much deserved big bow.

Leon I. Schochit, Farmington Hills

## COMMUNITY VOICE

### QUESTION:

What do you like most about Kids Day in the Park?



"I like to bark at the other dogs." Buster owned by Jessica Knaples, 23, Farmington



"I like being outside. Who invited all these dogs anyway?" Buzz owned by Amy Domestick, Farmington Hills



"I like to show off my hat." Comet owned by Lauren McCreary, Farmington Hills



"We like being outside with other birds. We're always cooped up in Stephanie's room." Carolyn and Angelina owned by Stephanie LeBansons

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— Philip Power