

Tragic times Town feels accidents' aftermath

Tragedy has become the talk of our community. It's tough to write about a school bond, new stores or condo developments, sidewalks or any other issues that may be worth editorial comment when your town is being emotionally ripped apart by tragic accidents befaling two of its young people.

The thoughts and prayers of an entire community go out to the families and friends of Shawn Mayberry and Melissa Garr, two hometown teenagers we had to write about last week.

Mayberry, 17, died July 23 while swimming with friends at a pond in Brighton. The Harrison High School football star, who would have been the team's top returning tackler and its best weightlifter, went under in 20 feet of water and drowned. He was respected as tenacious and enthusiastic about football.

Garr, 16, remains in critical condition this week suffering from a closed head injury and breathing with the help of a ventilator this week at University of Michigan Medical Centers in Ann Arbor. She was hit in the head by an 18-foot long, 5-inch wide branch that fell off an otherwise healthy tree at Farmington

Glen Aquatic Center pool. Her chance to survive was increased by the quick action of two teenage lifeguards at the pool, Laura Hryczyk and Melissa McKay, who responded by performing CPR until paramedics arrived.

Too often we write stories about teenagers or young people who do things they shouldn't be doing.

By all accounts, though, these two teenagers were not doing anything wrong. For some reason, they became victims.

The terrible circumstances of both accidents are compounded by their improbable nature: A well-conditioned athlete who reportedly wasn't drinking or doing drugs somehow got a cramp or got tired and drowned; A smart Farmington High School student is baby-sitting for three youngsters who are using the kiddie pool when a tree limb falls for no apparent reason right onto her head.

These are random tragedies that shouldn't happen to good people of any age, let alone teenagers in the prime of life. They remind us how quickly life can change or end, and how important it is to appreciate the things we can easily take for granted - like health, family and friends.

HAVEN offers hope to oppressed

When battered spouses, rape victims or abused kids reach the point of no return, they desperately look for a lifeline.

Which leads them to HAVEN (Help Against Violent Encounters Now).

It's the only Oakland County agency that provides advocacy, education, counseling and shelter exclusively for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse. Most users are victims or perpetrators in need of counseling.

HAVEN's philosophy cuts to the heart of what's at stake: "We believe that all people have a right to violence-free lives. We believe that abusive acts are acts of control and power that the victim does not provoke, enjoy or deserve. We believe that victims can regain control of their lives through appropriate support services."

Is there a genuine need for HAVEN? The statistics say yes. Last year, HAVEN furnished emergency shelter for 331 women and 452 children. Its crisis and support line fielded 10,534 calls. The domestic violence counseling program served 774 adults and children. There were 74 adults victimized by sexual assault who were counseled. Child abuse cases totaled 788.

Victims span the economic and age spectrum. Perpetrators typically were physically or sexually abused as children or witnessed violence in their home. Overall last year, HAVEN extended 17,000 lifelines, a 16-percent increase from 1995.

HAVEN's \$2.7 million budget receives funding from such diverse donors as United Way, the Salvation Army, Oakland County Family Independence Service, Oakland County Circuit Court and the Skillman Foundation. The 10th annual Promenade of Hope at the new Star Entertainment Centre in Southfield on June 24 raised more than \$400,000. The next big fund-raiser: the fourth annual Detroit Lions Courage House Dinner Oct. 22 at the Troy Marriott, featuring Head Coach Bobby Ross. Between 88 and 92 percent of HAVEN's total revenue goes to operations.

More than 200 volunteers supplement HAVEN's 76 staff members and 27 board members. These big-hearted folks extend helping hands from seven sites in four cities: Pontiac, Rochester, Novi and Southfield.

A key HAVEN service is the Men Exercising Nonviolent Skills (MENS) Program. Most who enroll have been arrested for domestic violence or do so as part of their probation. In 1996, the program taught 684 men about what it means to be accountable for how they

OAKLAND WATCH



BOB SKLAR

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Another key HAVEN service is dubbed First Response, part of the Advocacy Program. When a First Responder is paged, she knows it means another Oakland resident has been traumatized and is in dire need of help at a county hospital or police station. The trauma can be shocking: knife or gunshot wounds, severe facial bruises, broken bones, runaway emotions. "The first people the victim encounters have a lot to do with how a victim responds for the rest of her or his life," says Advocacy Program director Judy Lee.

Founded in 1976, HAVEN fights with sorrow, extending treatment as it strives to achieve prevention. Says executive director Hedy Nuriel: "The record number of calls and the increase in clients simply illustrates that we are doing a terrific job of publicizing available services but we have a long road ahead to eliminate these problems."

The police and the courts have teamed up to treat domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse "as the atrocities that they are," says Nuriel. "Yet thousands continue to suffer in their own homes and on the street."

Until that suffering is gone, HAVEN will have a vital role to play in our county - make no mistake about that.

Bob Sklar is managing editor of our Oakland County editions.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

What is your favorite musical group or entertainer?



