

# Musical accolades

## Bands, orchestras should take a bow

It's high time that Farmington middle and high school bands and orchestras tooted their own horns.

They deserve to.

The bands and orchestras in recent south-east Michigan music competitions scored big, culminating a year of hard work and effort.

The bands and orchestras were judged and given overall scores of I, II or III, with I being the highest. Each group played three selections, including a march, a required selection and a piece chosen by the group.

No easy task.

The students involved in all of the Farmington music programs should feel proud of their accomplishments and the public certainly should recognize their efforts.

It's certainly time to recognize that activities other than sports — which tend to accrue the most adulation and notice — are no less important.

In fact, music students should feel charmed because the efforts, dedication, discipline and talents they possess will serve them well throughout life.

Not many 40-year-olds can run the mile they did in middle school or make the touchdown they did in high school.

But just think how many 40-year-olds still play the musical instruments they learned as middle and high school students.

Accolades also must be given to the band and orchestra directors who sweat right along with their students; who encourage their students; and who give their all to their students.

The Farmington schools recognizes the importance of arts education, particularly its musical program. Clearly, musical education in the school district is a curriculum staple,

**The students involved in all of the Farmington music programs should feel proud.**

not an extra.

That phenomena shines through when students come home from music competitions armed with awards and accolades from judges.

There is something to be said about a district that has so many kids involved in its musical programs. For example, at Harrison High School one in every five students is involved in instrumental music.

Let's also not forget that three of the district's music teachers — Ray DeLuna, Carl Gipper and Preston Brown — had state and regional honors bestowed earlier this year. That is yet another testament to the strength of the district's musical education.

The awards also show the importance the district has put on musical education, especially string instruments, something that not too long ago many districts did. In fact, Farmington was a forerunner.

It should be satisfying to know that in a time of continual cost-cutting, especially in arts education, that the district long ago stepped up to the plate and recognized the importance of ensuring musical activities as a fundamental part of a well-rounded education.

These students who work hard every day, all year long practicing and fine-tuning their abilities, should indeed give themselves a hearty pat on the back, as should their directors, musical teachers and parents.

A job well-done.

## Kudos



**Congratulations: Jack Hawkins leads the Warner Middle School band, which with other Farmington school bands received awards for performances in recent musical competitions.**

## LETTERS

### He'll get my vote

In response to a guest editorial, "Hold representatives accountable," I can heartily agree with the title of the editorial. Each and every citizen has a responsibility to vote and then be involved with the political decisions that impact each and every one of us.

However, it soon became apparent that this was an attack on those who stood for the principle of law, truth and equal justice.

The author is very accurate to state "there is no room for gloating in the outcome of this impeachment and trial." Contrary to Mr. Nash's position, I applaud my congressman, Joe Knollenberg, and all those House managers who bent not to the polls nor to the "march in lock-step" Democrats who, like lemmings to the sea, followed their lying, obstructer of justice president into the history books with their votes not to impeach.

Mr. Nash is inaccurate on so many issues, but certainly so when he stated that Joe Knollenberg has never debated his opposition. He did so three times against Walter Briggs in 1992, Mike Breshgold in 1994 and Morris Fruman in 1996. Joe Knollenberg has been elected three times because of his views on taxes, spending and Social Security. He is a man of integrity who responds to constituents and represents the people of Michigan's 11th District by his commitment to reduced spending and regulation. Joe Knollenberg has my support and he'll get it again. And, he has my respect as a man of principle and courage to stand for the rule of law and our Constitution.

**Joan B. Grindell  
Farmington Hills**

### Too many bad drivers

I am writing this letter for one purpose: To complain about bad drivers!

Almost every day on the way to school in the morning, I get cut off by a 17-year-old kid trying to make a green light on Nine Mile and Gill or on Farmington and Grand River. This is really annoying because I have the fear of being hit.

I just think young and impatient drivers should be a little more careful and actually look for other drivers on the road, before taking off. In fact, this morning, I saw cars pulling onto the shoulder so that they would not have to wait in a line of cars waiting to turn.

I think that a part of this is road rage. When people are in a rush to get to work and are late, they seem to take it out on other dri-

vers. They usually honk at you for no reason or get right up behind you, forcing you to speed up.

**Tony Wilson  
Farmington**

### Can this be recycled?

I'm a resident of Farmington Hills and as I drive through subdivisions on garbage day, I'm appalled at how many people do not recycle as well as they should. I see newspapers, detergent bottles, boxes, plastic jugs and all sorts of recyclable material poking out of garbage cans and bags. We are all busy, but it does not take long to rinse out a few things or break down a box and put it in the bin. Do we really want to have the landfills stuffed with things that don't need to be there? I have two children and I don't want them to live in a world built on landfills. Let's all take a few extra minutes on a daily basis and ask ourselves "Can this be recycled?"

