

Nasty business Incident pulls school together

The flag was raised at North Farmington High School out on 13 Mile Road this morning as it is every school day. The yellow buses rolled into the parking lots and the students went in to be educated.

And there was every reasonable expectation that all of them will return home safely this afternoon at the conclusion of classes or school activities.

No, the walls of North Farmington didn't crumble and Western civilization was not wrecked just because some stupid someone left notes containing death threats against African Americans last week.

Yes, North Farmington students and staff have expressed disbelief and outrage over the notes — and rightly so. Racial insensitivity and intolerance are bad enough, but death threats? We'd like to believe that this nasty business is entirely out of character with the school and the community.

As police and school investigations into the matter continue, it seems that one positive thing might come out of this mess: The racist notes seemed to have pulled the student body together. Hopefully, the incidents will galvanize the school community to do whatever is necessary to prevent further nastiness.

A good start would be through the Farmington/Farmington Hills Multicultural/Multiracial Committee. The group will hold its inaugural Rainbow Recognition Breakfast at 7:30 a.m. next Tuesday, Jan. 16, at the Farmington Hills Activities Center on 11 Mile Road.

Some 25 people who have promoted toler-

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ance and multiculturalism in the community will be honored. We hope the North Farmington incident will somehow find its way on to the agenda Tuesday.

At this point, the important thing is not that the incidents happened. They're going to happen — even with the brightest of students in the best of schools run by the most caring of educators.

Something similar — racist graffiti on a locker — happened a year or so ago at Farmington Hills' Mercy High, an all-girl Catholic school known for racial and ethnic diversity in its enrollment.

The important thing right now is that this whole sorry affair be brought into the open and talked about. It's also important that school officials don't try to hide it or pretend it doesn't exist.

They shouldn't be ducking reporters' questions, or running around school with their walkie-talkies, trying to spot the location of the Channel 4 news truck. And what's this business of having a staff member escort a student every time he/she has to leave the room during class?

We'd think the staff would have better things to do these days at North Farmington High: like perhaps continuing to provide an atmosphere that inspires trust and respect.

King programs encouraging

From Rochester to Southfield, from Troy to West Bloomfield and down into Farmington Hills, it's good to see the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday taking hold in Oakland County.

Not all local communities are sponsoring King events, of course. In that, and in many other ways, our communities still have a long way to go in bringing King's dream to life. Still, it's encouraging to see so many Oakland County communities and schools scheduling King programs this year. Many are sponsoring King programs for the first time.

The King holiday carries special meaning for African Americans. Yet, King's message of a fully-integrated society is for all people of all races. Slowly, his dream is coming true in Oakland County. Our communities are becoming increasingly diverse, not just racially, but culturally, as well.

Consider Farmington Hills, Troy, West Bloomfield and Southfield.

All three communities are much more diverse in their racial, religious and cultural makeup than they were in King's lifetime. But there's a growing separation, even as we become neighbors.

Metro Detroit remains one of the most racially polarized regions in the country. It's not necessarily born of hostility, as it was in the Montgomery, Selma and Memphis

of King's era, but the wall of separation exists, nonetheless.

In this era of budget-cutting, we must also remember to Dr. King's second, and final, crusade — the crusade of economic justice.

We live in communities of plenty. Yet the gap between rich and poor is growing ever wider.

Whatever our race, creed or culture, the message of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. has much to teach us even today.

This coming Monday, we encourage Oakland County residents to participate in a King Holiday program in your community.

The Orchard Ridge Campus of Oakland Community College in Farmington Hills will feature Reginald Wilson, author of "Civil Liberties in the United States," 7 p.m. tonight, Jan. 11, in the Smith Theatre on campus at 27055 Orchard Lake Road.

Richard Williams, Oakland County's new director of community and minority affairs, will honor 14 high school students for essays written on the impact of King on Friday at Highland Lakes OCC Campus. Tickets to the 8:30 a.m. breakfast sponsored by OCC and the Lakes Area council for Diversity are \$6 and are available at (810) 360-3186.

At Oakland University, Monday begins a six week celebration of King as well as African-American Month. There will be a march beginning at noon at the Vandenberg side of Beer Lake. There will be a reception at the OU Gold Room at 1 p.m.

A candlelight vigil is scheduled for 7 p.m. Monday, at the OU Gold Room.

A proclamation by Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson will also commemorate King's birthday.



Martin Luther King, Jr.

MEMORY LANE

This was the week's news in history as reported in the Farmington Observer and the Farmington Enterprise:

■ 40 years ago — Jan. 12, 1956 (Enterprise)

Lloyd Smith, instrumental music instructor for the Farmington elementary schools, was named chairman of programs and music for the Michigan District of Kiwanis International.

Open houses were planned at the Farmington-area's three new elementary schools: Engle, Gill Road and Shawnae.

■ 10 years ago — Jan. 6, 1986 (Observer)

With financing a major consideration, plans continued on a piecemeal basis for the widening of Orchard Lake Road from I-696 to Grand River.