Joel Rosen
Farmington Hills



Pearl Jam. I just like their music and I wish I could see them in concert.
Tim Wardle
Farmington Hills



Spice Girls. I don't know, just because.
Shannan Matlis
Farmington Hills



Aerosmith. My mom always plays them in the car and I sing along.
Britny Forgue
Farmington Hills

We asked this question at the teen center in the Farmington Hills Ice Arena.

LETTERS

Racial 'incidents' are news

Reading about the instances of racial strife that seem to always make the news, I would like to point out a couple of personal experiences that did not make the news.

Approximately a month ago in the Wendy's on Orchard Lake and Ten Mile I was waiting placing an order when an obviously upset elderly white lady walked in. She complained that she left her newspaper at the table an hour ago and now it was gone. She was very angry and agitated and ranted at the young black man behind the counter. He reached into his own pocket and gave the lady 50 cents for another paper.

Two weeks ago I was at Laurel Park Mall and in the art glass section I saw a young black girl running after a very pregnant white lady saying "Miss, Miss!" She stopped the lady and asked her if that was her purse sitting on a bench out in the mall. The lady then realized she did not have her purse and ran out in the mall where she was sitting, on the bench where she left it; watched by a couple of the girl's friends.

These "incidents" don't make the news but they should.

Ronald Oliverio
Farmington Hills

In-fill work fueled by greed

I commend you on your article of July 24 about Adeline Stremmer's battle with Phoenix Land Development Corporation. The lady's problem finally received the attention it warrants. It is deplorable that the lives of long-standing residents are altered and disrupted for the profit and greed of in-fill developers.

Why can't developers build respectable transitions between new development and abutting homes? Why not have reasonable transitions in lot sizes, setbacks, and building heights between well-established neighborhoods and new developments? Why can't developers provide effective buffers (berms, trees, etc.) in the early stages of development as opposed to none at all or in the final stages? Instead, some developers show disrespect for the land and current residents. They rape the land and then attempt to belittle and intimidate neighboring residents.

It is disturbing, distressing and disgusting to be lectured on the developer's rights or to be dismissed because the developer meets the statutory requirement of the city. Residents elect officials and give them the charge of creating and changing the statutes. If residents cannot change the statutes then they certainly can change the officials (November '97).

Adeline Stremmer has shown courage, stamina and grace in the face of indifference by the developer, the community and city officials. Sadly, the treatment that Mrs. Stremmer has received is not an isolated case.

I congratulate and appreciate the Observer alerting the public of the tragic situation that the Stremmers and other Farmington Hills residents are experiencing.

Bette Austin
Farmington Hills

Mental hospitals are funded

As the chair of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Community Health, I would like to clarify some of the misconceptions from last week's article regarding the Department of Community Health Budget.

First, the Democrats are not responsible for leaving funding for three mental health hospitals "exposed" to the possibility of the governor's line item veto. As any high school student of government knows, the Michigan constitution gives the governor the power of a line-item veto, not the Democrats in the legislature.

Second, the Department of Community Health budget was on target. We did not over-spend, we reached a bipartisan agreement that matched the spending allotment agreed to by the governor and the legislature.

Finally, I would like to stress that the budget fully funds three mental health hospitals that the governor wants to close. At the beginning of this year, there were 349 patients in these three hospitals. My colleagues and I, both Democratic and Republican, wanted to ensure we did not have another disaster similar to the Lafayette closing a few years ago. That is why we funded these hospitals. Since 1990, the department has closed approximately 12 hospitals throughout the state. There is a great need for these three facilities. Without them, many children and adults will either be treated far away from their families or be left with inadequate care, or no care at all.

Nick Cirramitaro
State Representative 27th District

OCC's unfriendly move

In the past we have enjoyed playing tennis on the vacant courts at Oakland Community College during the summer.

Closing the access road to the tennis courts makes our tennis group unhappy.

Closing the access road on the edge of campus from Farmington Road to Orchard Lake during the bridge construction seems very unfriendly and absolutely wrong. I am not directly affected by this closure, but I feel sorry for those who are.

George Keith, the current president of the Orchard Ridge Campus, is an excellent English professor. Public relations is out of his expertise.

The college has not been friendly to our community since he took over. Maybe he should have stayed with teaching English.

I urge Farmingtonians when the millage for the community college comes up again to let them know how we feel.

Ruth Moehlman
Farmington Hills

Farmington Observer

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— Philip Power

TURNING BACK THE PAGES

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

40 YEARS AGO - AUG. 1, 1957 (ENTERPRISE)
Plans were being drafted to submit to U.S. Postal Officials to allow a new Farmington Post Office to be built at the corner of Slocum and Farmington Road. Meanwhile, negotiations were under way for the old building, on Farmington Road north of Alta Loma, to become a joint city/township public library.

25 YEARS AGO - AUG. 2, 1972
Members of the Soroptimist Club of Farmington and Boy Scouts joined the Farmington Public Safety Department in going door-to-door trying to protect residents from a rash of break-ins by engraving their merchandise.

2 YEARS AGO - JULY 31, 1995
High school students would need to make up one hour of instructional time for every hour of unexcused absence under a school district new policy in the works.