

School's in Mental adjustments needed

There are some big changes in Farmington-area neighborhoods and subdivisions this week. School is in, and the kids are out, en masse, mornings and afternoons.

The first day of classes was Tuesday for most students in the Farmington and Clarendonville school districts.

The opening of school marks a number of pedestrian and transportation changes from patterns firmly established over the summer months.

Some of the changes are obvious. Others are subtle. Many changes require adjustments by motorists.

One of the more important and obvious changes will be the emergence of yellow school buses and vans on the major thoroughfares of our community.

The mental adjustment for motorists will be to remember to when the bus lights are flashing to notify drivers that a stop is being made to pick up or let off students.

When a bus halts for passengers, a stop sign with two flashing lights will automatically be activated.

In many districts, including Farmington, such stop signal arms have been in place for several years now.

The sign and arm extend two feet from the driver's side, warning motorists to stop for children crossing the street.

Motorists should remember to stop and wait until flashing lights on a school bus are turned off before proceeding. Impatient drivers who get worked up by the wait should look for alternative routes with fewer buses.

For the first couple of weeks in September, motorists should consciously look forward for a block or two for youngsters who just might be stepping into the roadway.

Special care is also needed by drivers when turning where there are buses or students.

Motorists need to drive more defensively to compensate for the exuberance and impulsiveness of youth.

Smart, defensive drivers also should remember that the opening of school make a highlight in the lives of many youngsters. They are less street-smart than the older students and won't have received the safety training students sometimes get in school.

For the first few days of school, mom or dad might drive their youngsters to school, or walk there with them.

But, in the days ahead, when the kids are on their own, motorists must continue to be alert.

School bells and other reminders should ring in our minds as we get behind the wheel this week and in the weeks ahead. Mental adjustments must be made.

Hopefully, this will be a safe school year for all.

Workers key link to prosperity

Workers, listen. Corporate America is whispering what it thinks of you.

Ameritech, the regional telephone company, in 1988 reported 71,945 jobs on the inside of the front cover.

Chairman William L. Weiss' statement said it will "assure success for our shareholders, customers, employees and communities" (emphasis added).

By 1995, Ameritech's tone had changed. "We're growing with our customers. . . We're growing for our shareholders," said Weiss. But this time the employees were left out. Employment was down more than 9 percent, though shareholder value had increased 965 percent since 1983 versus 457 percent for the Standard & Poor index of 500 stocks.

Today, board chairmen don't mention employees as an important ingredient in a firm's success.

Fewer and few employees' pictures appear. Job shrinkage is hidden in back pages or, in Troy-based Kmart's case, eliminated entirely.

A decade ago, board chairmen built prosperity on a three-legged stool — shareholders, customers and employees. Today, there is a two-legged stool.

And if you know elementary physics, a two-legged stool can't stand very well.

America has seen job cuts before. The difference is that today's board chairmen don't seem to care.

Robert M. Tornasko, the management consultant who wrote a book called *Downsizing*, said, "The equally destructive consequences of deep, across-the-board cutbacks . . . include:

■ "Diminished employee commitment to their companies;

■ "Bitter personal trauma inflicted when the reductions were implemented with concern only for their economic impact, ignoring their psychological aspect; and

■ "Creation of corporate environments that are risk-averse and innovation fearing. These harder-to-quantify problems may return to haunt many businesses."

Everyone has heard statistics about how "real" wages (measured in the goods and ser-

Corporate America needs to reform itself before an aggressive government or a reborn union movement steps in.

vices one can buy) have been falling since 1973. Those statistics become tricky when corporate apologists use "mean" or "average" figures, because the high salaries and fat bonuses for those who do the job cutting obscure the impact on the lower end of the scale.

So let's look at "median" figures — meaning half are higher, half lower.

The median real hourly wage fell by 6 percent from 1973 to 1993," said the 1995 report of the president's Council of Economic Advisors. Is higher education the bonanza? For male college graduates with two years beyond college, wages fell 2 percent that period.

The situation is worse than the numbers show, for two reasons. First, said the CEA, "The decline in wages was marked by a decline in benefits coverage."

Second, the decline in hourly wages probably was understated because workers were putting in extra, uncompensated hours. Said the CEA, "Employees, not just employers, reported declining hours."

This divergence may be due to an increase in unpaid overtime or work at home, but it remains an area of active research."

The American economy, as many politicians on the right suggest, is suffering from anemia. It is a lack of consumer confidence because such a large portion of the work force lives in fear.

Our Labor Day message is that Corporate America should change its attitude toward workers; consider employment as a measure of corporate success along with shareholder value; and cut executive salaries and bonuses when there are employment cuts.

