

Hands up!

Abuse drive is fine, but...

OK, one more time: All you folks who think you're exemplary parents please raise your hands. Ah, we can just see hands going up all over the Farmington area.

Plenty of hands were lifted in response to a similar question posed Monday at the Farmington Families In Action kickoff breakfast for Substance Abuse Awareness Month at Glen Oaks Country Club — but only after inspirational speaker Michael (Karp) Karpovich had begged and bullied parents into it.

Karpovich was simply asking the roomful of parents/public officials to believe in themselves and believe in what they do every year about this time. And, yes, there's a lot to believe in.

October, you see, has become a red-ribbon month in the Farmington area. About the only way not to notice the anti-substance abuse whoop-de-doo is to sleep through October.

Strips of scarlet seem to be everywhere. Big red ribbons are draped over the signs in front of the city halls. Smaller ones are all over the schools, public and private, as well as attached to the students and teachers. You'll see red fluttering from auto antennas, door handles, mail boxes, just about everywhere.

And everyone who's anyone — especially public officials — has a ribbon pinned to his/her clothing. With an election coming up, no self-respecting politician would be caught without one.

The red ribbons are symbolic of community togetherness in the face of a huge problem — substance abuse — in the Farmington area and elsewhere. We can't speak for elsewhere, but around here this annual anti-drug crusade is a very big deal. For the past 11 years, a group known as Farmington Families In Action has seen to that.

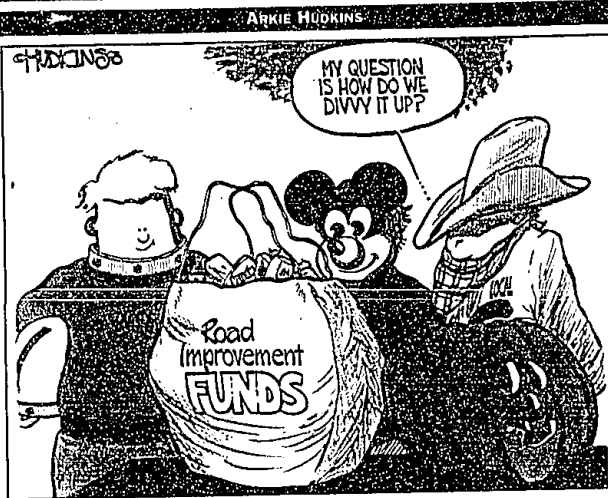
Dedicated FFIA members spend countless

unpaid hours planning the events — workshops, speakers (like Karp), rallies, videos, kickoff breakfasts, windup banquets, etc. — and raising the money to pay for them.

FFIA's message comes through long and strong: "We know there's a substance abuse problem in our community. There has been for a couple of decades now. But, through the education of our young people in programs like these, we're hoping we can do something about it."

That said, however, we must bring up a few concerns about the local substance abuse month. We've stated them before but, since this is Red Ribbon Month, we'll reiterate:

- Are the youngsters and parents who really need to hear the anti-substance abuse message getting involved in the program, or are the do-gooders just preaching to the choir? In his address to the parents Monday, Karp said: "The people who need to be here aren't. They never are. You look around the room and these are the people who are always at these things."
- Why do substance abuse programs always seem to be aimed at children? Maybe what we need is a special program for adults only. Sure, the youngsters have to be educated about the evils of drink and dope, and they're never too young to start learning. But let's be honest about it: Adults use drugs, too, and boy can some of them put away the booze. Maybe they should tie one of those red ribbons on the neck of every bottle of John Barleycorn and every brewski that passes over the liquor store counter into adult hands.
- Well, despite what is seen by some as a carping mentality, we think this abuse drive is a darn good deal. The people behind it deserve to be honored. So follow Karp's advice and raise your hands, exemplary parents.



LETTERS

Thanks, Steven

We would like to express our sincere thanks to Steven Bender, our Farmington Observer carrier.

Our 10-year-old cat, who has never left home before, decided it was time for the adventure of his nine lives. Needless to say, the family was frantic with worry. We made and distributed fliers, called all of our neighbors, put up posters throughout the neighborhood, contacted the Farmington police (who were very considerate and understanding), and contacted surrounding animal shelters.

We also talked to Steve, figuring that he might spy YoYo on his weekly rounds. It was the best thing we ever did.

Two weeks later, as we pulled up the driveway from work, Steve rode up on his bike and said he had spotted our cat hiding under the portable classroom at Flanders Elementary School.

He had left his two neighbors, Edmon and Mona Moren, to keep an eye out for YoYo to make sure he didn't leave.

We rushed over to the school with the cat's favorite treats, and YoYo has been living like a king ever since.

Our grateful thanks to Steven, who went out of his way to ensure that our cat found his way home. We can never repay him for his generosity. Thanks, Steve.

Bert, Mary, Bert and Kristy David,
Farmington

Sense not common

It all started innocently enough with the Surgeon General's warning on the side of a package of cigarettes 30 years ago. Year by year, anti-smoking groups chipped away at the popularity of smoking, by publishing the human carnage associated with this terrible habit.

Today it is considered declass to smoke, so much so that it is banned in most public places. The preceding illustrates the concept of "incrementalism," a series of slight or imperceptible augmentations toward a specific goal.

