

## Right at home in town

**H**ello Farmington. As I complete my first full week as editor of your Farmington Observer, I'm feeling right at home. That's because despite living just a few miles from this office for years, I traveled cross-county to work in Birmingham for eight years and most recently all the way out to Rochester to work for the past four years. My commute has dropped from nearly 40 miles to less than four, giving me less time to spend with "Traffic and Weather Together" and Drew & Mike and more time with my family and my job.

It's like a homecoming for me to cover a community I've lived near for 10 years. Although I don't know a lot of people and issues in the Farmingtons, I plan to learn plenty by getting around to many community events, meetings and gatherings; talking to people and reading what I can.

My memories of your community go back to my pre-teen years. When I was a youngster growing up in Allen Park, the only people I knew who lived here were my parents' close friends whose house was near Drake Road, just south of what is now I-696. I remember the winding dirt road — thick with mud in the fall — and the still-rural community we passed to get to their home. Off behind their densely wooded property, I recall hearing the clearing of trees and my "Uncle Mike" talking about the huge new freeway that would be built.

Years later, a friend of mine from high school friend moved into Independence Green. I remember driving here and noticing how quickly it had developed as a community. I got to know that complex, its little golf course, and, of course, all the traffic fun at the intersection of Halsted, Grand River and M-5.

In the past 11 years I've lived in Livonia and become more acquainted with your community.

I've shopped Farmington's stores for antiques, books, furniture and cars, and visited our Founders Festival. I've gotten stuck on Orchard Lake Road in rush-hour traffic and traveled much too fast on 696. I've seen



DAVE VARGA

friends married at Botsford Inn and visited sick ones at Botsford Hospital. And I've known plenty of people who work in your various office buildings, including both my wife and sister-in-law.

I like what I've seen and heard about — a historic central town; sprawling, hilly subdivisions; strong schools; and some beautiful tracts of land.

As for me, I've been in newspapers since college, working as a reporter for eight years and an editor for the past seven. Fortunately, my work as an editor has allowed me to do some reporting write stories and do reporting, which is what I originally got into this business to do. And, even more fortunately, I've learned to really enjoy my work as an editor — shaping the coverage, the look, the headlines, the layout and the editorial voice of the newspaper. For now, you won't see much of that change in your Farmington Observer. It's a fine newspaper with great photos and a sharp staff that covers the heart of the community; my plans are to tweak, not to overhaul.

If you have any ideas for improvements or stories that need to be told, I hope to hear from you. After all, this is your newspaper.

You can reach me by calling me at 477-5450, or drop me a line by fax (477-9722) or mail (33411 Grand River, Farmington, 48335). Better yet, if you're in town, stop by the office — we're on Grand River just west of Farmington Road — and say hello. And tell me about your community.

## Lansing key to fixing road woes

**A**cross the nation, Michigan's Gov. John Engler gets attention for 21 state tax cuts. What the rest of the nation doesn't read, however, is that our roads and bridges are in terrible shape. It's apparent on our riding comfort and vehicle repairs.

Engler himself refuses to admit there's a problem. In an October interview with Observer & Eccentric editors, he commented on delays for county road construction. He simply wasn't embarrassed by the general bad condition of Michigan roads.

Citizens Research Council of Michigan led its recent 12-page report on highway finance with this conclusion: "In interstate comparisons, Michigan ranks low in both amount of money spent on highways and in the condition of its roads... (The gasoline tax... at 15 cents per gallon is among the lower rates in the nation.)"

Meanwhile, even the lame-duck Legislature refuses to act to pump in more road money. We won't get into which party is dodging the issue, but instead offer our own ideas for increasing the \$1.3-billion road pot.

1. Sales tax correction. Michigan taxes its motor fuel at 15 cents per gallon for transportation, a rate that could be raised. But remember that Michigan is one of the few states to levy its sales tax (6 percent) on fuel without dedicating that revenue to roads, a violation of our "user fee" principle. Moreover, the sales tax is imposed not only on the cost of the fuel but on the other taxes, CRC reported.

