

Noise control

MDOT should lend an ear

Progress is a double-edged sword, especially for homeowners who live within earshot of I-275, which is slated for a \$31 million rebuild in approximately six weeks.

For motorists, a rebuild of the congested highway that is full of potholes will be a blessing.

But for homeowners, such as Joan Barber who lives on Nine Mile and has long suffered with the freeway noise, as well as others in Meadowbrook subdivision, the rebuild promises to only increase the already irritating noise levels.

The missing piece here is the lack of consideration Michigan Department of Transportation officials have shown nearby residents.

Improved roads are definitely a priority to Michigan drivers — and so is peacefulness.

It would not have taken much effort for MDOT officials to listen to residents' complaints. But MDOT officials have made it clear they do not plan to redesign the I-275 project.

Residents are taking exception to plans to "tune" the pavement with grooves for better traction — with a definite whirling sound. Renovation plans also call for expansion joints for every 10 miles of highway, yet another source of noise.

Residents also want the roadway rebuilt with asphalt, which they maintain is quieter — but more expensive — than the cement MDOT officials plan to use.

Further irritating residents is MDOT's position that they don't have to conduct a sound study because the road project is a renovation, not a new road or additional lanes.

One homeowner has measured decibel levels of 82-84. OSHA regulations considers anything

■ We encourage all residents in the area, as well as representation from Farmington Hills City Hall, to descend upon Lansing en masse.

80 and over loud and dangerous, according to the Noise Pollution Clearinghouse.

MDOT and state officials have consistently fallen short of taxpayers' expectations. First, the roads in the metro area are a shameful mess. Secondly, when it comes to fixing them, no one seems to talk to the drivers who drive them, and the residents who live along them.

Some Farmington Hills residents plan to attend an MDOT meeting next week to tell state officials just what they think of these plans. We encourage all residents in the area, as well as representation from Farmington Hills City Hall, to descend upon Lansing en masse.

When the freeway is rebuilt there's no doubt that state politicians and the governor will put themselves on the back, believing once again they have stood up to the plate and fulfilled taxpayers' needs.

Unfortunately, transportation officials appear to be an insensitive bunch. A case in point is Joan Barber and the noise levels she has lived with along I-275 for years.

And then according to one MDOT spokeswoman, she doesn't understand why residents want a noise study now, suggesting one when the new road is in place.

Now that makes sense. But it's also yet another way to tell residents that their feelings and concerns don't count.

Shame on state road officials.

Internet bills a publicity ploy

The "crime of the week" is becoming a sad joke in the Michigan Legislature.

Latest entry is a pair of bills to add two years onto the prison sentence of a pedophile who uses the Internet to prey on kids. "Get tough," say the news releases of publicity-hungry lawmakers. One suspects there are more "tough new laws" news releases than there are Bill/Monica jokes floating around the State Capitol lobby.

Let's talk sense. Crime is crime. Assaulting a child sexually is one of the more heinous crimes a human can commit. It deserves and usually gets a prison sentence along with lengthy exposure on the address list of sexual criminals.

But what makes using Internet an extra crime, worth an additional two years in prison? Why is that worth two years more than a male intruding into the bedroom of his ladyfriend's daughter?

What makes using the Internet worth two years more than going into a park and dragging a kid into the bushes? What makes using the Internet worth two years more than picking up and abusing a young hitchhiker?

What makes using the Internet worse than using a standard telephone or writing a letter?

The Michigan Senate rushed to the job for publicity purposes. The phenomenon of attacking children sexually has been around for thousands of years. The Internet is just a few years old. It's a hotter topic at suburban cocktail parties than the U.S. Postal Service, the telephone or two tin cans and a string.

"If you are a sexual predator working the

Internet, we are going to find you, we are going to get you, and we are going to put you in jail," said Sen. Mike Rogers, R-Brighton, sponsor of SB 7 defining the crime. Why not just nail all predators regardless of how they approach a kid?

Michigan does have a law tacking two years onto a criminal's sentence if he uses a gun in committing a crime. That makes sense. Guns are more effective tools of death than fists, brass knuckles and even knives.

But the Internet? If Senate Bills 7 and 217 become law, they will just take up space in the statute books.

It was ironic that the Senate acted within a week after some of its members bawled out Budget Director Mary Lannoy for giving the Department of Corrections (prisons) an 8.6 percent increase while higher education was getting half that percentage. Senators wanted to know why. The answer is that every new crime is greeted with the bleating legislative response of "tough new laws" and "tougher penalties."

Here's a question for Sens. Rogers and his pal, George Z. Hart, D-Deerborn, sponsor of SB 217: What are you doing to make sure we catch those predators? Are more law enforcement people being hired to police the Internet? Are more prosecutors being added to assemble the burden of proof in an Internet case?

Or are you just hiring more publicists to prepare more news releases about redundant punishments?

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

In this Monica Lewinsky era of media hype, do you think we'll ever see a classic American celebrity like Joe DiMaggio?

We asked this question at the library in downtown Farmington.



