

Mayor's mission Put election politics aside

The air you hear being expelled isn't coming from your tires. It's the collective sigh of relief, now that the first ever Farmington Hills mayoral race is over.

This campaign wasn't pretty. Sure, having residents directly elect the mayor is perhaps noble and admirable in the purest sense of democracy. This race wasn't about serving a higher purpose.

Rather, it became about serving higher office. The campaign became entangled in partisan rhetoric (and not original bromide at that), obscene campaign spending, name dropping at the expense of relevant endorsements, and whether the city's new arena really needs a second \$50,000 Zamboni.

When this election seemingly reached the nadir of nonsensical, the abortion issue was trotted out. We're sure that's what residents are pondering when they're backed up in traffic on southbound Middlebelt approaching 12 Mile — whether the city's new mayor is pro or anti-choice.

Had this campaign went any further, we're sure the two candidates would've been compelled to take a position on Bosnia, too.

We predicted the infusion of politics as our biggest concern in an editorial opposing the direct election of a mayor. Our reason was — and still is — if it's not broke don't fix it.

Previously, the mayor was voted on by other council members. The leadership position was one attained out of collegial respect and orderly succession.

The city manager form of government was a suburban creation in the 1950s primarily to avoid autocratic mayoral regimes of big cities. Too often, we pointed out, the office of may-

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or can become a political power base constructed by an egocentric pol. Granted, the directly elected mayor only has a two-year term with a maximum of two terms. The city manager form of government will remain intact in Farmington Hills.

However, in terms of potential divisiveness brought out in future mayoral campaigns, this first election has done nothing to quell our fears.

That said, we believe the new mayor can put this contentious election quickly behind by gaining the respect of council and the community.

He can achieve that by being the heart and conscientious of city council, as well as by being a leader.

We expect the new mayor to be a visionary as well as pragmatic. He must keep council focused on key issues and maintain order at meetings.

With all that, he will need to be highly visible in the community and be accessible to constituents, who will obviously have higher expectations of the person they directly elected to the post.

All of this requires hard work and, no doubt, excessive demands on personal time. But it's not necessary.

Otherwise, the mayor's position will be enacting to one opportunistic politico — backed by a lot of money and a few well-heeled friends — searching for instant credibility.

Nominate Family of the Year

The American family isn't as easy to characterize as it was in the TV era of the Cleavers, what with single parents, empty nesters, career couples with no kids, even gay couples, more prevalent than ever.

But despite significant evolutionary changes, the family is still the heartbeat of America.

On the eve of National Family Week Nov. 19-25, we at the Farmington Observer take delight in publicizing Oakland Family Services' Oakland County Family of the Year Essay Contest.

Oakland Family Services is a private, non-profit, human services agency in Rochester Hills, Walled Lake, Pontiac and Berkley. The 1995 contest theme: "Celebrate Families! My Family Is My Foundation." The intent is to honor families "who demonstrate the importance of family in providing love, support and encouragement to one another," according to the official contest rules.

"We seek to focus on the everyday issues and the occurrences that are central to the health of the family, such as effectively integrating work and family, the importance of family traditions and the importance of family support to children's development," says Oakland Family Services' Jean Elder, a Farmington Hills resident.

The contest is open to all Oakland County families of two or more people, living together or apart, related by blood, marriage, adoption or commitment to care for one another.

To enter, type or neatly print an essay of 500 words or less describing why your family deserves to be Family of the Year. Be specific in how your family has served as the founda-



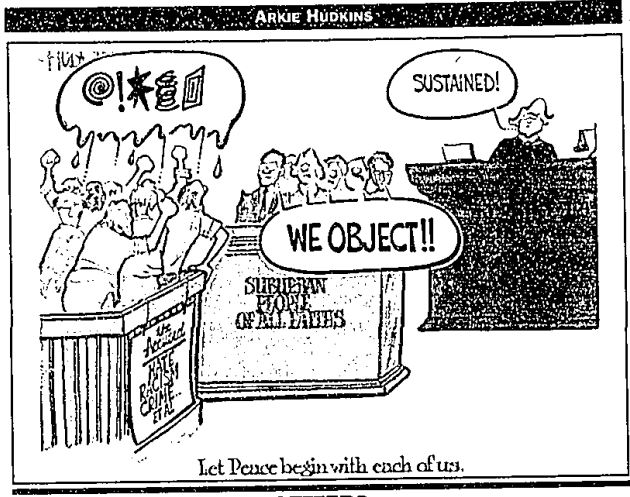
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tion for each family member. Tell how your family coped in hard times but found strength and inspiration in everyday life.

