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CHAT ROOM



TIM SMITH

Thrills and chills mark Opening Day

This new baseball stadium called Comerica Park is going to take some getting used to. But it probably would be unfair to give it the thumbs up or thumbs down based solely on Opening Day, when there were so many "kinks" in the place that I swear Ray and Dave Davies were in the capacity crowd.

I intend to give it the benefit of the doubt.

First observations were that the beautiful ballpark itself is everything they said it would be, but with too many long lines and too few mustard dispensers for those \$2.75 hot dogs.

No vendors, either.

Opening Day turned out to merely be an OK experience, one that didn't quite match expectations that my brother, Chris, and I had when we planned to attend the official April 11 unveiling of the Detroit Tigers new playpen. Driving down the Jeffries Freeway from my brother's Redford Township home, we were virtually bursting with anticipation.

So what if it was blustery and cold, with temperatures in the 30s. This was a historical event, the start of a new chapter in the storied history of the Tigers. We weren't going to let some bad weather get in the way.

My brother and I loved Tiger Stadium and hated to see the cozy confines go. But, we grumbled, it is the 21st Century and progress is progress.

The first order of business was to find suitable parking. For 25 years, I drove down to Tiger Stadium and know all of the ins and outs of that particular area. Certain parking lots and travel routes were innate. It was routine.

A discovery

With Comerica Park, however, everything obviously was going to be a discovery.

But on Opening Day, with the whole state converging on Woodward Ave., the thought of navigating through gridlock and a maze of one-way streets for parking spaces did not seem enjoyable. Thankfully, we heard a radio commercial for Trumbull Parking, a lot just across Michigan Ave. from the rusty old stadium that marked the spot of Tiger baseball for a century.

For \$10, we parked and took a heated shuttle bus to a drop-off point at Grand Circus Park. Instructions were simple: Come back for the return trip anytime during the ballgame, the driver said. Fans staying until the end of the game, however, were told to be prepared to wait 45 minutes for the bus to arrive.

Home on the range

On this wintry day, it was doubtful many would watch a full inning let alone a full game.

At 10:45 a.m., just 15 minutes before the gates opened, thousands of eager-eyed fans of all ages crowded the main entrance, adorned by large photographs of Hall of Famers George Kell and Ernie Harwell.

Once inside, we took it all in. The prairie-like green field, the delicately detailed statues of Al Kaline and Hank Greenberg, the so-called decade bates, featuring old photos and replica memorabilia such as an enlarged 1988 World Series ticket stub. And hey, Steve Kemp's picture adorned a banner representing the 1970s, indicating that true baseball fans will enjoy this place as much as the carousel-riding kiddies will.

Up, up and up we went to the upper level, with Section 339 our destination. On the way up the ramp, we caught a glimpse of the large hole in the ground that eventually will become Ford Field. Also within view was Hockeytown Cafe and the Fox Theatre, two other good reasons to drive to downtown Detroit.

Next stop, at about 11:30 a.m., was the concession stand for a hot dog and something to drink. We waited in line for about 15 minutes and finally made it to the counter. Unfortunately, slow-

Jaycees name Volunteer of the Year

■ Officials from Farmington and Farmington Hills gathered at Glen Oaks last Thursday to honor a special volunteer.

BY MARY RODRIGUE
STAFF WRITER

Phyllis Howard was honored as the Volunteer of the Year at the 33rd Annual Farmington Area Jaycees community leadership prayer breakfast Thursday at Glen Oaks in Farmington Hills.

The longtime Farmington Hills resident was honored for her work as director of the Farmington Early Childhood Center and Neighborhood House.

Rebecca Gee, a nurse with the Head Start program and co-worker of Howard, listed dozens of social programs the extraordinary volunteer has initiated, expanded and supported over the years.

"In the four years I've worked with her, she has continually shown a great passion for her work," Gee said. "She has a great compassion for the economically and socially disadvantaged in the community."

Howard has also worked with the Farmington Goodfellows, tolled as liaison with the Salvation Army and other agencies to eliminate duplication of services, and with professionals in the community to get free or discounted health care services for her clientele.

"She has worked countless hours with the Muscular Dystrophy Association, Easter Seals and is a supporter of Animal Rescue," Gee said. "She is a creative, outstanding leader who shows concern and compassion."

Howard modestly accepted the Jaycees plaque from president Mike Carbone.