Lucille Shenk works in Farmington



Rebecca Ballston Farmington



Patrick Techudi Farmington



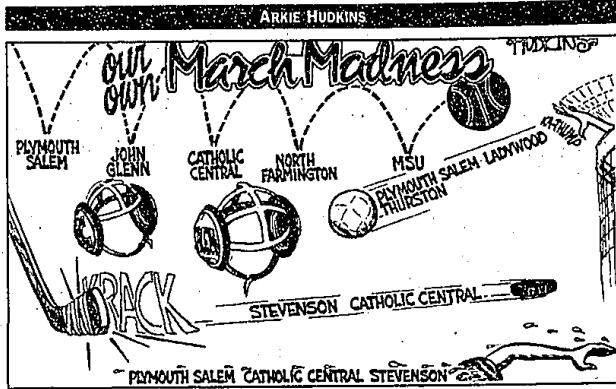
Leon Scholchit Farmington Hills

"I certainly hope so."

"Yes, there are still good people."

"I think our next president. People are putting pressure on the kind of (moral) character they want to lead the nation."

"No, I doubt it. He (DiMaggio) was one in a million."



LETTERS

Many qualified workers

I read Philip Power's column, "GOP leads way in job training," in the Observer dated Feb. 11 and feel compelled to reply to some of his remarks.

First of all, I was impressed by his opinions. However, I must challenge the statement: "The current shortage of qualified workers is already viewed by business folks as Michigan's biggest economic problem. Employers can't find qualified, skilled workers."

I am a qualified, skilled legal secretary who retired too early after almost 13 years at my last place of employment. I do conduct myself in a professional manner and dress appropriately. I have even done fashion modeling which tells me that I can hold my own. I find it very difficult to believe that the job market for qualified workers is in such poor condition because I have responded to newspaper ads, been interviewed, by one and/or three people at the same time after having been tested for several hours and leaving feeling very confident that all went well, only to be advised that I was not chosen for the position.

Upon inquiry as to why, I was given very vague answers leading me to believe that my unspoken age was the deterrent. The law prohibits discrimination because of age and thus, the employer evades the issue rather than risk a lawsuit charging age discrimination.

Is this not strange considering that the mature worker usually is more efficient, dependable, trustworthy and most willing to go the extra mile? During these past months that I have been looking for part-time employment, I have encountered far too many inefficient people holding down jobs who cannot and/or will not answer a simple question, i.e., bank tellers who do not know the employer's policies, a manager who clearly states that she does not know anything about the subject of my inquiry. I know that I am fully qualified, but obviously I cannot work in the minimum wage neighborhood.

Florence Ziarnik
Livonia

Failed promises

I want to thank the Observer and Tim Richard for reporting on the failure of Michigan charter schools to deliver on the promises made by the governor and the Mackinac Center.

The U.S. Department of Education recently released a report on "Barriers, Benefits and Costs of Using Private Schools to Alleviate Overcrowding in Public Schools."

The study found that:

- Urban non-public schools reject 17 percent of the students who apply in contrast to public schools, who must take all students;
- Eighty-six percent of denominational schools would not admit voucher students if

they were required to exempt kids from religious instruction;

■ Most non-public schools use admission processes not permitted by public schools. Seventy-three percent require student discipline records, 74 percent ability to perform at grade level, 77 percent require interviews with students, 88 with parents.

Further, 68 percent of non-public schools are not interested in accepting children with mental or physical disabilities (who must be accepted by public schools). The bottom line that non-public schools make clear is that 92 percent would be willing to accept students from overcrowded public schools only if they were allowed to maintain their current admission standards, curriculum and religious instruction.

Marian McCracken
Farmington

Refreshing

Given all the recent press over the Grosse Pointe High School sex scandal and the binge-drinking deaths at local colleges, it certainly was refreshing to read an article about Farmington High's academic jocks. It's about time we paid tribute to these positive role models instead of rehearsing some of the negative issues this high school has faced in recent months (such as beer bashes and the use of out-of-town friends' homes as "party houses," where the police had to actually break into the home and escort hiding students out in handcuffs).

Let's continue to focus more attention on these positive role models that our younger children can look up to and relate to and perhaps realize that they, too, can achieve success in both school and sports. As one of the students, Kristin, stated in the article: "Academics is tops. But it's nice to know I can still do both, and excel at both." Yea, kids!

F. Eugonnie
Farmington Hills

Note of thanks

We would appreciate you printing this note of thanks to State Rep. Andrew Raczowski for helping through a problem we had. He met with us at the Adult Senior Center on Eleven Mile Road. He took the time to go over our situation and then made the necessary phone calls to show us how to handle the situation. Thank you.

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Olive
Farmington

Farmington Observer

JOANNE MALISZEWSKI, COMMUNITY EDITOR, 248-477-5450
SUSAN ROSE, MANAGING EDITOR, 734-953-2149
HUGH GALLAGHER, ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR, 734-953-2118
PEG KNOXPEL, ADVERTISING MANAGER, 734-953-2177
JIM JIMMERSON, PUBLISHER, 734-953-2100
STEVEN K. POPE, VICE-PRESIDENT/GENERAL MANAGER, 734-953-2252
MARK WARDEN, CIRCULATION DIRECTOR, 734-953-2234
RICK FIDORELLI, MARKETING DIRECTOR, 734-953-2150

HOMETOWN COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK, INC.

PHILIP POWER, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD JOANNE TOWAR, VICE PRESIDENT/EDITORIAL RICHARD AGRIAN, PRESIDENT, 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