

## Sales lesson Fund-raisers can be draining

The last of the holiday gift wrap many folks bought from the school fund-raiser is probably finished or put away for next year; those candies they bought from students are reduced to a drop in the holiday calorie bucket.

But if you thought the Farmington school board's decision last month to push fund-raising out of the classroom will put an end to such money-making efforts, don't bet on it. It's an interesting idea, but it won't happen.

Anyone with children or relatives/friends who have children knows that these school kids regularly get used as money-making tools by any number of very worthwhile groups through the schools. It isn't going to end — it's just going underground.

One example is Jump Rope for Heart, a valuable exercise that encourages youngsters to do some cardiovascular jump rope, gives them heart healthy information and raises money for the American Heart Association at the same time. (Parents know the real reason that kids like this event is that they can "win" prizes like water bottles or T-shirts by getting a certain amount of donations.)

It's easy to see how this bit of healthy competition can add peer pressure on those who don't want to or can't participate. Maybe their parents already give hundreds of dollars to the American Heart Association or they forbid

their children to beg off family, friends and neighbors. Kids shouldn't be put in a situation of being singled out or made to feel uncomfortable during the school day for not participating or donating, especially if it's a First Amendment issue. On the other hand, you could argue that students go to school to learn and being singled out is always a learning experience.

Under this new policy, teachers and school administrators are being asked to get students to participate either before or after school or by sending information home. The policy will definitely make it tougher on the teachers and staff by forcing them to follow new rules, while theoretically freeing up some class time.

In many cases, the unintended result will be to decrease the funds raised, such as money used by PTAs, sports or music boosters, or the good done by groups, such as Goodfellows through the holiday collections. And that is unfortunate. Often, the school-based efforts can make or break, say, a band's trip overseas or efforts to feed more needy people.

Helping youngsters become caring, responsible citizens is a worthy goal for the schools. But forcing kids into the ever-growing number of fund-raising efforts, whether set up before or during class, certainly isn't the only way to accomplish that mission.

## 'Tough new laws' talk is cheap

Michigan's prisons are like Pac-Man in the video game which incessantly consumes other creatures.

Under the last two governors, the Corrections Department has quintupled its budget to \$1.3 billion. Now, with its prisons overflowing at the 40,000 mark, Michigan is exporting prisoners to other states. State officials talk of building five more prisons that will cost \$18,000 to \$40,000 per inmate to run.

So what has been the Legislature's response? No one proposes more taxes to pay for new prisons. Instead, lawmakers sit up at night around the kitchen table inventing new crimes and longer punishments, to warehouse more offenders for ever-longer periods of time. The most common term in their news releases isn't "efficiency" or "taxpayers" or "kids" but "tough new laws."

Consider a state Senate news release: ■ "Tough law against those who prey on victims by impersonating utility workers," sponsored by Sen. Loren Bennett, R-Canton, signed by Gov. John Engler.

■ "Sentencing guidelines," generally higher — Sen. William Van Regenmorter, R-Jenison, passed by the Senate.

■ "Expanded truth-in-sentencing, requires all convicted felons to serve at least their minimum sentences; no reduction in minimums for 'good behavior'; longer stays for bad behavior" — Van Regenmorter, passed Senate.

■ "Andre's law — provides option of capital punishment for a person convicted of raping and killing a child" — constitutional amendment proposed by Sen. Joel Gougeon, R-Bay City; no Senate action.

■ Ban on assisted suicide — Van Regenmorter, passed Senate.

A big game in Lansing should be called Crime of the Month. The idea is to create special categories within a crime for special classes of victims. It's like the Old World caste system where you get two years for hitting a perceived nobleman and one year for a peasant.

It started with the 1987 Detroit riots when lawmakers proposed the death penalty for killing police and firemen. The next step was a

special category called "ethnic hate" crimes, where punishment would be enhanced if you attacked someone from another ethnic group.

In recent years, there have been bills to enhance punishments for killing senior citizens, then for carjacking, then one prohibiting parole for a carjacker (Rep. Eileen DeHart, D-Westland), then for hurting pregnant women, then for more adult trials (and prison sentences) for minors.

This year, sensing that teachers' union bashing had gone too far, senators produced bills for extra punishments for assaulting a teacher.

Moving traffic violations are bad, but they get enhanced fines if you speed in a highway construction zone.

The most recent entry came during the Christmas holidays when public service ads targeted drunk drivers. Rep. Andrew Raczowski, R-Farmington Hills, didn't even have a bill in draft form before he announced he would seek doubled penalties for drunken drivers with kids in the vehicle.

Assaulting anyone is bad, but there would be a separate crime for assaulting a Corrections officer (Rep. Frank Fitzgerald, R-Grand Ledge).

Rep. Penny Crissman, R-Rochester, has two bills to allow garnishment and attachment of the institutional accounts of jail prisoners and Corrections inmates.

Rep. (now Sen.) David Jaye, R-Macomb, is seeking chemical castration of sex offenders as a condition of parole.

Most of the bills amount to pandering to public fears. Nearly all would crowd prisons even more. Absolutely all would take state money (after 24 tax cuts since 1991) away from colleges, schools, natural resources, safety inspections, health care and adoptions.

There's no end.

Don't be suckered by the "tough new laws" slogan aimed at your interest group. They are talk, and talk is cheap.

Lawmakers need to dream up more responsible ways to deal with criminals.

### COMMUNITY VOICE

#### QUESTION:

Have you kept your New Year's resolutions so far?

