

At your disposal Area needs more waste days

It happens every spring: An opportunity for Farmington-area residents to get rid of dangerous household wastes — properly. Farmington Hills and Farmington co-sponsor something called Household Hazardous Waste Day every spring about this time. This year's edition will be held Saturday, May 11, at the 47th District Court on 10 Mile Road between Power and Farmington roads.

From 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. that Saturday, residents (they'll have to prove it) can dispose of lots of crud that really shouldn't be put out with the regular trash.

Over the winter, your average suburbanite will have collected the usual assortment of motor oil, antifreeze, car and household batteries, drain and oven cleaners, gasoline mixtures, carburetor cleaners, strippers and removers, adhesives, glues, pesticides and herbicides.

Yes, that stuff can harm people, pets and plants, so it shouldn't be dumped down the drain or stuffed into garbage bags that'll end up in landfills — and eventually back in the land or air.

Instead, they should bring that stuff to the court house on Household Hazardous Waste Day. Technicians — some dressed in protective "moon suits" — from Chemical Waste Management will be on hand to show proper disposal techniques.

Karen Birkholz, recycling coordinator for the city of Farmington Hills, said she expects about 700 to drive through on May 11. Workers will collect tons and tons of waste from residents who won't even have to get out of their cars.

It's our thinking that there should be even more disposal days. There used to be two of them, spring and fall, and then came some unfortunate budget cuts. And, of course, we'd like to see a longer list of things acceptable for collection.

Hazardous disposal days are great, and we're glad they're so well-attended. To our knowledge, few communities provide such an outstanding service.

However, it's our thinking that there should be even more disposal days. There used to be two of them, spring and fall, and then came some unfortunate budget cuts.

Anyway, expansion of the program is something both cities should consider.

And, of course, we'd like to see a longer list of things acceptable for collection. Chemical Waste Management will not accept: latex and water-based paint, compressed gas cylinders, radioactive material (including some smoke detectors), explosives, shock sensitive compounds and medical wastes.

Also, the program is for residents, not commercial or industrial businesses.

But, all things considered, waste disposal days are well worth the effort and expense. Please, Farmington-area officialdom, give us more of a good thing.

Precinct delegates a vital force

May 7 is one of the most important political deadlines of the year. By 4 p.m., candidates for party precinct delegate must file petitions with at least three signatures of registered voters with the county clerk in order to be on the Aug. 6 ballot.

Most of the time, we call Aug. 6 "the primary." For precinct delegates, however, it's the final election. Precinct delegates from the Republican and Democratic parties don't run against each other in November, but the candidates they help pick will be running.

Michigan has several thousand voting precincts. Both parties are eligible to elect at least one delegate from each precinct — sometimes more, depending on voter strength. The precinct delegates attend a county convention and pick delegates to the state convention.

So what? What do these partisan machinations have to do with our every day life? Lots:

- They determine control of the party. The ability of fundamentalists to command Gov. John Engler's attention in the Republican Party, and the continued strength of public employee unions in the Democratic Party, grew out of past precinct delegate elections.

Precinct delegates also are expected to be party workers. There are two ways to win an election: lots of money from PAC interest groups and great organizational strength in the precincts. If you (wisely) fear that too much money will taint politics, then you should opt for running for precinct delegate.

- Precinct delegates pick state convention delegates from their ranks. The state conventions nominate two candidates for the state Board of Education. The state board gets little newspaper coverage and almost no broadcast coverage, but it makes the policies that 560 school districts must follow. The best way for a parent, an employer or any plain citizen to protect public education is to become part of the process as a precinct delegate.

The process is simple enough. Ask your local clerk for a petition form. Collect signatures from at least three but no more than 15 voters in your precinct. File by 4 p.m. May 7.

State conventions also nominate university board candidates — two for the University of Michigan Board of Regents, two for the Michigan State University Board of Trustees and two for the Wayne State University Board of Governors.

The sad fact is that conventions do a shallow job of screening those candidates; some special interest groups even pick candidates on the irrelevant basis of their views on abortion rather than their budget experience and philosophy.

You hear public university students complaining that they don't see the "big name" faculty in undergraduate classes? Do you hear complaints about graduate teaching assistants who can't teach or speak understandable English? You can moan and whine or waste your breath on a radio talk show. Or you can become a precinct delegate in the party of your choice, ask the university board candidates some pointed questions and vote for the ones with the right answers.

The process is simple enough. Ask your local clerk for a petition form. Collect signatures from at least three but no more than 15 voters in your precinct. File by 4 p.m. May 7. Hustle out your friends to vote for you Aug. 6. Attend the county convention in late August. Speak out or vote with party delegates who think the way you do.

Political professionals will tell you: "Organization" will beat "money" most of the time. And "organization" means dedicated delegates in the precincts.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

What is the purpose of art?

We asked this question at the opening of The Festival of the Arts Sunday at the Activities Center.