Send your essay — with your name, address and phone number — to: Celebrate Families, c/o LovioGeorgeInc., 681 W. Forest, Suite 200, Detroit, MI 48201. Entries must be postmarked by Monday, Nov. 13. Fax entries to (313) 831-0240. Direct questions to (313) 832-2210.

Oakland Family Services professionals will evaluate entries and announce the winner during National Family Week. The winning family will receive prizes from local merchants.

Among the Oakland County groups that echo Oakland Family Services' sense of family are the Farmington Hills Commission on Children, Youth and Families, the Boys-Girls Club of Troy, Birmingham-Bloomfield Families In Action, Big Brothers-Big Sisters in Southfield, Camp Oakland in Oxford, Clarkston Youth Assistance and West Bloomfield Youth Assistance.



ARKIE HUDKINS

LETTERS

Slanted views

Eric Borregard's article in the Oct. 5 edition of your newspaper displayed a fine example of slanted news. His sources were one-sided, his logic faulty and even Borregard's conclusions lacked objectivity. In his article about Farmington schools, Borregard claimed that "... Farmington is not ready to make the adjustment to international standards," and that, based on one source, North Farmington High School students will not be "... number one in anything." This article published in your paper outraged and insulted many students and faculty at North, and needed more editing and fact-checking.

As the Co-Editor of North Farmington's student newspaper, The Northern Star, I consider myself a capable, if not proficient student of journalism. While not a professional journalist, I at least know not to make value judgments in my articles based on one person's testimony. Mr. Borregard, however, did not attempt to refute the slanderous statements made in his article. One phone call to any North Farmington student or faculty member would have given him enough information to contradict his sources' statements. In the past three school days at North, I took three tests, none of which had any multiple choice questions.

Borregard's article also suffered from another journalistic taboo: fault logic. He spent much of his article spouting statistics pertaining to schools around Michigan and around the U.S., then used these reports to prove his opinions about Farmington schools.

I agree that some American schools pale in comparison to some European schools, however, this does not mean that every American school is below some mythical "International Standard." Farmington schools are not representative of all American schools; by Borregard's logic, the entire Ford Motor Co. product line could be based on the performance of a single car.

Eric Borregard clearly did not research enough before writing his article. He attempted to package a dinner table discussion with some educational reports and use this ammunition to shoot down a high school, school district, and nationwide educational system. I considered your paper above this kind of journalism, and I still do.

After all, one cannot judge a whole by the performances of its parts, and vice-versa. Maybe someone should have taught Borregard this lesson — even the "sub-standard" students at North Farmington High School know this, and according to your paper, all we do is

drive around in cars playing silly games.

Michael T. Murphy
Farmington Hills

Editor's note: Eric Borregard's column was an opinion piece. It was not presented as a news story.

Kindergarten dilemma

Imagine the anticipation that most parents have when they send their child off to kindergarten, for the very first time.

Now imagine that your child, for whatever reason, is not ready for kindergarten. Your child might have a mild speech problem, need physical therapy, or might be a little immature. You know that your child is normal, but needs a little help.

Imagine the disappointment when you learn that the Walled Lake Consolidated School District (which includes the northwest corner of Farmington Hills) does not offer this option. You are referred to the special education department. A mysterious new option evolves; it's called the "PPI" program. When you try to determine the nature of this new beast, all that you can glean is that the acronym is short for "pre-primary impaired."

What they don't tell you is that all the children that are not ready for kindergarten are lumped together into one program. This includes children that are autistic, mentally and physically retarded, and children that might be a little immature for their age.

Your child is then left to "boil and bubble" in a cauldron of humanity where hope is checked at the door.

Harvey Hoffenbium, Farmington Hills

Where were parents?

As a member of the Farmington Hills community I was shocked when I attended a community meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 10 at Farmington High School.

The show was hosted by Ben Marks and there were 16 panelists and only 16 in this large auditorium who thought it important enough to attend.

There were police chiefs from several communities, a couple of sheriffs, a representative from Senator Abraham and many other caring representatives of our community on the panel prepared to answer questions and guide troubled parents.

My question is, "Where were you?"
Milton Rose, Farmington Hills

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

What does Veterans Day (Nov. 11) mean to you?



"I know my grandfather was in the war, but I don't know much about it. It's kind of sad."
Debbie Baker
Livonia



"It's a day you honor veterans — alive or deceased. I don't get a day off."
Marlene Gytzsch
Farmington Hills



"When I think of Veterans Day, I always think of my brother. He fought in Vietnam on Veterans Day. I call my brother and thank him."
Tammy Marlene
Farmington Hills



"It means it's day to celebrate veterans of all wars. I think all the people who served during war should be celebrated at all times."
Mark Rose
Livonia

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— Phillip Power