Corporate America needs to reform itself before an aggressive government or reborn union movement steps in.

The bottom line is that workers are human, too.

MEMORY LANE

This week in history as reported in past editions of the Farmington Observer and the Farmington Enterprise.

■ **40 YEARS AGO — AUG. 30, 1958 (ENTERPRISE)**

Schools were ready to open with record enrollments. Farmington had 5,300 students, a 20 percent increase over last year, while the Clarendonville District had 2,200, an 8 percent increase.

Short item: "The average American, lucky fellow, ate 161 pounds of meat last year — up 37 pounds from his pre-war intake."

■ **25 YEARS AGO — AUG. 23, 1971 (ENTERPRISE & OBSERVER)**

A controversial school millage increase was

defeated in the Farmington District by 878 votes, forcing the board of education to continue with an austerity budget that eliminated sports and other activities.

Ronald N. Holko, chief police inspector in Westland, was named director of public safety in Farmington Township.

■ **2 YEARS AGO — AUG. 22, 1996 (OBSERVER)**

In an attempt to control development, Farmington Hills officials are asking residents to approve a millage that would provide funds to buy land, thus keeping it away from developers.

A "who's who" of Farmington-area leadership, past and present, turned out 200 strong for the funeral of Floyd A. Cairns, the man known as Mr. Farmington Hills.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

Is the Democratic National Convention on your TV viewing agenda?

We asked this question at the Downtown Branch of the Farmington Community Library.



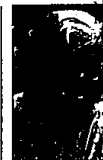
I don't know . . . I usually don't watch that kind of stuff.
John Walters
Farmington Hills



No, it's just a lot of rhetoric. All that money could be better spent on other things.
Carol Hansen
South Lyon



Parts of it, maybe. I like to be on my computer at night.
Hugh Morrison
Farmington Hills



Yes, I thought, Elizabeth (Dole) was great. Let's see what Hillary (Clinton) can do.
Naomi Morrison
Farmington Hills

Letters to the Editor

Thanks to so many

The Farmington Founder's Festival was a success for Farmington Families in Action and Cromwell Family Chiropractic.

Some \$386 was raised for Farmington Families in Action throughout the three-day sidewalk pop sale that was run by Cromwell Family Chiropractic in downtown Farmington.

The amount is more than double the amount raised at last year's Founders Festival pop sale. In addition to the money raised, information was distributed about the efforts of Farmington Families in Action as they are to battle the lingering drug problem in our community.

The contest for the gift certificate to Luigi's Restaurant was won by Gilian Cline, a Farmington Hills resident. Thanks go to Luigi's for donating the certificate.

Special thanks are due to Gary Jacobson and his employees at the Farmington Farmer Jack. They were great support this year and last year.

Thanks are also in order for Mahdi at the Good Food Company in Canton for their help with our supply of carbonated juice.

Dr. John Cromwell,
Farmington

I will continue to serve our community as a Board of Education Trustee and as a member of many other foundations, commissions and organizations that impact the quality of life in our area. I enjoyed meeting each of you as I went door to door.

I am a better person for the experience, because I have been blessed with so many new and wonderful friendships. As I drive around the city I can still see many of your faces as I pass your homes. Once again, thank you to the 3,371 voters for your confidence on Aug. 6.

Cathy Webb,
Farmington Hills

Honor VanAmejde

I wonder how many residents are aware that one of Farmington's best ever school superintendents has not yet received the recognition he deserves.

Mr. Marinus VanAmejde served the pioneering educational community of Farmington from 1957-76, when it was the fastest growing district in the state of Michigan.

He has personally hired many of Farmington's high quality teachers and administrators.

I have requested from the Schulman, Flanagan, and Maxfield administrations to honor Mr. VanAmejde for his dedication and success, in some way, during his living years.

I have been turned down each time, usually at the secretarial level.

In 1995, I attempted communication with the current administration in regards to naming a building in Mr. VanAmejde's honor, and unbelievably, I was told, "We can't get into anything like that here." The secretary did not even put the call through.

I humbly offer the following honorable list for review: Power Middle School, Schulman Administration, Schulman Drive, O.E. Dunckel Middle School, Harrison High School, Lanigan Elementary School, Warner Middle School and William Grace Elementary.

Certainly, a man whose impact is approaching its fourth generation, deserves recognition. Our society truly has its elders. We need to honor them.

Kerrie Saunders,
Port Sanilac, Mich.

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 Michigan 48335. Or they can be faxed to 810-477-9722.

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— Philip Power