

Farmington Observer

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Our fundamental purposes are to enhance the lives of our readers, nurture the hometowns we serve and contribute to the business success of our customers.

Acts of others leave us cold and snow bound

The chill embargo of the snow
Was melted in the genial glow;
Wide swung again our ice-locked door,
And all the world was ours once more.
—from *Snow-Bound*
by John Greenleaf Whittier

The deep snow of December is giving way to a modest thaw in January. But as well prepared as Farmington and Farmington Hills residents are for bad weather, the big snow hasn't been without incidents.

On Dec. 18 Farmington was forced to ticket two dozen businesses for failure to clear snow from sidewalks. They had issued warnings and allowed them a week to comply. It seems to us that the businesses would have been better served if they had cleared the snow immediately.

The legal liability alone would prompt most reasonable people to act promptly. The city wisely requires snow removal from business owners' sidewalks for the safety of others.

We have written twice in our news columns about the problems at the sled hill on school-owned property on the northeast corner of Shiawassee and Farmington roads.

Kevin Gushman, from the City of Farmington's public services department, said the recent damage to the hay bales amounted to vandalism. Farmington Hills naturalist Joe Derek says the hill is being "trashed."

Some supervisory help, provided by the Farmington Hills Special Services recreation division, is on hand on weekends and on days when schools are closed.

Thus it's one of the great examples of the two cities and the schools cooperating on a useful project.

It doesn't really take clairvoyance to see that if there isn't some self-restraint on the part of the kids and the parents using the hill, it could be closed or the hours limited.

We urge everyone to step up the self-regulation and to report acts of vandalism, such as the recent fire in some of the hay bales.

Rules include no snowboarding (there are other designated areas), no skiing and no tobogganing. Use designated return paths as a courtesy to others and don't sled toward unprotected Shiawassee.

It appears some Farmington and Farmington Hills homeowners were victimized by a local snow removal company. A handout in a mailbox prompted many of them to send money to the company but when the big blizzard came in December no snow removal services were provided.

It remains to be seen if the company will provide snow removal during the coming weeks. Hills police officials said that individuals would have to take the

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company to small claims court or file a civil suit.

It seems to us that, if enough people didn't get promised snow removal, then the Oakland County Prosecutor's office might want to look at the question of consumer fraud.

Finally, we have had two disturbing cases of parents leaving kids in cars unattended. In one, the baby was only 18 months old. In another, a woman left her two kids in her car while she went to work. Fortunately, in both cases, other more responsible adults reported it to the authorities.

Not shoveling walks. Mis-using sled hill. Cheating on snow removal. Leaving babies unattended in cars. In each case, it is not caring for others that leaves us cold and snow bound.

GUEST OPINION

Scouting mom disagrees with letter about Boy Scouts

I am sensing so I hope this letter makes sense.

But I must say it cannot make any less sense than the drivel written by Mr. Novak. Especially the paragraph ending "the BSA says that discrimination is a value held most dear." I read and reread and read it out loud to my mother and neither of us could make heads or tails.

Mr. Novak, were you ever a Boy Scout? I am proud to be a den leader with Pack 228 here in Farmington Hills. I have been a Cub Scout and Boy Scout leader for more than six years and currently hold a district position as well. I have a son in Wolf Scouts (second grade) and I did recruiting in the school this past year as I have done for the last few years. Not one time did I ever ask a boy if he believed in God or not. Yes, there is an achievement requiring a boy to explore his religion and there are parts of both the Boy Scout and Cub Scout oaths that speak of Duty to God. And in my six years I have never had any parent come up to me and complain. And I would certainly never tell a boy he could not be a Scout because he was an atheist!

I would maintain that the Portland lawsuit you used as an example had a lot more going on behind the scenes than we were allowed to know.

I don't claim to be aware of the details of the other cases involving men that were gay. And I will admit that I don't always see eye to eye with the BSA on some of their decisions.

But some of your statements were so blatantly one-sided I felt I had to respond. As far as I know the only way an unmarried heterosexual can get thrown out of the BSA is to break rules. Such as harming youth or something equally as offensive. Maybe you can come back with case after case to support your claim that the BSA is racist, discriminatory, and intolerant, but you overlook the

other side of Scouting...

I have three sons. Two are in Troop 45 here in Farmington and the youngest in the Pack. I have seen them grow in knowledge, experience, wisdom, compassion, leadership, love for the outdoors, tolerance and maturity as a result of Scouting.

In my den just last month, we took and entire den meeting and colored bags for Meals on Wheels, we decorated 300 cookies for a soup kitchen in Detroit, and my sons, along with a few others, rang bells for Salvation Army. Then there is Scouting for Food, where hundreds of thousands of cans of food are collected each year. There is a lot of community service and involvement that goes along with Scouting.

As far as a class action suit having to be used to get women as den leaders, shoot, there had to be suits to get women paid the same as men, to get women the right to vote, to get women to play sports.

And yes, we are still building trails, protecting forests and educating our children. I don't know what kind of bad experience you have had with the Scouts, Mr. Novak, but you certainly are focused on the wrong things.

Connie Knie,
Farmington Hills



Cartoon by George Strelczuk

LETTERS

■ No approval

A recent Observer headline indicated the Farmington Hills Planning Commission had OK'd plans for a proposed development at 14 Mile and Orchard Lake. I was stunned.

I had attended the five-hour meeting of the Planning Commission on Dec. 21 where the issue was discussed at great length. The reality is that the Planning Commission can only make recommendations to City Council in this matter. This they did with seven "subject to" conditions. But it really upset me that most Observer readers would consider the project a done deal because it was supposedly OK'd.

It is not a done deal.