Farmington school officials proposed that the farm portion of the Spicer property (now Heritage Park) be used as a working farm for educational purposes.

The raising of an 1836 American flag marked the beginning of the celebration of the sesquicentennial of the Botsford Inn in Farmington Hills.

■ 1 year ago — Jan. 12, 1995 (Observer)

Time ran out on an effort to recall six of the seven Farmington Hills City Council members. The officials were targeted because of their support of a commercial and residential development at Middlebelt and 12 Mile roads.

Larry Lichtman ended an icy, dicy year as Farmington Hills mayor. Joanne Smith took over as the city's last council-appointed mayor.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

What's your idea of winter fun?



'My family and I go cross country skiing at Heritage Park.'
Juliet Petrus
Farmington



'Nothing, really. I go to more movies maybe.'
Walter Maloney
Farmington Hills



'I love walking in the snow.'
Charlene Diehl
Farmington Hills



'Walking the dog. Somehow it's more fun in the snow.'
Both Diehl
Farmington Hills

LETTERS

What a carrier!

I have wanted for months to write to you about our paperboy, Josh Stockton. He is such a wonderful young man and gives such personal, attentive service. He has a pleasant personality, and a great smile. He is a young man any parent would be proud of.

Even with Christmas and New Year's falling on Mondays, we still got our paper as scheduled. I really would like to recommend Josh as your paperboy of the year. He is an asset to our community. I will be interested in watching his progress in the years to come.

My letter seems inadequate in expressing our thanks to and admiration of Josh Stockton.
Helen Hollingshead, Farmington Hills

A 'hostile' tax

I am writing to inquire about the Intangibles Tax for the State of Michigan that has just found its way into my 87-year-old mother's life. She received a notice from the Discovery Unit that it appeared she should have filed for 1992 and 1993, based on her Federal 1040 Schedule B for those two years.

This is totally new to us, but in checking with the Discovery Unit, I was informed that the tax is listed on the Michigan Income Tax booklet. It is, but I believe that many, many Michigan taxpayers are totally unaware that they too will soon be receiving the same kind of letter.

And what is this "Intangible Tax"? It is a tax on interest and dividends paid, an income-producing property tax on Michigan residents whose interest and dividend income from taxable intangible property exceeds \$5,000 for single and \$10,000 for a joint return.

For some reason, once you go over your allowable interest and dividends limit as decided by the state of Michigan, the state then gets to tap into your income again. How did this ever come to be? By whose authority?

In trying to discover more about this tax on a tax (Michigan already taxes this income on the state income tax form, as does the federal income tax form), I began to resent this income on instruction into Mom's savings, as well as the time it took to call and ask a couple questions and then gather the necessary copies to return to the Michigan Department of Treasury.

The form furnished is C-6606 and it lists stocks, bonds, credit unions, mutual funds, accounts and notes receivable, mortgages and land contracts, annuities, cash on hand, as well as cash in a safe deposit box or safe (perhaps in an old coffee can it could be exempt), as subject to this intangibles tax of 3.6 percent.

What isn't covered by this intangibles tax? U.S. Treasury bills, notes, and bonds, and government certificates, as well as Michigan mu-

nicipal bonds, stocks of banks and trust companies and money on deposit in banks and savings and loan associations, including certificates of deposit, IRA's, pensions and annuities payable under old age.

I believe that this Intangibles Tax is hostile to every prudent resident who attempts to provide their own financial security in old age or at any age. I believe it is punitive to those who put money in cash management accounts and credit unions, as opposed to bank and savings and loans.

This is a tax that favors government institutions by making those non-taxable intangible property. My understanding is that in 1991 the Discovery Unit came into being. Does that mean that prior to that time, the law was not observed or enforced? Do you have any information to share? Is this something that most taxpayers don't know about? We surely did not and it will also affect us.

I foresee many who will cry foul when they receive this greeting from our state government. There is also a 19 percent penalty for failure to file in 1992 and a 12 percent penalty for 1993. We are talking about another means by which hardworking, saving, responsible taxpayers are being fleeced by government.

Joan Grindel, Farmington Hills

Scholarships needed

I am writing to express my appreciation to Tim Richard for the Dec. 7 article he wrote about the Oakland Community College Foundation.

Mr. Richard was very perceptive in focusing his article on scholarship recipients because helping students achieve a better future is the key mission of the OCC Foundation.

Mr. Richard did a thorough job of explaining the type of scholarships we offer and why there is a continual need for ongoing scholarship support.

He also emphasized the human aspect of our work by describing the scholarship process using real faces and names of recipients. The Foundation, and especially our scholarship recipients, deeply appreciate Mr. Richard's keen insight and sympathetic coverage.

Thank you for your newspaper's support of our efforts.

Cheryl A. Kozell, executive director
Workforce Development

Opinions are to be shared: We welcome your ideas, as do your neighbors. That's why we offer this space on a weekly basis for opinions in your own words. We will help by editing for clarity. To assure authenticity, we ask that you sign your letter and provide a contact telephone number. Letters should be mailed to: Editor, The Farmington Observer, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48336.

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— Philip Power