Another less fortuitous example is the decay of the American educational school system. Year by year more teachers joined unions, their salaries grew more competitive and eventually surpassed the private sector,

and an arrogant self-perpetuating bureaucracy evolved.

Fifty years ago the concept of a consolidated school district made common sense. Farmers in rural communities bused their children to a central location so that economies of scale could be realized.

Today the Walled Lake consolidated school district receives students from seven different suburban communities. Every September more students arrive to an already overcrowded situation. Students are then sent packing and are bused to schools outside of the district.

Fifty years ago our forefathers, faced with the same problems we are today, would have the common sense to redistrict the schools. They understood the importance of local control over neighborhood schools.

They realized the fundamental right of all taxpayers to send their children to neighborhood schools located in the city in which they live and pay their property taxes.

Today the self-serving bureaucracy of Walled Lake consolidated schools illustrates that common sense is indeed not all that common.

H. Hoffenbium, Farmington Hills

Warming update

Global warming has been in the news recently. The August Environmental Defense Fund newsletter reported that "a section of Antarctic ice shelf is disintegrating due to regional warming." ABC and CBC national news also reported that global temperatures have risen about 1 degree Fahrenheit in the last century and are predicted to increase another 1 to 6 degrees Fahrenheit in the next 100 years.

Temperatures are rising; the Antarctic ice shelf is melting and ocean levels will rise catastrophically if we don't take steps to control carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions. The 1992 Rio Earth Summit adopted a non-binding agreement for industrialized nations to reduce emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000.

This year, in Berlin, delegates to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change signed an accord to negotiate a binding agreement by 1997. We must continue efforts to protect the planet for future generations.

Dick Landback, Farmington Hills

Pro ball in suburbia? No joke

Broadcaster Ernie Harwell had a little joke when he narrated Detroit Tigers baseball games in the 1970s, '80s and early '90s.

"That pop foul was caught by a fan from Allen Park. That home run was nabbed by a fan from Kalamazoo. That slice into the right-field stands was picked up by a fan from Okemos."

Of course, Harwell had no way of knowing where the fans came from, but it was the Tigers' way of acknowledging that people from over two-thirds of Michigan came to games.

Joke time may be over. A new competitor is emerging for baseball fans' attention, and it is eyeing the metro Detroit suburbs.

We refer to minor league baseball. Already the West Michigan Whitecaps are attracting folks to their new ballpark in Grand Rapids. Lansing is putting up a stadium for a team with the unlikely name of Lugnuts. Battle Creek's team, the Battle Cats, started play this year.

Earlier in 1995, a group of outstate investors approached the city of Novi with an idea for a minor league stadium.

And a couple of weeks ago, the Palace approached Oakland Community College with an unwritten proposal for a minor league stadium on 20 acres of OCC property on the Auburn Hills Campus.

Anyone can see the point. The notion of a minor league baseball team and stadium near I-75, I-96, I-696 or even I-94 is far from crazy. And if the horse racing business goes belly-up, as the owners of Ladbroke DRC in Livonia threaten, a good chunk of land and parking lot may come on the commercial real estate market sufficient to accommodate a minor-league ballpark.

Tiger crowds used to push the two million mark in a season. Lately they've been lucky to

exceed one million. There was one players' strike too many in 1994 that cost loyal fans a World Series. "Fans" comes from the word "fanatic." That's how much baseball watchers love the sport. To deny them a World Series is an act bordering on desecrating the flag. And that's just about what the major leagues did.

During former owner Tom Monaghan's machinations for a new stadium, it became abundantly clear that most suburbs wanted no part of a major league stadium, with 50,000 seats and a parking need for tens of thousands of cars and buses. But a minor-league team? That may be food for thought.

Minor-league stadiums are built for 10,000 or fewer fans. Minor-league stadiums don't demand the \$55 million the Michigan Strategic Fund intends to use for "public infrastructure and land assembly" for a new Tiger Stadium.

A dozen metropolitan Detroit suburbs are large enough in population to qualify as a hometown for a new minor-league club.

If the PBS television series "Baseball," produced by former Ann Arborite Ken Burns, taught us anything, it's that major-league ball wasn't always played in palatial surroundings seating 60,000 people with luxury boxes for the corporate types. Smaller-town baseball can be just as satisfying, easier to get in and out of, cheaper to take the family to see, and easier on the state treasury than major-league ball, at which current Tigers' owner Mike Ilitch confesses he's losing \$10 million to \$15 million a year while producing disappointing quality.

Think about it. Baseball in a small-city setting in the suburbs, the way it used to be played.

A lot of investors are thinking about it. A lot of fans are ready for it. Mike Ilitch's Tigers should be looking over their collective shoulders.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

What's your idea of a good book?



The Love Letter by Catherine Schine. It's a good little love story about an older woman.

Merry Roth
Livonia



"Good Night, Sleep Tight, Sweetie." My kids just love it.

Vicki Rosett
(with Jacquelyn)
Livonia



The "Care" books for children. My kids love them.

Sharon Deeter
(with Sarah)
Farmington Hills



"The Moon Bear" series by Frank Asch. My daughter likes them.

Kleta Valdivinos
Farmington Hills

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— Philip Power