The rest of the story happened about 12:30 in the morning. After hearing a couple of smaller agenda items, one of the Planning Commissioners expressed his feeling that the Planning Commission was being "tricked" (by Council) with respect to the proposed development. Two commissioners wanted to know why they had not had a joint study session if this was such a "hot issue." Another commissioner said he wanted to table the issue. One Commissioner was confused about the process. Then the truth surfaced...we were given a directive to let it go forward, so we voted for it. A quiet "yes" was heard in the background. The meeting ended.

Fran Valley
Farmington Hills

■ Editor's note: The headline in the Sunday, Dec. 31 Farmington Observer for the above matter said: **Planners send huge retail project on to the Hills council. Hopefully the long story, two plots, location map and headline made it clear this was only the planning commission's recommendation to the Hills council, whose members have final say.**

■ Goodfellow thanks

The 2000 Goodfellows year is over, and our pledge of "No child or senior without a Christmas" has been successfully completed. Our delivery day this year was Dec. 18, and it rained which made it difficult, but the job got done.

Even though the economy was good this year the Farmington Area Goodfellows helped 114 families, which included 873 children under the age of 12. There were 139 seniors that received assistance, and 38 disabled adults.

This program happens each year because of the many generous people who live or work in the Farmington Area. The two weeks before delivery day we had over 12 people at our headquarters each day to help sort and pack the food boxes. Many people came in the evening to help with the toy packing and the home boxes for the seniors. We put others to work typing gift certificates and sending out thank you's to those who sent us money in response to our "All Community Mailing."

On delivery day we had over 70 students from the three high schools (National Honor Society) to help with delivery of the boxes and packages. The volunteers of the Farmington Area are the greatest. However, most residents don't realize the amount of time and effort that it takes to make

the Goodfellow program happen. We have 11 standing committees who start working in early November to do the work needed to complete our mission. And of course we are all volunteers, no one is paid.

We have many folks that spent countless hours working at our headquarters, but one person put in more time than any of us, and that's Harry Hogue our Warehouse Manager. Harry stepped in for Bob Chappell who has moved up in the volunteer ranks to director of the Shrine Circus. Harry did a great job and this is only his second year. Also our Rookie of the year was Tony Ferranti who put in many hours in the warehouse. There are three others that I must mention and that's Joy DeFranco who was in charge of the toy packing, Lisa Ellis for sending out the "Thank You's," and Alea Bame of Metro Bank for being our treasurer.

All of us on the board of directors want to extend our most heartfelt thanks to all those who were part of the team. We hope you enjoyed what you did, that it made you feel good to help others, and will consider helping us again next year.

We trust you had a wonderful holiday and may the new year be good to you.

Richard L. Tupper
President and general chairman

■ Snow removal

It's time for a change. The city has been trying to make the city streets passable but they lose the effort of snow removal by not putting down salt. The snow would melt and go away from the streets if salt were applied while on the last pass of the trucks on all of the streets as it goes away on the main streets with salt applied.

Now for the rest of the story. The seniors that have kept Farmington a live town need some kind of help. I've been a victim of driveway suffrage. Everytime I get my driveway cleared so I can use it, the snow plow comes by and fills it up with large chunks of road ice that makes it impossible to get out or into my driveway, without wrecking my car.

There could be a volunteer crew to follow after the snowplows fill our driveways that we have cleared them ourselves for the first time. This could be done on few homes where seniors would register that are over 65 and with health problems.

This would make our town one of the safest to all the seniors and health problem people that have given so much to our community.

To call the contractor that has been in touch with our DPW is not the answer. To remove the driveway fall-out from our city snowplows would cost \$25. How much he does for this fee is not known but that would be too much of a financial burden for seniors and the health impaired. Most of the seniors can't afford to have this added expense to their already overtaxed incomes, such as they are.

Maybe public service time could be used to help both the needy and the penitent.

Or maybe someone with financial and mechanical means could contract with the city for just the needy who register after a plan is set up.

After all seniors are as important as our children with computers in schools

and libraries. They have needs too and it's only temporary.

George Strelczuk
Farmington

■ Islamic coverage

On Wednesday, Dec. 27, 2000, and for the next two days, the Islamic community in the United States and all over the entire world celebrated Eid Al-Fitr marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan. The Farmington Observer, claiming to be the community newspaper, completely ignored this important event. People of Islamic faith constitutes a substantial number of your audience and we feel appalled for this insensitivity toward the Muslim community when the Observer did mention Christmas and Hanukkah.

The coincidence of the three religious holidays falling within days does not happen every year as the Islamic and Jewish Holidays follow the lunar calendar. President Clinton delivered a warm and eloquent message of friendship and respect to Muslims around the world on the above occasion (videotaped and written). President Clinton said: "It enriches our country with Islamic teachings of self-discipline, compassion, and commitment to family. It deepens America..."

Islam is the second largest monotheistic religion after Christianity, with more than 1.4 billion followers worldwide and more than 6 million followers in the United States. Ramadan is the holiest month in Islam. It is in this month when the Messenger Muhammad (pbuh) received his first revelation from God through the Angel Gabriel. This revelation, which continued for 23 years, is known as the Qur'an. Thus, from that perspective, Ramadan has a very specific meaning as to its importance in Islam. Every year in the month of Ramadan, Muslims fast from first light (dawn) until sundown (dusk).

I hope the above gives some perspective so you can be more sensitive toward the community for the next time, and in the hope for peace throughout the world.

Muna Atasi,
Farmington Hills

Share your opinions

We welcome your letters to the editor. Please include your name, address and phone number for verification. We ask that your letters be 400 words or less. We may edit for clarity, space and content.

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