

# Farmington Observer

## OPINION

33411 GRAND RIVER, FARMINGTON, MI 48335

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 12, 1995

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## Sell job

### DDA should seek right mix

**W**hen businesses search for new territory, they don't look at a map: They follow the dollar sign.

Farmington's Downtown Development Authority has taken this into account in a new business recruiting drive. A DDA subcommittee is putting together a slick promotion package, trumpeting the downtown's selling points. Included will be demographic information and color photographs conveying downtown's elegant and historical setting.

Moreover, the authority will offer a financial incentive to businesses that relocate in downtown. The DDA is offering to help subsidize business loans by paying a portion of the interest payment.

The DDA's recruitment effort is spiffy, if not spunky. We laud the effort.

When soliciting new businesses, though, we suggest the DDA listen to its own message. The population between ages of 25-44 group is growing in Farmington.

Call them what you will, Generation Xers,uppies, or puppies, advertisers coo at their mere mention. And they spend money.

We ask that the DDA take them, and their eclectic tastes, into account when seizing on potential businesses.

Already, there is a plethora of antique shops, craft boutiques, discount stores and chiropractic offices. Although serving a need,

these are not the things that immediately lure the younger side of the 25-44 age scale to downtowns.

Northville's downtown is held up as an example, but Royal Oak is also worthy for comparison.

Many automatically seize on Royal Oak's one store that deals in the leather and whip trade and its fluorescent-colored hair patrons. Regular visitors, though, rave about Royal Oak's diverse mixture of used and import record stores, ethnic restaurants, quaint coffeehouses, vibrant nightclubs and trendy boutiques. People walk the streets well into the evening.

Farmington has some of those types of businesses already but could use some more.

Understandably, Farmington residents relish the city's tranquil and unassuming nature. That doesn't have to change.

We're merely suggesting the 25-44 age group is perhaps interested in more nightlife than a 9:15 p.m. showing of "Batman Forever."

They also tend to listen to bands like Sponge rather than trying to find four porous rubber cleaning wipes for a dollar at a discount store.

And chances are they're looking for Doc Martens, the shoes, not Doctor Martin the chiropractor.

## Newspapers: key community voice

*"An unconditional right to say what one pleases about public affairs is what I consider to be the minimum guarantee of the First Amendment."*

— Hugo Lafayette Black

It's a basic part of our lives as Americans. But freedom of expression, as we know it, is taboo for people who call Belarus, Albania, Iraq, Romania or China home. There, opinion breeds peril to life and limb.

This week — National Newspaper Week — we're proud to remind readers of the idea-forging role your Observer plays in the western Wayne County communities we serve.

Consider our opinion and points of view pages. Together, these lively facing pages represent the Observer's heartbeat. They're meant to persuade, prick and provoke. If they don't, they're falling short in keeping readers interested, informed and involved.

In our editorials, we take stands on public issues. In our columns, we spotlight a variety of viewpoints. In our letters, we let readers share their feelings on local concerns. The common link is opinion — sometimes harsh, sometimes upbeat, but always stimulating.

Relevance, decency, fairness — they're the engines driving these generators of commentary. We encourage all forms equally as evidenced by the amount of space we devote to opinion — ours, yours and others — each Thursday.

Like most suburban newspapers, your Observer strives to be a primary source of community news, information and entertainment. From tax assessments to crime reports, from community theater to school boards, from wedding announcements to new stores — that's the scope of our beat.

But suburban newspapers are also, as President Bill Clinton puts it, "strong, unfettered



BOB SKLAR

advocates for the American ideals of democracy and citizen participation."

Ben Franklin, a visionary colonial printer, was blunter in his take on the role of the newspaper: "If all printers were determined not to print anything till they were sure it would offend nobody, there would be very little printed."

As we develop even more compelling reasons for making us your information source of choice, we at your Observer also must step up our commitment to helping you think different ways and consider different directions within the bounds of good taste and documented argument.

You may not agree with our stands, and that's just fine. Disagree with tact and good taste in a letter that we can print. That's the beauty of freedom of expression. You can debate what's on your mind in a briar patch of dissent — without fear of reprisal.

Colonial printer Peter Zenger staged the first great fight for press freedom in 1735. It's fitting in this 160th anniversary year of his famous trial that we celebrate National Newspaper Week by remembering the pages of your Observer that help you keep your finger firmly on your community's pulse.



## LETTERS

### Seeking support

**C**itizens For A Safer Farmington Hills will be knocking on your door Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 14-15, to give you accurate information about public safety in Farmington Hills. The 1-mill Public Safety millage is to provide more services and personnel in both fire and police departments.

Farmington Hills is the largest city in Oakland County and 12th largest in the state and yet spends far less for public safety than neighboring cities such as Southfield and Livonia. Demands on both departments for service place a tremendous strain on existing personnel.

The fire department's medical emergency and fire runs exceed 4,600 annually, an increase of 78 percent since 1984. The fire department depends heavily on volunteer firefighters, which means the four stations cannot be staffed 24 hours a day. At times, this can create a problem with desirable response time during off hours.