**Laurie Wethington  
Farmington**

### It's all in the name

Listeria kills people. Irradiation kills Listeria, and virtually all other bacteria, but it is feared more. Nuclear activists made the word "radiation" cause terror. America dismantled safe power plants and returned to coal and gas. Pollution, explosions and death have resulted, but we have been saved from atomic energy.

Electricity has been used safely for 100 years, but some still wonder where it goes when the switch is turned off. Microwave ovens are as common as toasters, but cause panic in people who will comfortably stare at a television tube.

Irradiation of meat will save more lives than pasteurization of milk, but it may need to change its name. Gamma Clean, Rays are Us, Micro Germ are a few suggestions.

**Hank Borgman  
Farmington**

**Opinions are to be shared: We welcome your ideas, as do your neighbors. That's why we offer this space on a weekly basis for opinions in your own words. We will help by editing for clarity. To assure authenticity, we ask that you sign your letter and provide a contact telephone number.**

**Letters should be mailed to: Editor, The Farmington Observer, 33411 Grand River, Farmington Michigan 48335. Or they can be faxed to (248) 477-9722.**

## You're working longer for taxes

The good news, as we head toward next Thursday's tax deadline: new tax credits, deductions and other changes have pushed the average refund to \$1,823, according to returns filed with the IRS through February.

The bad news: the government estimates those changes have lengthened the amount of time it takes to fill out an itemized tax return by two hours or more.

The worst news: unofficial Tax Freedom Day for 1999 (the number of days an average person must work to pay his or her entire tax burden) falls on May 10 — later than ever.

The great tax debate of the 1990s has centered on who pays and how much. The last major tax "reform" proposal signed into law in 1997 dealt with cuts in the capital gains tax and added the tax credit for children, which takes effect this year for 1998 returns. A federal budget surplus has most Republicans in the current Congress seeking additional income tax cuts to keep the economy stimulated.

The IRS had to develop 11 new forms and revise 177 others for 1998 returns to accommodate the changes. The agency spent an undetermined amount of time correcting returns that were filed earlier this year that listed qualifying dependents but failed to include the child tax credit.

The Tax Reform Act of 1986 promised a simpler system with fewer rates. It has largely been rendered ineffective by subsequent changes authorized by Congress. To be fair, the economic expansion and the growth in individual investment in the stock market through 401 K plans and mutual funds has contributed to our annual April 15 marathon.

### APRIL 15

But with the focus on making the system equitable, the goal of keeping it simple has been buried under a quagmire of rules, regulations, forms and tax schedules. In a nationwide poll conducted last month for the Associated Press, 66 percent of 1,012 respondents said the federal tax system is too complicated. That was up by nearly 20 percent from a similar poll conducted in 1996.

This is no petty matter. The federal government has levied income taxes on individuals at various times since the Civil War and continuously since the 16th Amendment to the Constitution was passed in 1913. The current pay-as-you-go method, around since the 1940s, relies heavily on voluntary cooperation. Compliance — even by honest tax filers — becomes more difficult in direct proportion to the complexity of the task.

Lower compliance means lost revenue for the government, more cost as the IRS tracks down wayward taxpayers and tax rates that remain artificially high to keep the revenue stream constant. It's a vicious circle.

Is it time to throw out the entire tax code and start over? We'll see.

The proof will come the next time a presidential candidate proposes a flat tax or a national sales tax. If we use the proposal as a jumping off point for serious debate — instead of just arguing about whose pockets will be picked — we'll know the time for real tax reform is at hand.

## COMMUNITY VOICE

### QUESTION:

Do you agree with the U.S.-backed NATO bombing of Yugoslavia?



"Yes, You've got to stop Milosevic. That's exactly how Hitler started."



"Yes, I guess I do. But it seems like such a complex thing I can see the other side, too."



"Yes I do. I don't feel that what is going on there is right. We need to step in."



"I do agree for humanitarian reasons. It reminds me of the Holocaust."

We asked this question at the downtown Farmington post office.

## Farmington Observer

JOANNE MALIJEWSKI, COMMUNITY EDITOR, 248-477-5450

SUSAN ROSE, MANAGING EDITOR, 734-953-2149

HUGH GALLAGHER, ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR, 734-953-2118

PEG KOWCZEL, ADVERTISING MANAGER, 734-953-2177

JIM JINKINSON, PUBLISHER, 734-953-2100

STEVEN K. POPE, VICE-PRESIDENT/GENERAL MANAGER, 734-953-2252

MARK WARREN, CIRCULATION DIRECTOR, 734-953-2117

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— Philip Power