

Annual festival

City, Hills are hotbeds of the arts

Farmington and Farmington Hills have long been a hotbed for the arts and arts organizations.

That's why having an annual Festival of the Arts - sponsored by the Farmington Arts Council, with help from both cities - is such a natural for this community.

The weeklong celebration, under way through Sunday at the William Costick Activities Center, was kicked off Saturday night with the "Starry Night" gala, designed as an introduction to the week of events, as well as a fund-raiser for the arts in the community.

By all accounts, the evening was a success with more than 200 guests in attendance. Exhibits at the Costick Center made the evening complete and served as a perfect entry to the festival.

With a week's worth of activities planned at the center, there's something for everyone. The week is designed to not only bring the arts home to all of us, but to encourage each of us to get involved with the arts and to try our hand at any one of the many arts and organizations available in this community.

The choices are many including jazz by the high school bands, Farmington Artist Club demonstrations, ideas and hands-on experience from the garden clubs, pianists, the Farmington Community Library's Battle of the Books, ballet and performances by the Farmington Community Chorus and Community Band, as well as "Kiss Me Kate" by the renowned Farmington Players.

The week is designed for everyone. You don't have to be an artist, professional or hobbyist. You don't have to be a musician, professional or hobbyist. You just have to want to learn about the arts and involve yourself in them.

Quite frankly, there's no better place than the Festival of the Arts to do both. All but one of the events - "Kiss Me Kate" - are free. The festival organizers haven't forgotten anyone. Opportunities abound for kids, adults and senior adults.

The annual festival not only is a celebration of the arts in the area, but it is a testament that indeed Farmington and Farmington Hills are rich in a variety of cultural arts, certainly more so than a majority of suburban communities.

The area is replete with 20-some active arts organizations, including headliners such as the Farmington Musicals, Farmington Community Chorus, Farmington Players and Farmington Community Band. But there's



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL SANDERS

Congratulations: Nancy Coumoundorous, Robb Clarkson, Sara Woollard, Paul Barber, Pam Schultes, Cheryl True, Marvel Steiger, and Ellen Kendall (seated) have done a great job of organizing this year's Festival of the Arts.

many more as well, including the Ridgewriters, Embroiderers Guild and a number of garden clubs. More importantly, being as well known as Vincent Van Gogh or Van Cliburn is not, and never has been, a prerequisite for participation in any of the organizations.

These organizations also are not fly-by-night groups who quickly form on a whim and die shortly after. Many are celebrating 20, 30, and some, 40 years, of activity. And all of the organizations are open, constantly accepting new members. Your interest and enthusiasm is the main prerequisite.

Another clue to the importance of the arts in this community is the position of cultural arts coordinator, a post now held by Nancy Coumoundorous, who formerly held a similar position in Waterford.

This is Coumoundorous' first festival since her arrival late last year. She and the arts council are to be commended for their hard work and dedication. Organizing and making a weeklong festival a reality is no easy task.

By the looks of it, this year's festival will again be successful. Events and activities are designed to showcase the arts and the artists in this area. They are also designed to entice guests into the world of cultural arts.

Take the time to stop by the Costick Center. We have published a schedule of events for the family. Take advantage of the possibilities and enjoy!

Sanders' closing marks history

A slice of Americana - Detroit-style - passed into history with Saturday's closing of the popular Sanders store and restaurant in the Kendallwood Shopping Center at 12 Mile and Farmington Road.

We would be hard pressed to find anyone who would be happy to see such an icon of old Detroit pass into the ages. To so many adults, childhood meant a stop at Sanders after school, after shopping with mom, or just after a bike ride with friends.

Known for its hand-dipped ice cream and delicious chocolates, Sanders was such a mainstay that as the company's stores have closed - the last one in Detroit in 1996 - dedicated customers have traveled far and wide to remaining open stores.

Sanders' employees were just as loyal.

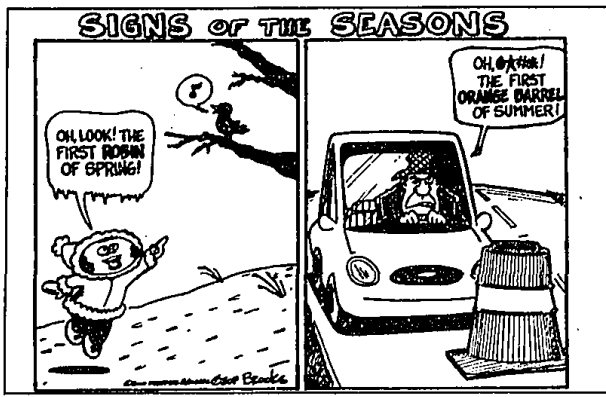
Anna Evennon, for example, who worked at the Farmington Hills store, stuck with the company for 40 years. Her career started at the store that once adorned Nine Mile and Coolidge roads.