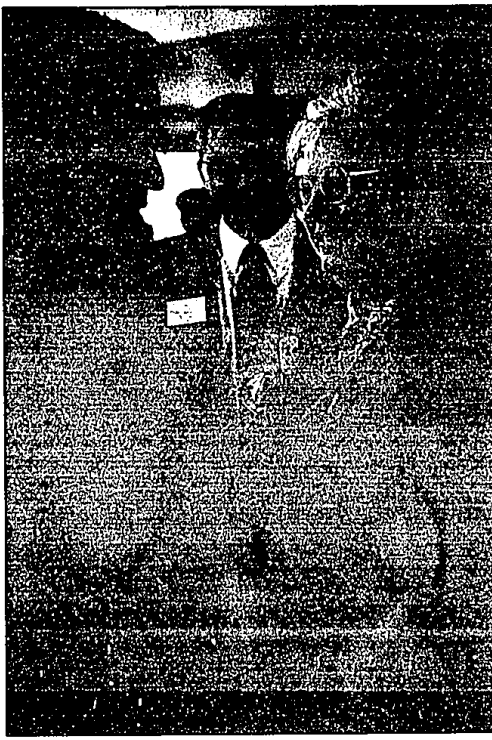
"No volunteer works alone," she noted. "I want to thank you, I am truly grateful. And while I have your attention, the Neighborhood House is in need of more volunteers."

Keynote speaker Dr. Audrey Brosnan, an adult religious education



leader at Our Lady of Sorrows Church in Farmington, urged the audience to "realize life as you live every minute. Find the real purpose in life - reach out and care enough to do something - instead of becoming engrossed in the details of busy schedules. Take time out to live life. Take a pause to contemplate. See where you can be compassionate."

Minister Jeff Slater from the Church of Christ made the invocation prayer and Rabbi Daniel Nevins of Adat Shalom Synagogue gave a benediction. Farmington Hills Mayor Nancy Bates, James Mitchell, mayor pro tem of Farmington, and state Rep. Andrew Rackowski, R-Farmington, gave Howard proclamations honoring her volunteer work.



Congratulations: Phyllis Howard accepts kudos from State Rep. Andrew Rackowski as Mike Carbone, Farmington area Jaycees president, looks on. At left, Howard's plaque and flowers.

Mercy students shop for community service

BY MARY RODRIGUE
STAFF WRITER
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To mark National Volunteer Week, Mercy High School invited over 20 metro area organizations to its Farmington Hills campus last Tuesday to offer opportunities to students seeking community service.

"It's a good time of year with summer not far off," said Pat Atchinson, volunteer coordinator and event organizer.

"It gives the girls ideas, especially the younger students."

It was the ninth annual volunteer fair and many organizations had been to the school before, she added.

Between 500 and 600 students visited the fair, which stretched along two main corridors of the school. Mercy students must complete at least 25 hours of community service as part of graduation requirements. Many volunteer extra hours, Atchinson noted.

Michele Akers, manager of public programs for the Cranbrook Institute of Science in Bloomfield Hills, enticed the students with an interesting little icebreaker placed on the table in front of her: an owl pellet.

"It's bones and fur the owl regurgitates from the meal it just ate," she told a group of three students. "It's like

hairballs and cats."

Two of the girls actually knew what it was. The third looked grumped out, but all three took the time to hear Akers talk about the volunteer opportunities available at Cranbrook.

"We need help in the nature center, with exhibit maintenance, doing clerical work in the office. And next week is Eco Week and we need volunteers at the museum," she said, handing out pamphlets.

Hospice opportunities

Rebecca Lange, volunteer coordinator for VNA Hospice in Oak Park, noted that this year, eight University of Detroit High seniors "did a beautiful job working with us and we'd love to expand that."

Opportunities range from offering respite care in the home, helping out in the office, even setting up a memorial service.

Jeff Ferreri, representing the Longacre House community center in Farmington Hills, was looking for students to help with the summer camp program.

"The camp has reinvented itself this year," said Ferreri. "The focus is on culture, the arts and kids. And there are plenty of different camps - fine arts, commercial arts, performing arts and variety arts like juggling, magic and clowning."

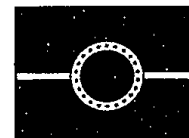
"We're aiming for broad exposure and fun."

Sophomores Rochelle Hughes and Beth Rutkowski already have volunteer jobs - Rochelle at Huron Valley Hospital and Beth at Our Lady of Victory School in Northville - but were on



Volunteer fair: Georgia Neubrecht and Elizabeth LaForest, RSM of Peace Action of Michigan, recruit Mercy volunteers.

Commemorative flags available for sale now



Flags commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Korean War are now available for purchase from the Farmington Chamber of Commerce. The cost is \$50.

The 3-foot by 5-foot colorful nylon flags are a symbol of the unified effort of the U.S., the Republic of Korea and our allies to stop Communist aggression on the Korean peninsula 50 years ago.

The 22 stars represent the 22 allied nations that fought side-by-side to save South Korea.

The words "Freedom is not Free" were added by the veterans who, more than anyone else, know the great price of liberty.

The flag is in both English and Korean (Hangul) languages. In the center is the "Taeguk" symbol from the South Korean flag, familiar to many as the symbol for the philosophy of Yin and Yang. In Korean, known as Eum and Yang, the symbol stands for peace and harmony. South Korea has adopted this as its official commemorative flag.

Make checks payable to the Farmington Memorial Day Parade Committee. The Chamber of Commerce is at 33000 Thomas St., Suite 101. Hours are Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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Please See COMMUNITY SERVICE, B2