The police department is well below the national average of officers per residents. The demand on limited staff has caused a cut-back in neighborhood patrols and a decrease in uncommitted patrol time.

Crime prevention is an important part in reducing crime through pro-active programs, yet the Crime Prevention Section staff has not increased in nearly 17 years.

The cost per household of the 1-mill proposal will be between 50 cents and \$2 a week. This small increase will provide the following services:

- Build a centrally located fire station staffed 24 hours a day.
- Add 16 full-time firefighters.
- Improve medical and fire response time.
- Add 14 new police officers.
- Improve police response time.
- Upgrade public safety technology.

Dedicated members of Citizens for a Safer Farmington Hills are committed to informing voters of the need for upgrading the police and fire departments because it is essential to increase police and fire services in the community.

Betty Nicoley, Farmington Hills

send my own children and relive the magic of this rustic environment that is totally dedicated to teaching young people to excel to their highest potential.

Years later, as a mother and now a new grandmother, and as a member of the Interlochen Board of Trustees, I am even more convinced that Interlochen Arts Camp and its counterpart, Interlochen Arts Academy, instills in our young people values which seem to be so lacking in society today — discipline, commitment and creativity, to name a few.

Chrysler Corporation CEO Robert Lutz recently spoke at Interlochen about the importance of critical thinking skills which will make our youngsters the leaders of tomorrow, both in business and in the arts. He too called Interlochen "a gem in this state and indeed of this nation."

For me one of the warmest moments came this July during an outdoor performance known as "Collage" where youngsters perform in each of the arts disciplines, including music, dance, visual art and theater. It was all wonderful, but the zeal and enthusiasm of the Junior Choir (children ages 8 to 10 from around the world) in their red sweaters — singing from the heart with arms entwined — was overwhelming. But amazingly enough, not an odd occurrence at Interlochen. After witnessing that, every grandparent should set up a fund now to make sure their grandchildren don't miss this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

If your readers haven't yet experienced Interlochen, they should do so soon. If not from the stage, then from the audience as supporters of young talent and solid ideals.

Isabel Francis Smith, Bloomfield Hills

### On gun board

**R**esponse to Dolan on Guns Concealed Weapon Permit: State Rep. Jan Dolan does not seem to understand how the county gun boards work.

Let's use the Jackie Ponke murder in the dental office as an example. Under the present system if Mrs. Ponke, fearing for her life, applied for a concealed weapon permit she would almost certainly have been denied.

The denial would have been based on not carrying large amounts of cash, the most common reason given. In progressive states like Indiana or Florida, she could have received a permit since she was a respectable citizen, with no criminal record.

If Mrs. Ponke had used a firearm to save her life from an abusive husband, would Jan Dolan have called it more family violence?

James R. Dale, Farmington

### Good coverage

**C**ongratulations to your newspapers and to reporter, Tim Smith, on the excellent coverage given to one of this state's greatest assets — Interlochen Center for the Arts.

"Arts Camp A Creative Mecca" (Aug. 10) really captured the essence of this unique spot in northern Michigan. Having attended the camp myself as a youngster, it was a thrill to

## COMMUNITY VOICE

### QUESTION:

When and to whom have you last written a letter?



"It was to my friend, Dana, who moved to Virginia to be in the FBI. Does anyone (write letters) anymore?"  
Denise Brant  
Grosse Pointe



"A thank you note last Friday. I think it's very nice if you can send letters handwritten to add a personal touch."  
Larry Robert  
Farmington Hills



"On a computer yesterday to a girlfriend out of state. I just put it in the mail today."  
Denise Brant  
West Bloomfield



"I wrote one to my grandparents about a month ago. I can't remember the reason why. I think it was just overdue."  
David Wilson  
Farmington

## The Farmington Observer

TOM BAEK, COMMUNITY EDITOR, 810-477-5450  
ROBERT SKLAR, MANAGING EDITOR, FARMINGTON OBSERVER, 810-901-2563  
ROBERT KAMPP, RETAIL ADVERTISING MANAGER, FARMINGTON OBSERVER, 810-901-2501  
MARY SCOTT, MANAGER OF CIRCULATION, FARMINGTON OBSERVER, 810-901-2548  
JOHN REDDY, VICE-PRESIDENT, PUBLISHER, FARMINGTON OBSERVER, 810-901-2581  
JOHN SALVERSTEN, ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER, 810-901-2595  
STEVEN R. POPE, GENERAL MANAGER, OBSERVER & ECCENTRIC NEWSPAPERS, 810-953-2252

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RONALD ADRIAN, PRESIDENT

**Our Mission:** "Because we publish community newspapers, we think about community journalism in a fundamentally different way than our bigger competition. They consider themselves to be independent from the stories and communities they cover, swooping in to write the unusual or sensational and then dashing off to cover something else. We regard ourselves as both accurate journalists and as caring citizens of the communities where we work."

— Philip Posey