Change is never easy. Especially for adults, Sanders is one of those places that takes us all back to what we likely believe was a simpler, quieter time... when one scoop of delicious ice cream dripping with Sanders' hot fudge made the world a wonderful place.

It is tough to say goodbye to an icon, particularly one that warmed the heart. Likely nothing will take the place of a Sanders. Sitting at a counter on a comfy red swivel stool is irreplaceable for the memories.

But that's what we have - memories. And they last a lifetime.

GEORGE BROOKS



LETTERS

Opinions are to be shared. We welcome your ideas, that's why we offer this space for your opinions. We will help by editing for clarity. To assure authenticity we ask that you provide a contact telephone number and if mailing or faxing a letter, please sign it. Letters can be mailed to: Joanne Maliszewski, 33411 Grand River, Farmington, MI 48336, faxed to Joanne at (734) 469-2700 or emailed to jmaliszewski@oe.homecomm.net

More of the same

Guest columnist Virginia Nicoll's call for a national health care program is a call for higher costs and rationing. In spite of Nicoll's claim, "the profit-driven free market" has not failed to provide quality health care. Rather, the government has created an environment, leading to out-of-control costs in several ways.

First, federal payroll tax policy encourages employer-funded medical insurance that leads to free-market distortions. Consumers of insurance-funded health care are insulated from the true costs of their care. Consumers see low costs and increase their demand for services. This increasing demand leads to increasing costs that are passed along to employers in the form of higher premiums. Since consumers never see the increase in price, demand remains unaffected. Free markets depend on this feedback to function properly.

The second way the government distorts the free market is Medicare and Medicaid. Over 40 percent of U.S. health care expenditures are funded by government programs leading to the separation of consumers from price. In addition, the lack of financial accountability leads to waste and inefficiency.

Another disturbing aspect of large amounts of government funding is an increased politicization of the health care industry. It is not a coincidence that health care costs, like education costs, routinely rise faster than the rate of inflation. The government's overbearing involvement is responsible.

A third reason for high costs are unnecessary regulations and inefficient approval processes. Pharmaceutical companies are vilified for alleged price gouging yet governmental procedures create an uncertain economic environment. Acquiring government approval for a new drug takes an average of seven years and \$250 million. During the entire regulatory process, the potential for failure is enormous. Imagine investing \$250 million into a product that is canceled and never generates income. Research and development requires large sums of money to find potential cures for diseases.

The United States leads the world in medical research because of the "profit motive." Eliminate this motive and you turn America into a follower. Unfortunately, no other country appears capable of leading because of their own socialized health care systems.

Finally, the government desperately needs to implement tort reform. By allowing trial lawyers to run roughshod over the medical

industry, innovation is stifled and costs spiral. Frivolous lawsuits lead to rich attorneys while the rest of us suffer with the increased prices. But given that the trial lawyer lobby contributes more money to political campaigns than any other special interest group, it is unlikely Congress will shut off this lucrative pipeline.

Affordable health care is a pressing concern for many Americans, but the solution is a flourishing free market. The government has led us to our current problems and continuously demonstrates an inability to solve them. The last thing we need is more of the same.

Steve Sutton
Farmington

Insensitive

Your selection of a featured front page story on Easter Sunday was distasteful and a disgrace. How could you possibly choose what was nothing more than a free advertisement for a tattoo parlor to run as a front page story on any day, let alone on one of the most holy Christian days of the year?

Obviously, someone at the Observer thought this to be more important or newsworthy than the Jewish celebration of Passover on the prior Thursday or the Christian celebration of Easter. Then again, perhaps you felt your readers would be more attracted to the full color photograph that accompanied the article than they would have been by a picture of a local synagogue or church. If so, the Observer has sunk to new depths of journalistic insensitivity.

Tom DeWard
Farmington Hills

Another chance

The U.S. government is providing Elian an opportunity to become reacquainted with his Dad and the family he must join. After their divorce his mother provided most of the love, nourishment and direction for Elian; his home was not with his father's new wife and child.

Elian left Cuba in an unsafe boat sneaking away under the cover of darkness. He will probably return in a first class aircraft, met by Cuban authorities and TV cameras. It is too bad his mother can't be there, but she died taking him away from all this.

Hank Borgman
Farmington

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:
What do you like best about the Festival of the Arts?

We asked this question at the festival during the "make and take" workshops. The kids are Woodcreek students.



Drew Summayer



Kacey Ventura



Ryan Messey



Melanie Hows

"I like drawing pictures and stuff."

"Drawing and activities and music and stuff."

"I like the painting. I like the music. I like the art."

"I like the pictures and how they look the time. The paintings are nice."

Farmington Observer

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— Phillip Power