We asked this question in front of the Farmington post office in the Downtown Center.



"Yes. (It's) actually to lose weight through diet and exercise."  
Kevin Weaver  
Farmington



"I didn't make any. I don't keep them anyway."  
Joe Penberthy  
Farmington



"I didn't have any. Why? I like the way I live my life now."  
Jim Teller  
Farmington Hills



"I haven't started mine yet. I want to try to get into shape and get active through the 'Y' and lose a few pounds."  
Anthony Rice  
Southfield

### LETTERS

#### Hall monitors don't help

Who are these men walking through our halls, who are these men invading our peace, and who are these men intentionally harassing us? These so-called hall monitors are supposedly walking through our halls, protecting us so-called adolescents. What is really happening is that good kids are accused of things they aren't doing. We are told that hall monitors are there to protect our school, but there is a thing called overprotection when every time we turn around, they are right in our face. We have no privacy, we get constantly harassed and are asked, "What are you doing here?" in our own school.

These hall monitors are supposed to prevent fights, drinking/drug use, and skippers throughout our school. It still seems to be the same. Kids still skip when a class they don't like comes up. Kids still fight, only now it's out of school. Kids still come to school drunk and high. I know this is true because I've seen it.

I have asked other kids what they thought about hall monitors. Most think that hall monitors are "being paid to walk around the school and look at people." Another said, "It's an insult to be treated like a 2-year-old in my own school, having to be supervised. I mean, who do these people think we are?" I think that they pick on kids to hassle so it looks like they are doing their job. One day I was going to my locker during my own lunch period to get a book so I could study for a quiz. The officer said to me, "What are you doing here?" You're not supposed to be here," and told me in a threatening way, "never do this again." Excuse me, do what again — get my book so I can study?!! I thought that's the reason I was in school!

I feel strongly that the only way a good healthy school system works is by having a zero tolerance rule for these problems at our school. Treating everyone like a criminal accomplishes very little. A zero tolerance rule for skippers, fighters, and users would mean that those caught doing these things would be expelled for the rest of the semester. If kids knew that something this drastic would happen to them, then they would think twice about doing these things. I'm tired of feeling that I have to defend myself to hall monitors especially when I mind my own business and try to live by the rules of the school. School should provide a comfortable environment. I should be able to have a positive feeling about being in school. This is pretty hard to do when hall monitors are around spying on us.

Jonathon Kambouris  
Northville

#### Thanks for help

I wish to publicly thank the Farmington Hills police officer who drove my elderly mother home after my car broke down on the dark and rainy evening of December 22.

Not only that: A tow truck was called, and after it arrived, the officer drove me home as well.

This is the human face of "community policing," and was much appreciated.

Again, thank you!  
John M. Patrick  
Farmington Hills

#### Do lawmakers distrust us?

On Dec. 4, the Michigan Senate voted down a proposal by Senator Gary Peters that would have placed the issue of assisted suicide on the ballot in the November general election. If passed, the people of Michigan would have been responsible for making one of the most defining and momentous decisions of a generation. Regardless of your views on the issue of assisted suicide, this is too important of a decision to leave in the hands of politicians who are more concerned about political posturing for the upcoming November election or personal political agendas. This issue should be our decision as an electorate to make. It should be ours to discuss at bowling alleys, at Tupperware parties, around the water cooler, at our churches and synagogues, at town hall meetings and most importantly, with family members.

Do the Senators who voted to deny us one of our most cherished rights lack trust in the competence of the voters in Michigan? Do they think we will not reach into the depths of their souls and vote our true convictions on this important issue or was this denial granted because of political pressure from certain special interests groups.

If this was a denial due to lack of faith in the electorate, then these elected officials deserve to be removed from office November. This is a clear sign they no longer believe in the system they have been elected and sworn to uphold and defend. If this was a denial because of pressure from special interests, even more reason to have a public referendum. It shows our elected officials are either willing to prostitute themselves or too feeble to vote their conscience.

What's even more disturbing and about this important debate is our representative in the Senate, Senator Willis Bullard was absent and didn't vote. This is the second major issue in under nine months that directly affects the people of his district and the second time he's been AWOL. Once is forgivable, twice is intolerable. He owes the people of the 15th District an explanation.

If you are as disturbed about this as I am, call his office toll free (888) 736-2855. If he's unwilling to be there for us when his vote really matters, why should we be there for him in November when our votes are important to him?

Stephen Dibert  
Farmington Hills

### TURNING BACK THE PAGES

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

#### 40 YEARS AGO — JAN. 9, 1958 (ENTERPRISE)

Farmington approved hiring planning consultants to work on a major study of downtown, with major upcoming plans including paving some downtown streets with concrete and building a second offstreet parking area.

Signatures from 374 homeowners in the Bel-Aire subdivision were listed on petitions objecting to a modern 24-lane bowling alley proposed on Leelanau just south of the Bel-Aire shopping center. A rezoning request prompted the opposition, though the builders noted that the current zoning would have

allowed an all-night hamburger stand or restaurant which might be even more objectionable.

#### 2 YEARS AGO — JAN. 8, 1996

A Farmington Hills man was charged with sexually assaulting an 11-year-old boy. Initially, Farmington Hills police believed the 30-year-old man was luring young boys through the Internet. He was later found guilty.

Farmington Hills' chances of stopping a proposed Commerce Township waste water treatment plant's effluent were hanging on a threatened species of fish called the redear dace, according to a lawsuit. The waste water would have flowed through the Farmingtons to the Rouge River.

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— Philip Power