

LETTERS

Proud of America

As Independence Day nears, I'd like to share my proud experience of America with you. It is too often I hear negative things about this wonderful country and I believe my view would prove to be a valuable topic for your publication. I always wish for my story to instill greater loyalty and patriotism for Americans, instead of taking it for granted.

Twenty-five years ago, my husband and I set out to attain a dream of freedom and prosperity. From Lvov, Russia, we embarked on a journey of unknown outcome. With limited experience, twin girls of but five years of age, \$200, no knowledge of any language but Russian and great determination we ventured to America. We aspired for liberation and opportunities for independence.

After years of being deprived individual rights and the permission to leave Russia, we at last reached the United States in 1974. We were excited to have arrived in a country where freedom and diversity was welcomed and where voices were heard. America offered us overwhelming opportunities and we quickly gained wonderful friendships and were welcomed to express our individuality — something we had been denied in Russia.

My vision of having a health spa like Tamara Institute De Beaute' has been obtained with a level of prosperity, appreciation and a love for life that is immeasurable. My dedication to educate the public about the health and beauty industry increases every day, as does my pride in being an American. Being offered these and the multitude of other opportunities is a reality that has exceeded my dreams.

I still have that same feeling of gratitude that I did in 1974. I hope that someday others in this great country of ours will come to realize its liberation and appreciate their ability to be individuals. Many countries remain deprived like Russia. My desire for all countries to be like America grows when I hear of the many struggles they continue to go through — as my family and I once did.

This Independence Day, I take great pride in being an American citizen. I am happy to share the feeling of gratitude and of honor for America, the best country in the world.

Tamara Friedman
Farmington Hills

his most repulsive to date. Not only does he continue to practice medicine in violation of the cease and desist order I issued more than a year ago, he cruelly plays with the emotions of desperate people — those who are in such pain that they are willing to die at his hand or those so desperate to live, they are willing to grasp at any straw in the hope of being one of the lucky few who get a lifesaving transplant.

My only hope is that his latest action has outraged the public that we will succeed in gathering the evidence to successfully prosecute him.

Our staff continues to work closely with local law enforcement and the attorney general's office to put an end to this cruelty. However, it is clear that Kovorkian still believes that public sentiment is on his side. I urge all those good citizens who are as appalled as I am to let him know that he is wrong and to support our efforts to enforce the law. I am heartened by the recent legislative initiative banning organ transplants performed by unlicensed individuals and ask for support in this effort as well.

Kathleen M. Wilbur
Director, Michigan Department of
Consumer & Industry Services

Thrilled by story

How thrilled I was to find an extensive article on Cloverdale School's "Field Day" when I opened up my June 18 newspaper.

My son Stephen has attended this training center, which educates and provides care for children with severe physical and mental impairments, for four years. During this time he has flourished under the attention from the entire Cloverdale staff — teachers, paraprofessionals, volunteers, office staff, nursing staff and therapists. These folks love our special kids and are undoubtedly among the hardest working and most dedicated public school staff in Oakland County.

At a time when special education seems to be under so much fire (most attackers having a very inadequate understanding of the purpose, function and necessity of special education) it was terrific to read the Observer's positive article. Everyone at the Cloverdale was excited and talking about it on Friday!

Carolyn Das
Farmington

Congrats on grad stories

A hearty "congratulations" on your recent coverage of the June 7 graduations of the North, Harrison and Farmington High Classes of '98. Graduation is a special time for hundreds of students and their families in our community, and your coverage, not just photos, helped to personalize each of the three events.

No, I am not the parent of a '98 graduate, but I can appreciate any and all coverage of the good things happening in our community.

Cynthia Hellick
Farmington Hills

Spending priorities show universities get short shrift

It's getting near crunch time in Lansing.

With summer officially here and elections looming in November, both the Legislature and the governor are anxious to get their final deals cut on taxing and spending. It's at this time of the year that the real priorities finally become clear.

Consider Gov. John Engler's. He wants to spend \$187.6 million to build 5,856 new prison beds. Once they are built, operating these prisons will cost the taxpayers an estimated \$110.8 million every year, according to the Senate Fiscal Agency, historically the source of the most accurate estimates in Lansing. That works out to a cost of \$32,033 per inmate per year. Overall, the governor wants to increase the Department of Corrections budget, already a swollen \$1.4 billion, by around 5 percent.

By contrast, Engler's original executive budget proposed a 1.6 percent increase to the states colleges and universities, well below the level of inflation.

State Sen. John Schwarz, R-Battle Creek and chair of the Senate Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee, is the Legislature's main authority on spending for higher education. Earlier this year, he held hearings around the state about the consequences of cutting spending on colleges and universities. The consequence, he was told everywhere he went, would be decisions by colleges to hike tuition at a rate higher than inflation in order to make up the difference.

Then when the appropriation bill surfaced in the House, nearly 40 Republicans deserted Engler and voted with Democrats to increase university spending in excess of what the governor wanted. The Senate passed an appropriations bill that increased spending for higher education by 3 percent.

Now it's crunch time. This whole issue will get settled within a week or 10 days.

Here's the context that helps frame my own thinking about this matter.

At a time when Michigan's economy is roaring along at near historic levels, it is very odd for the Engler administration to want to pinch back colleges and universities, among our state's most valuable long-term resources.

There is no doubt Engler supported appropriations above the level of inflation for the past



PHILIP POWER

two years, which enabled universities to keep tuition increases low. But if you look over the past 20 years, there is no doubt that higher education in Michigan has been funded at a rate considerably less than inflation. There's plenty of catch-up still to do.

There is a very strange quality to the governor's budget priorities. He wants to spend \$32,000 per newly warehoused prison inmate, in stark contrast to the \$5,700 the state spends per pupil in supporting K-12 schools or the money the state spends per college student.

Rep. Kirk Proff, D-Ypsilanti, for months has been pointing out that the cost per inmate in Michigan prisons is considerably above that in neighboring states. He has called for a high level commission to explore why and propose remedies. So far, there has been negligible response from the Engler administration.

Sen. Schwarz wants to increase state spending on higher education by 3.6 percent, which is above the level of inflation and allows colleges and universities to hold the line on tuition. This amounts to a spending increase of some \$40 million, about a third of what Gov. Engler wants to spend on new warehouse space for criminals.

I think Schwarz has the better part of this argument. If he doesn't and if colleges and universities have to hike tuition, grumpy parents can register their views by calling the Governor's Office at (517) 373-3400.

Phil Power is chairman of HomeTown Communications Network Inc., the company that owns this newspaper, and a regent of the University of Michigan. He welcomes your comments, either by voice mail at (734) 953-2047, Ext. 1880, or by e-mail at ppower@online.com

Horried at Kevorkian

I am horrified and repulsed by the actions of Michigan's most infamous non-doctor, Jack Kevorkian. Last fall, as the director of the Michigan Department of Consumer and Industry Services, charged with licensing and regulating doctors, I reminded residents "Kevorkian has not had a valid medical license for six years and does not have the skills or expertise to carry out the very intricate work done by organ transplant specialists and teams."

His latest action, cutting out the kidneys from a victim he assisted to commit suicide, is

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