

## Our heroes

### They deserve spot in limelight

The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.  
—Edmund Burke

Jeffrey Partin isn't one to look the other way when something bad is happening, and neither is Howard Mitchell. Because of them, evil did not triumph in a Farmington Hills parking lot last Sunday.

The Farmington Hills residents are being hailed as heroes this week after they came to the rescue of a 67-year-old woman who was about to become the victim of a carjacking outside the Kroger supermarket at 11 Mile Road and Middlebelt.

The woman, who was not seriously injured, told police that she struggled and screamed after someone grabbed her by the throat and pushed her down on her car seat.

Enter Partin, who witnessed the struggle and took decisive action. In this era of just-don't-get-involved, the 39-year-old grabbed the suspect, a Southfield teen, pulled him off the woman and struggled to hold him until Mitchell entered the fray. Together they controlled the suspect until police arrived.

Because of their bravery and derring-do, the two have let themselves in for some serious media attention. They're the darlings of TV news, of course, and the subjects of newspaper articles—including the top story on Page 1 of today's Farmington Observer.

The Farmington Hills City Council honored our heroes during last Monday's meeting.

We think they deserve every kind word said and written about them. As we pointed out, the accepted advice these days is: don't get involved, look the other way and let someone else worry about it. Apparently, these guys don't buy that baloney. They didn't last Sunday morning, anyway.

And make no mistake, Partin and Mitchell didn't know what they'd face when they got involved. Carjackers are vicious and usually carry guns. In this case, the suspect had a knife, some duct tape and homemade handcuffs.

Our heroes certainly weren't strutting around like Rambo. In fact, Partin, as unassuming a guy as you'll ever meet, showed concern for the suspect with some "what a shame" comments afterward.

Their exploits reminded us of another carjacking attempt in the Farmington area. A father, with the help of a bystander, forcibly prevented a man from driving off in his car with his wife and his 4-year-old daughter inside last January at the Grand River/Halsted Plaza.

Evil is not a fiction in this dangerous world, but two fellows named Partin and Mitchell proved last Sunday heroism is not a fiction, either.

We'd like to believe that the world is full of people who are willing to risk their own safety, even their lives, to help when needed.

## Make school elections simpler

Almost unnoticed in the Michigan Legislature's tinkering with the School Code is the fact that school board elections will be affected.

The School Code puts school districts into five classifications, which is about four too many. There are different election rules for each. Lawmakers, to their credit, have decided informally to strip election rules out of the School Code and place them in the Election Code, where they belong. So far, so good.

Here, based on decades of accumulated experience, are our ideas for how to conduct school elections:

1. Every other year. Currently school elections are conducted annually. They get little attention—more than 10 percent is considered a high turnout; in many districts the turnout is 3-5 percent. More attention can be concentrated on schools if elections are held every second year, preferably in odd-numbered years when folks aren't thinking of partisan politics.

2. A single election election. Currently, we elect the State Board of Education and governing boards for the University of Michigan, Michigan State University and Wayne State University in the general elections in November of even-numbered years. These candidates get lost in the shuffle.

Combining the state education elections with school and community college elections would add a measure of excitement that would stimulate turnout and prevent single-interest groups from gaining control.

3. A single voting system. In much of the state, school boards run their own elections and have different polling places from city and township elections. That's confusing and unnecessary. The more forward-looking minds in

Lansing any cities and townships should run all the elections so that precinct voting places will be the same. That's common sense, and we endorse it.

4. A spring election. School elections are conducted about the second week in June. We like the idea of moving them up to May. New trustees could have at least a month experience before voting on a budget.

Interest in school issues should be heightened. If a millage or bond proposal fails, boards will have more time to make alternate plans before the new fiscal year starts July 1.

One state Senate bill calls for November elections for school boards. That would only worsen the problem of school issues getting lost in the shuffle, with the president, U.S. senators, U.S. representatives, governor and state administrators, state Senate, state House, countywide officials, county commissioners, township boards, state Supreme Court, state Court of Appeals, circuit court, probate court, district court and general ballot proposals. A spring election still is better for schools.