'To express yourself and what you believe and feel.'
Jenni Bodzin
Farmington Hills



'To show and appreciate beauty.'
Marilyn Smith
Farmington Hills



'It's a visual expression of emotion. It's not always beautiful.'
Pearl Sykeson
West Bloomfield



'One person's need to communicate to another.'
Eric Johnston
Farmington Hills

Liked story, photos

On behalf of Adat Shalom, I wish to congratulate Sharon LeMieux and Alleen Wingblad on the outstanding photo and article, which the Observer ran on April 8, featuring our members, Supowitz family, at their Passover seder.

The piece was both interesting and informative, and many of our Farmington congregants told us that they had seen it. I'm glad that the arrangements with the Supowitzes worked out so well for you. The photos were great as was the accompanying article, and we are truly appreciative of the time, effort and talent that went into putting the Supowitz & Passover onto your front page.

Judy Marx,
communications director,
Adat Shalom Synagogue

'Shop elsewhere'

The Timbercrest commercial development is nearing completion. Just as we guessed, the businesses located there offer nothing unique to the community. Everything there can be found within a 10-minute drive, multiple times over.

For example, within two miles of this location are an excellent produce/specialty market (Nino Salvaggio's on Middlebelt near 14 Mile), a great hardware store (Jean's Hardware on 12 Mile between Middlebelt and Orchard Lake), and many drug stores (Rite Aide at 11 Mile and Middlebelt, and 12 Mile and Farmington, to name just two).

You may be thinking, "Oh, well, the strip mall's there and it's not going to go away. There's nothing I can do about it now, so I might as well shop there."

That's what the next developer is counting on you thinking. Know the area on Middlebelt, north of 12 Mile and the Shell station? You can bet some developer is just smacking his lips over it.

But you, the residents of Farmington Hills, have the power to say, "Enough is enough." We lost the battle over the development of Timbercrest, but we can still send a strong message.

We are asking you and your neighbors to take your business elsewhere than the Timbercrest strip mall.

You're probably also thinking, "What difference does it make if I do or don't shop there? I'm only one person." These kinds of stores count on neighborhood traffic. That's why there are so many of them covering any given city.

You can have an impact. When Timbercrest's commercial development isn't a rousing success, maybe developers will get the message that we've had enough. We won't support any more unneeded commercial development, additional traffic and unbearable congestion.

We urge you to think about the message you

send when you choose where you shop. This is your community; you can vote with your dollars, and you can send a message about what you won't tolerate in the future.

And speaking of voting, keep in mind when you vote for state senator that Timbercrest is largely a product of Terry Sever's violating the trust of Farmington Hills residents, by his last-minute turnaround vote in favor of the Timbercrest developer.

What other betrayals can our community expect if Sever becomes our state senator?

Remember, if you are tired of overdevelopment and congestion, don't support the Timbercrest strip mall. Shop elsewhere.

Sue and Mike Curtis, Farmington Hills

Helmets OK, but . . .

Wearing a helmet while bike riding is a good idea. In some accidents, helmets have saved lives. However, do we really need a law to compel people to use common sense?

And why insist that only children under 16 wear a helmet — and only when they're on bikes? Why not fine everyone caught without a helmet while riding a bike or a trike, or walking, or even taking a bath?

Those activities can be dangerous, too. And, hey, shouldn't everyone wear steel-toed shoes to protect their feet? And wear elbow and knee pads in case they trip and fall?

Let's not draw the line at bike riders. Let's fine everyone every time they exhibit a lack of foresight.

When a helmet law was first passed in Columbia, Md., parents received warnings, then fines, when their children were caught sitting on their bikes in their own driveways without helmets.

Young teenagers wore their helmets until they were out of their parents' sight. They then took off the helmets and stashed them in bushes — thus becoming lawbreakers who were rarely caught or fined.

I endorse passing a resolution supporting the use of helmets while bike riding so that the last two people on Earth, who have never heard of bike safety helmets, can become informed.

But passing an unenforceable law is unnecessary.

Patti Alspach, Farmington Hills

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, 33411 Grand River, Farmington 48335. Or, they can be faxed to: 810-477-9722.

TURNING BACK THE PAGES

This week in history as reported in the pages of the Farmington Observer and the Farmington Enterprise:

40 YEARS AGO — MAY 3, 1956 (ENTERPRISE)

Salary increases amounting to \$3,760 were granted to city of Farmington employees by the city council during discussion of the proposed 1966-67 budget.

Heavy rains turned low parts of the Farmington area into "quaking rivers and lakes," according to a front-page story.

Don Nichols won the high jump to help Farmington beat Thurston, 63-46, in a high school track meet.

10 YEARS AGO — MAY 1, 1986 (OBSERVER)

Charles Rosch, Farmington Hills finance director, was honored by the Government Finance Officers Association for his expertise in municipal budget preparation.

Jacqueline Aho, a North Farmington senior, and Harrison seniors Daniel Weiner and Mark Schiefky were named to the Observer & Enterprise's Academic All-Star team for 1986.

1 YEAR AGO — MAY 4, 1995 (OBSERVER)

Developer Jay Kogan offered Hillside Day School \$30 million if officials would leave Farmington Hills for a "more visible" location elsewhere in Oakland County. School officials turned down the offer and went ahead with plans to expand on its Middlebelt Road location.

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— Philip Power