

Saying goodbye YMCA's Bush will be missed

There is always that small group of people who are so dedicated to what they are doing and what they have done that they become a fixture in the community.

Kevin Bush, executive director of the Farmington Area YMCA, is one of those people, whom we appreciate while we have him in the community, but haven't a clue of how badly he will be missed until he's gone.

About 18 years ago, Bush, now 46, arrived in Farmington as assistant to then-director Gary Unruh. Two years later, Bush took over the executive directorship and the rest is history.

Wherever you go in the Farmington area, it's a sure bet someone knows or has heard of Bush. Not only is his name tied indelibly to the YMCA, but a host of other organizations - American Heart Association, Rotary, Optimists and Commission on Children, Youth and Families - that benefitted from his involvement.

Bush, however, is one those kingly in the community who is understated and does his job and his work without much hubbalo. That's a clear sign of his leadership abilities. To see the other signs of that leadership, take a look at the YMCA, an organization that in many communities remains small and hidden from view.

Under his leadership, the Y's growth has been amazing. The Farmington branch has gone from 60 employees and a \$480,000 annual budget to 180 workers and a \$4 million yearly operation.

The Y's explosive growth culminated with the 15,000-square-foot expansion at its Farmington Road facility two years ago. And Bush says that the \$2 million project has allowed the organiza-

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tion to grow at 16 percent a year.

The Farmington YMCA, under Bush's leadership, has long become an active and involved organization. With Bush at the helm, the YMCA never stood still, betting that what it provided years ago still stood the test of time.

Bush and those who followed him at the YMCA clearly saw a need to keep up with the changing landscape, especially with children and families, in the Farmington area. Instead of sitting back and musing over the changes, the YMCA jumped ahead to provide activities and opportunities for today's changing families with child care needs and after-school programs.

It is no surprise that the Metropolitan Detroit YMCA snatched him up. He's good at what he does. Though his good fortune is Farmington's loss, we wish him well. He deserves it.

Indeed, Bush is and has always been a forward thinker. We can only hope that Bush's replacement at the Farmington YMCA will indeed do his legacy justice.

Bush will be missed, but he has left behind a path that we hope will be followed. His departure in January will leave a sizable void in the community that has benefitted from his hard work and dedication.

Service: It's not a holiday picnic

There are still three weeks until Christmas and even some confessed shopaholics we know are ready to call it a season.

That's because the reality of hitting the mall these days seldom matches the image conjured up in the media. Shopping - holiday or otherwise - is portrayed in newsprint, on television and even at the movie theater as an experience or even a "lifestyle choice." Why else would the opening of an outlet mall on the fringe of suburbia generate story after story, day after day, for weeks on end? Why else would otherwise sane people line up at 6 a.m. on the Friday following Thanksgiving so that they can purchase this year's Tickle me Elmo - the Furby? And why else would retail analysts predict increased holiday sales each November only to have retailers turn around in January and say sales didn't quite match their expectations?

But shopping in the real world is not nearly as fun as it's made out to be. It's not just finding the time in overextended schedules or battling the crowds of holiday shoppers, either. We've seen a real slide in customer service during the 1990s. Good, knowledgeable, courteous sales help is disappearing faster from major department stores than those hard-to-find "retired" Beanie Babies. Walk into one on any given night and you're likely to find as many unstaffed cash registers as staffed ones. Even the large electronic stores have become virtually self-service. While product displays include price and a list of features, any customer seeking additional information via human contact is just about out of luck.

Contributing factors undoubtedly include

the current labor shortage, which affects low-paying service jobs more severely. But global competition, mergers and the squeeze on retailers' bottom lines have an impact as well. On-the-job training at many retailers is almost non-existent.

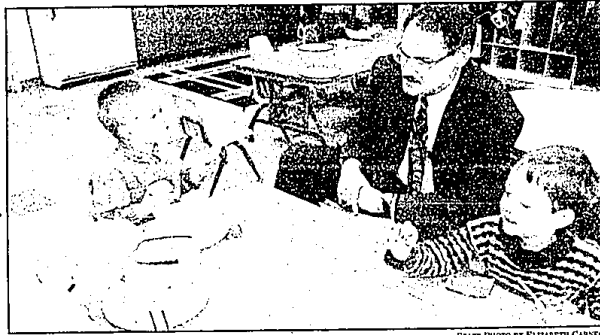
In fact, retail customer service has now become the domain of a few, high-end department stores and specialty shops. Neiman Marcus and Nordstrom have carved out reputations based on going the extra mile for their clientele.

Unfortunately, what's good for top-drawer stores isn't necessarily good for retailing as a whole. There are far more shoppers - and more aggregate dollars - at the middle end of the spectrum. Surveys repeatedly show that the overwhelming majority of people who receive poor customer service never complain to management. However, they never return to the store either and they usually tell at least four other people about their experience.

