

Volunteerism

Don't wait for tragedy

From the Farmington area and all across Oakland County they came out in droves for the recent March of Dimes WalkAmerica at 20-kilometer walk routes in Farmington Hills, Troy and Auburn Hills, thousands of Oakland residents participated, contributing to pledges totalling nearly \$500,000.

Once that money is collected and sent on to the March of Dimes between now and the end of May, it will go a long way toward advancing babies-saving research.

We heartily congratulate every person, young and old, who devoted most of their Sunday to such a worthy cause.

And those kudos aren't only for the walkers. At carefully-plotted stops along each walk route were friendly volunteers, serving pop, ice water, orange slices and even hot bagels to tired but determined walk team members.

The efforts of these no-name volunteers were every bit as crucial to WalkAmerica's success as the involvement of high-profile model Kathy Ireland.

Also important was the hard work from behind-the-scenes folks who helped organize and publicize the 26th annual event.

Although a "job well done" is being extended here to WalkAmerica supporters, it isn't lost on us that there are scores of other worthy causes that Oakland residents fervently believe in.

Seemingly every weekend are walks and runs and other fundraising events to battle cancer, heart disease, arthritis, muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis, to name a few.

In fact, one was held in Birmingham just a

few weeks ago. The annual Walk for Multiple Sclerosis on April 14 raised about \$160,000 for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

Unfortunately, even with so many great causes to commit to, many people do not become involved — outside of the occasional drop of a coin or bill into a convenience store container — until something directly impacts their lives.

They wait until something happens to them that opens their eyes to the bigger picture, and to the realization that someone was there to help them when they needed it. So why not help someone else in return?

It's too bad that something drastic first must happen to someone before they make that connection. One of the WalkAmerica participants summed it up as just being part of human nature. People often don't tune in to what others feel until they feel it themselves.

Whether human nature could ever change in that regard remains open for debate. But the West Bloomfield resident made another cogent observation.

You can't expect people to give it up, in time or money, for every charitable cause that comes down the pike. But what if each individual made some kind of contribution to one cause each year?

Here's endorsing such an idea. There's no reason why each Oakland County resident shouldn't have a March of Dimes or Muscular Dystrophy Association in their lives. Believing in an organization and its cause is something to admire, strive for and accomplish. Think about it.

Rouge — a vital resource

The Rouge River has made tremendous progress, but it still has a long way to go.

Inside today's newspaper is a special section called "Changing Currents." It takes a look at the ongoing recovery efforts focused on the Rouge, both what's been accomplished and what lies ahead. Ten years ago this week, we published a similar section on the conditions of "our river." We're happy to report that restoration programs have made considerable — in some cases, incredible — progress.

The annual Rouge Rescue volunteer effort has done an excellent job clearing the worst trash from the river. This program will continue to be necessary, since new problems crop up every year, but clearly the worst is over.

Informational programs have started to make a difference in the public consciousness. More people throughout the watershed are realizing that their actions affect the river.

Recreational opportunities on and in the river have expanded in amazing ways. Canoes and paddleboats are back, habitat restoration projects have improved fishing opportunities, and the idea of swimming the Rouge suddenly sounds not so far-fetched.

The powers that be have begun addressing the issue of storm water runoff, just as important a pollution concern as sewer overflows.

The dredging of Newburgh Lake in Livonia has moved to the front burner. Within two years or so, the PCBs should be gone and anglers can feel safe eating their catch.

Perhaps most important, combined sewer overflows — where heavy rains cause raw sewage to spill into the river — are well on the way to elimination in the upper reaches of the watershed. By the end of next

year all the CSOs in the Observer & Eccentric area can be expected to be resolved, either through retention basins or sewer separation projects.

That, however, will only take care of a third of the CSO problems. And there's the rub.

Currently appropriated money gets the Rouge Project through its first phase. Beyond that, funding becomes distressingly uncertain.

Local, county and state governments have spent lots of money on the Rouge and will surely continue to do so. It's the right thing to do. The Rouge has lots to offer us, and we have a responsibility to correct past abuses.

However, federal money has been key to this entire effort, and it will probably take more to see it through to completion. Led in particular by U.S. Rep. John Dingell, D-Trenton, Congress decided years ago that the Rouge merited special attention because of what it could teach the rest of the country. It would be a shame to cancel the class half way through the term.

The Rouge restoration is the kind of thing that only government can do. Not government alone — participation by groups and individuals is critical — but without government, this would never be happening.

That the Rouge needs saving is self-evident. That it deserves the money required to do so seems almost as obvious. The river impacts this entire area's quality of life, and by extension, its image and economic health.

The volunteers and officials who have cooperated to bring the restoration this far deserve the thanks and congratulations of everyone living in the watershed. It's up to all of us to finish the job.