Most of our state sales tax goes to fund schools. We could easily pump \$350 million more into roads by removing the sales tax from fuel and substituting an equivalent 8-cents-a-gallon increase in the fuel tax.

That would, of course, leave public schools \$350 million short. We suggest that the governor and Legislature admit they cut other state taxes far too hastily in 1994. They could

replace the lost school revenue with some combination of increases in the single business tax and personal income tax — both of which were among the 21 tax cuts the governor boasts about.

The U.S. Congress imposed a 4.3 cents-per-gallon tax on fuel that goes into the general fund. Congress should either should either a) repeal the 4.3 cents or b) dedicate it to the transportation fund.

Off limits should be vehicle registration fees, which have been hiked to \$337 million in 1995, according to the Citizens Research Council study. Michigan has moved from a weight-based fee system to a price-based system already. There is no justification in taping this already tapped source.

2. Equity changes. Michigan splits its transportation funds between the state, counties and municipalities based on a formula first written in 1937 and revised in 1951 — a formula sadly out of date. CRC reports:

Okland County has 2.7 percent of the county road mileage and absorbs 13.6 percent of the vehicle miles traveled. Wayne County has 1.6 percent of the statewide mileage of county roads and absorbs 15.9 percent of the county vehicle miles traveled. Clearly, the road formula must be brought up to date to reflect suburban traffic, not soybean fields.

3. Trucks. Michigan has a 164,000-pound weight limit on trucks. Most of the rest of the nation limits trucks to 80,000 pounds. The trucking lobby says heavy trucks don't damage roads if the weight is spread out on across 11 axles. We doubt that. Lower truck weight limits are necessary.

Michigan motorists are practical folks with little interest in ideological claptrap. They want better roads and know they will cost money. They're looking to Lansing for a dose of political courage to produce more road funds.

business meeting at Farmington High to hear from an attorney for a tri-county group organized to intervene in the Detroit school segregation lawsuit.

■ 2 YEARS AGO — Dec. 12, 1994 (OBSERVER)

Officials were pledging the end of real gridlock in the Grand River, 10 Mile and M-5 interchange through a \$1.3 million demonstration project grant to pay for engineering and purchasing right-of-way.

### COMMUNITY VOICE

**QUESTION:**  
How do  
reindeer  
fly?

We asked this  
question of Sar-  
rows Elementary  
Troop 858 at the  
Farmington  
Hills Police  
Department.



'Magic Dust.'  
—Kaitlyn Kohls,  
Farmington Hills



'Santa Claus  
puts dust on  
them.'  
—Kelsey Doyle,  
West Bloomfield



'By magic'  
—Michelle  
Buccell,  
Farmington Hills



'Santa's magic.  
He says all their  
names.'  
—Danielle  
Buccell,  
Farmington Hills

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Donate blood for others, self

I would just like to say Amen to the Dec. 5 editorial, "Donate blood — a gift of life." And further, I would like to emphasize blood donation as a way to possibly save one's own life, not necessarily that of another. I kind of doubt if most persons know there is a good health reason in blood donations for one's self.

According to many health studies, oxidation of iron in the blood stream is a major cause of cholesterol build-up in the arteries. Sure, one can take all the anti-oxidant food supplements or pay thousands of dollars for chelation therapy — or — one can simply donate blood at least three times a year, painless and free, and accomplish the same objective. Health studies claim that simply by donating a pint of blood at least three times a year dangerous levels of iron in the blood are reduced, thereby preventing oxidation and resultant build-up of cholesterol in the arteries. It's free and easy.

But don't take my word for it. Ask your doctor. If your cholesterol overall level is over 200, if you are a man and your HDL (good cholesterol) is below 36, or if you are a woman and your HDL is below 45, why not think about donating your blood? The HDL is the "good" cholesterol, and is what transports the LDL (bad cholesterol) out of the bloodstream. The problem is, it is next to impossible to raise your HDL unless you do vigorous exercise for long periods of time several times a week. How many of us can do that? If you can, fine.

Meanwhile, there is no upper age limit for donating blood and there are American Red Cross donation centers all around us. I repeat their telephone number for those who missed it in the Dec. 5 editorial: 1-800-GIVE-LIFE. It's perfectly okay to donate blood for your own selfish reasons. Please, just do it.