Also, the evidence is mounting that middle-class consumers are beginning to vote with their computer mouse. Shopping over the Internet - really just a high-tech catalogue collection - is expected to reach \$2.3 billion during the 1998 holiday season and online sales have more than doubled every 12 months, according to Consumer Reports Magazine.

All this spells trouble for the traditional retailer, which typically counts on generating as much as half of its annual revenue during the holiday season. We can only hope the "experts" figure it out while shoppers are still willing to make the trip.

Footsteps



STAFF PHOTO BY ELIZABETH CARNEGIE

Priorities: Outgoing Farmington YMCA director Kevin Bush spends time with his small friends (from left) John Antishin, Simon Helmig and Thomas Lindbert. The needs of families and children were a priority for Bush during his tenure in Farmington.

LETTERS

Don't stop privileges

Sometime last year, the city decided that rollerblading and skateboarding in downtown Farmington was becoming too much of a problem. Before we knew it, rollerblading and skateboarding were against the law! Officials claimed that it would take away from businesses. Somehow that may be true for some shops, but not all. There's a skateboard shop on Farmington Road at Grand River. How much business do you think they would lose?

I can see a problem with skate boarding in downtown, and I'm aware of the breaking of benches. I guess it's OK to get rid of skate boarding, but what can rollerbladers do to damage property? Some of us just rollerblade for fun and as a way to get around. Why should the people who haven't done anything have to deal with not having the right to rollerblade in our city?

As far as I'm concerned, banning skate boarding and rollerblading is a cop-out on the part of city officials. I'm sure that with such smart people in the world today, we could find some other option to fixing this problem, rather than just stopping all privileges.

Andrea Tartaglia
Power Middle School

Make your wishes known

As families gather this holiday season, it is the hope of nearly 60,000 Americans that conversations include a discussion of organ, tissue and eye donation. They are the ones waiting to have their lives begin again through a transplant.

One Michigan corner transplant recipient stated, "We never talked about donation in our family because it just didn't seem important to us. Not until my eye injury forced me into blindness. Now that I can see again, I make it a point to help others realize the importance of family discussion and the impact that a donated cornea has made in my life. I am thankful to my donor family every day of my life."

Most people think that filling out a driver's license sticker regarding their donation wishes is enough. But it most definitely is not enough. People need to realize that the decision to donate organs and tissues ultimately lies with their next-of-kin. Family members ultimately make the final decision about donation. It is much easier to talk about your wishes before death and to find out how others in your family feel, rather than be faced with the decision during a time of grief.

For the thousands of Americans who have had their lives renewed through transplantation the message is clear: they are living healthy, joyful lives not because others died but because of the gifts they gave that allowed lives to continue. Thanksgiving takes on a new meaning when something precious has been returned. This is how transplant recipients view life, indeed, how we should all view life.

For free information about donation, contact the Michigan Eye Bank at 1-800-247-7250 or visit our web site at www.mebtc.org.

Patrick Pruitt
Canton

Our heartfelt thanks

This letter is written on behalf of the Clyde Nichols family.

I am writing to express my most heartfelt appreciation and thanks for the sincere way that the employees of the Heeneey-Sundquist Funeral Home have helped my family, friends and particularly myself, through our loss. Clyde was the most wonderful husband, father and friend to a lot of people. Their staff showed a caring and concern for our feelings that went above and beyond the call of duty.

I know that our hurting will continue for a long time, but the thoughtfulness of the people at the Heeneey-Sundquist Funeral Home has certainly made our burden over the loss of a loved one lighter for all of us. Once again, our appreciation and thanks for all you have done.

Lenore Nichols
Farmington Hills

Absolutely superb

Sincere and grateful appreciation has been expressed to businesses, groups and individuals, toward the success of the auction/dinner on Oct. 16. The event was co-sponsored by Farmington Musicales and the Longacre House for a new community piano.

There is one individual, however, who really deserves to be highlighted and that is May Arvo. As a detailist and organizer, she is superb and as a dedicated member of the Farmington Musicales, she gave several months of her time and energy toward this community project. Stars in your crown May, and thank you from many of us.

Patricia K. Eastwood
Farmington Hills

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

What did you do over the Thanksgiving weekend, eat or shop?



"We ate. All four days. No shopping, just eating."
Bethany Keilna
Northville



"I had the family dinner. We went to Meadowbrook the next day."
Barbara Fox
Farmington



"A combination of both."
Theresa Schwartz
Farmington



"Both. That was about it."
Carla Perdue
Farmington

We asked the question at the Farmington Post Office.

Farmington Observer

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— Philip Power