Memory Lane

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

- 40 years ago — May 10, 1956 (Enterprise)
- Farmington City Manager Earl Scherffius argued that future council meetings be held in the Municipal Court House on Liberty Street so that large crowds could be seated.
- "Strange Bedfellows," produced by Harry Farmer, was the attraction staged by The Farmington Players at Farmington Junior High garage at 33566 Anland in the 13 Mile/Farmington Road area was demolished in what was described as a tornado-like wind.
- 10 years ago — May 8, 1986 (Observer)

Graham Lewis was named superintendent of the Farmington Public Schools by the Farmington Board of Education, replacing the retired Lew Schulman. Lewis had been interim superintendent since January.

Slacy Schalm scored three goals to help Farmington beat Lathrup, 5-1, in a pre-district qualifying round of the state girls' soccer tournament.

1 year ago — May 11, 1995 (Observer)
Curtis H. Hail — former coach, teacher, auto dealership owner and Farmington Township supervisor — died May 5, 1995 at his Midland, Mich. home. He was 88.
Farmington Hills Mercy won its fourth-straight Catholic League girls' golf championship.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

Do you know who is running in the school board election?

We asked this question at Hunter and Maple in Birmingham.



"I know some of them. Some people take an interest in school elections, but not everyone."
Frances Gnaste
Works in Birmingham



"I don't know. I don't have kids in school."
Sandra Ciske
Works in Birmingham



"No. But people who have children in the system do care."
Matt Hudkins
Shops in Birmingham



"Yes. The people on the board represent me and my ideas."
Linda Cohen
Shops in Birmingham

LETTERS

She's for 'Prill'

This may be the least controversial letter you will receive on this subject. That may be because Priscilla Brouillette, running for school board, is not controversial. She is solid.

She's good no matter what side you sit on, because she represents hard work, intelligence, common sense and commitment. Prill has served for the last two years on both Hillside Elementary and Dunckel Middle School Improvement Teams, has served on Dunckel's Parent Advisory Committee, Hillside's PTA and participated on the Hillside Principal Selection Committee.

Prill has also helped establish a strong technology presence at Hillside and is on the Technology Committee at Dunckel.

Forgive me, but why she would want to stretch herself even further than she already does, for a somewhat thankless, but I'm sure rewarding job, is beyond me. I'm just relieved and thrilled that she does.

Rest assured, no one can better prioritize and juggle the tasks needing attention. I will rest easier, and so will you, knowing that someone of this caliber would be working tirelessly to bring the very best possible to all our children.

No hidden agenda here; her goal is clear — non-partisan demand for a superior educational system for the Farmington and Farmington Hills community.

Arlene Johnson, Farmington Hills

Take a look

In reference to the article about selection of a new city manager for Farmington Hills.

The article was terribly unfair to the three local people who have made up the backbone of Farmington Hills city government during the growth years.

These men — Steve Brock, Dave Call and Dale Coutegan — have the advantage of knowing this city well.

Any one of the three is qualified to run this city. Possibly the criteria for selection is too much of a "wish list" rather than what we really need.

Farmington Hills has severe problems of traffic, noise, invasion from possible radio waves and the dumping of sewerage in our local creeks from communities the north and west of us.

Local people involved in our government, already working on these problems, would have an edge over someone from a different community with just "growth" as experience.

I feel the city council should take another look at the criteria and our local candidates.

When we have knowledgeable, competent and likable people fit to do a difficult job why not give them a chance?
Ruth Moehmann, Farmington Hills

Thank you all

Saturday morning, April 27, dawned cloudy and cold; but that didn't dampen the enthusiasm of the many families who attended the Second Annual Trout Derby at City Park, sponsored by the cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills.

I would like to ask all of the people who fished to join us in thanking the following businesses for their generous donations used to purchase the 500 rainbow trout for the derby.

The Benchmark, Betty Johnston Dance Studio, Blakeney's Ranch House Restaurant, Farmington Kiwanis, Farmington Ram's Horn Restaurant, Garden City Upholstery, Ginopolis Restaurant, Lynda Lindhardt-Caldwell Banker Preferred, Wild Birds Unlimited and Yankee Consignments, Inc.

Thank you one and all for a great day.

Joe Derek, city naturalist,
Department of Special Services

A great carrier

As a reader of the Farmington Observer for over 25 years, I would like to share with you my appreciation of our current paper delivery person, Chad Ellis.

What a remarkable young person he is. He not only consistently delivers our paper on time, he is courteous and very personable, when he collects. How refreshing.

Yvonne Singer, Farmington Hills

She says thanks

An overdue thanks to the Farmington Observer for the continuous support for our local schools and family life in Farmington and Farmington Hills.

Most recently, I'd personally like to thank photographer Sharon LeMieux for her pictorial talents and Larry O'Connor for his writing merits on the cover of the May 6 Observer, entitled "O.E. Dunckel 6th graders go Latin."

Taking the time to cover these school programs add to the lasting pride and work ethics of our kids. Thank you on behalf of all the teachers at O.E. Dunckel, including the generosity of the Delta department as well.

Karen Halberg, Farmington Hills

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— Philip Power