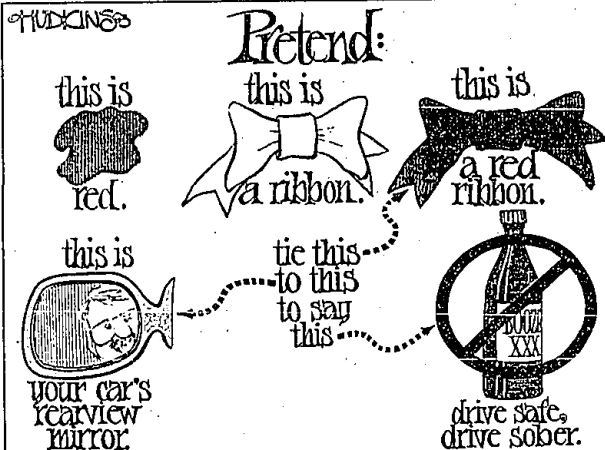
5. A cap on school money elections. Voters get angry when school boards return again and again to the ballot with money questions.

We like the idea of limiting these elections to three fixed dates per year—the spring school election, the August primary and the November general election. If lawmakers decide four dates are better than three, fine—as long as those dates are fixed in law and voters don't get a scattering of elections.

All of our suggestions are aimed at concentrating voter attention on school issues.

Now that the School Code is being written, it's time to make education elections simpler and give them better attention.

ARKIE HUDKINS



### LETTERS

#### On charter schools

Tim Richard, in his column of Dec. 7, condemns charter schools because one school of 160 students, The Trivalley Academy, has too many ties to the Holy Trinity Church.

At least it does, in his opinion. Because of this one example, which he believes violates the principle of separation of church and state, he wants to curtail all charter schools.

His unspoken assumption is that there is no overt religious influence in public schools. Yet among those who set education policy today there are many who are imposing their secular "religious" value system on public education.

They do not espouse any specific organized religion. Quite the contrary, they ridicule established religions.

Political correctness, diversity, radical gender feminism, and a disdain for excellence, individuality and American tradition and values are hall marks of their religion.

As we see more charter schools there may well be a few with too close ties to religion and churches. If so, they should be addressed. However, I for one consider it a small price to pay for the tremendous value that charter schools will bring to Michigan education by opening it up to competition and choice.

Mr. Richard, I will get more concerned about these small religious infringements of charter schools when you get more concerned about educators who promote their own secular religion.

I am tired of those who cry about every little imagined crack in the "wall of separation" and yet completely ignore those educators who belittle religion and religious values.

James Collins, Farmington Hills

this letter with their respective management teams and employees.

The police department shall continue to charge all employees who sell or serve alcohol to minors. A licensee should not have to solely assume the penalty because of the improper actions of an employee.

The certainty of dismissal/disciplinary action against employees can be used by licensees as a management incentive to remind employees to protect themselves and their employer. In addition to LCC penalties against the licensee, the seller of alcohol to a minor faces the possibility of a fine up to \$500 and up to 90 days in jail.

I sincerely commend the majority of licensees who continue to do an excellent job prohibiting the sale of alcohol to minors, and also many other licensees who have extended themselves to improve operating policies and cooperate with the efforts of the police department.

Research indicates that alcohol-related accidents and tragedies increase during the holiday season. The commitment of licensees and their employees not to sell or serve alcohol to minors is an important component that adds to the general safety and welfare of the entire community. Your cooperation and efforts are deeply appreciated.

William J. Dwyer,  
chief of police,  
Farmington Hills

#### Remember charities

It appears that some taxpayers in Michigan will be receiving a refund of a portion of their Michigan income tax, a requirement of the Headlee Amendment.

As the network of services to abused children, victims of domestic violence, the homeless, and other vulnerable populations of our state suffers under increased demand and continuously reduced funding, what a grand gesture it would be if people donated the refund to their favorite charity.

I know our children with no home of their own would appreciate such generosity.

Jean Vickers,  
executive director  
St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center

### COMMUNITY VOICE

#### QUESTION:

What special treat do you leave for Santa on Christmas Eve?



"We've never really left anything."  
Jessica Cedar, 11,  
Farmington Hills



"Cookies and a carrot for Rudolph."  
Matthew Kalndi, 3,  
Novi



"Jell-O and milk. He likes that."  
Derek Roberts, 4,  
Farmington Hills



"Cookies. Chocolate cookies. He eats them all."  
Chris Sakran, 8,  
Farmington Hills

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— Philip Power