Kenneth Kemp,  
Farmington Hills

#### Policeman saves life

**P**oliceman dives into Lake Orion and saves a life.

Monday, Nov. 25 on our first day of snow a 63 year old woman decided to end her life and jumped into Lake Orion which was partly frozen.

Officer Lt. Jerry Narah didn't hesitate, he removed his service revolver and boots and dove in and saved her life.

His deed will be mentioned in the news and quickly forgotten. When a policeman gets involved with some of the rotten people in our society and something goes wrong you can be sure this kind of new will be on TV and will have full coverage daily for weeks to come.

Where would we be without our police?

Milton Rose,  
Farmington Hills

#### Where credit is due

Indians of today were not even living more than 100 years ago.

Indians born in America are Americans, no

more and no less. They should not have special attention. They will take all the foolish whitemen will give them.

Indian reservations should be a thing of the past. Indians should pay taxes and work for a living like other Americans. Their children should go to public schools of their choice and so on.

Indians of today would have nothing if not for the whitemen.

Everyone should stop spending their money at Indian casinos until this is settled once and forever. We must stop babying them.

Lets give credit where credit is due. All who have ancestors that came over from Europe — they are the ones who deserve special attention. Those people did not get food stamps and welfare either.

Leslie E. Swanson,  
Farmington

#### What Christmas is all about

**I**n this holiday season, perhaps we should reflect on what Christmas truly means to us. Christmas is meant to celebrate the Nativity, or birth of Christ. The holiday has generally been observed by the Christian church since the 4th Century A.D., though its exact origins are unknown.

Today however, Christmas has become a shopping spree in a department store, a wish list for Santa and the office cocktail party. Too often we are caught in the holiday frenzy. Have we misplaced the true meaning of Christmas?

At a time when many criticize the moral disintegration of society, everyone can appreciate the contributions of Jesus Christ to civilization. The life, and death, of Jesus altered the course of history more than any other person who has ever lived.

During the past 2,000 years, He has been the leading inspiration for western culture. In this time we have discovered and occupied the New World, and now continue to explore the worlds of inner and outer space. Many of our advancements are due directly to Him.

His inspiration has created some of the world's greatest music and art. Yet we also know Jesus has the greatest social reformer ever to walk the earth. Before His birth, the world had little compassion for basic human life. His inspiration led to the foundation of democracy.

His life enriches us today, and tells us death is not the end. He leads us to act beyond our own self-interest. His message of love, compassion and equality before God will forever comfort and challenge humankind.

It is with faith in Jesus that we celebrate Christmas. It is about His love and presence in our lives. Christmas is about everyday miracles and answers to our prayers.

When the gifts are unwrapped, come join the true celebration in a church near you. Christmas is the gift of God for all people that was born in the child of Jesus.

Jeff Lukens,  
Farmington Hills

## Farmington Observer

DAVE VARGA, COMMUNITY EDITOR, 810-477-5450

TOM BYRD, PUBLISHER, 810-901-2537

ROBERT SKLAR, MANAGING EDITOR, ECCENTRIC NEWSPAPERS, 810-901-2563

MARY SCOTT, MANAGER OF CIRCULATION, ECCENTRIC NEWSPAPERS, 810-901-2548

STEVEN K. POPE, GENERAL MANAGER, 810-901-2555

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OUR MISSION: "Because we publish community newspapers, we think about community journalism in a fundamentally different way than our bigger competition. They consider themselves to be independent from the stories and communities they cover, swooping in to write the unusual or sensational and then dashing off to cover something else. We regard ourselves as both accurate journalists and as caring citizens of the communities where we work."

— Philip Power

### MEMORY LANE

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

■ 40 YEARS AGO — DEC. 13, 1956 (ENTERPRISE)

Bids for construction of proposed Kendallwood and William Grace schools were higher than construction estimates, prompting concern by Farmington Public School board members.

■ 25 YEARS AGO — DEC. 8, 1971 (ENTERPRISE & OBSERVER)

About 100 residents turned out for an anti-