

# Evaluate both secular, faith groups by service delivered

Way back in 1982, my wife, Kathy, and a number of other parishioners at St. Andrew's church in Ann Arbor started a feeding program for street and homeless people.

The idea was to give people in need a good breakfast to start out the day. It was a good idea then; it's a good idea now. The program is still going strong, feeding more than 100 people every day.

The food, usually donated by local groceries and restaurants and sometimes (after all the paperwork gets filled out from federal surpluses, is cheap. Labor is all volunteer. The space used is the parish hall, so it's rent-free. If you demonstrate in terms of the outcomes it's intended to provide - breakfasts - the program is amazingly cost-effective.

"Surely, the program at St. Andrew's and others like it are what President George W. Bush has in mind when he talks about providing public funds for the good works that faith-based organizations can provide. The Bush Administration has set up an Office of Faith-Based Action, designed to reach out to "faith-based groups that have a proven record of saving and changing lives."

Called "charitable choice" by policy wonks, the interplay between government and faith-based organizations has been around since the 1996 Welfare Reform Act. Last October, President Clinton signed a law allowing federal payment to religious groups that offer mental health services for youth.

To be sure, charitable choice is not without its problems. Separation of church and state. For example, Brent Walker, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee, calls charitable choice "the wrong way to do right. ... We think it will result in invasive regulation and excessive entanglement between church and state."

At a minimum, it's certain the volunteers at St. Andrew's spend far too much time filling out federal forms to qualify for surplus food; at a maximum, it's no business of the federal government to tell the folks at St. Andrew's who to feed breakfast to.

Competition for dwindling dollars. Critics claim public funding for "religious" social purposes risks diverting scarce funds from "secular" social

purposes. School vouchers, for example, can be looked on as skimming dollars from public schools.

The incapacity of the poor. Although they don't often admit it, at heart many critics believe poor people don't deserve (or cannot handle) choosing between (often monopolistic) government programs and those offered by faith-based organizations.

Looking behind each of these objections, however, is a kind of "either-or" mentality that frames the issue in exclusive terms: Either people will be forced into government-funded programs or they will have no choice other than those sponsored by religious groups. But as long as funding for both types of programs - secular or religious - is based on transparent making progress toward solving existing social problems are those that realize that the diversity and multiculturalism of our communities demand multiple strategies and many programs delivered by a variety of different groups united by shared aspirations.

Joseph A. Connor, founder and CEO of a Michigan non-profit organization called the Collaboratory for Community Support, points out that "communities making progress toward solving existing social problems are those that realize that the diversity and multiculturalism of our communities demand multiple strategies and many programs delivered by a variety of different groups united by shared aspirations."

Connor is worried President Bush's initiative could set off a secular-religious contest of vendors, each competing with the other for programmatic scraps. He hopes the Office of Faith-Based Action will work to bring legitimacy to on-going and effective religious approaches, not in contrast to but in collaboration with secular strategies. The Collaboratory, for example, is working in Battle Creek to reduce teen pregnancy by enlisting the support of both Planned Parenthood and Catholic Social Services.

The key point here is not to frame an activity to be funded by public dollars as "a program" replete with designated "responsible agencies," countless regulations and the turf that inevitably accompanies both.

Instead, both public and faith-based organizations should be evaluated and funded on the basis of demonstrated success in delivering concrete, measurable outcomes to people who need and want them.

If the Bush Administration can manage that, it will have taken a big step forward in mobilizing the compassion and efficiency of both the public and the private sectors.

Phil Power is chairman of HomeTown Communications Network Inc., the company that owns this newspaper. He welcomes your comments, either by voice mail at (734) 953-2047, Ext. 1880, or by e-mail at ppower@homecomm.net.

# Wanted: Help filling big shoes

You never really know where life's going to take you.

Three years ago, I was wielding power as managing editor of a weekly newspaper with a circulation of 25,000, in a rapidly growing Minneapolis suburb. Even though I loved my time there, being a managing editor has certain drawbacks.

I came out here for a fresh start, to become a reporter again and get back to why I got into this business: writing. For almost two years, that's what I've done, grateful every day that I get paid for doing what I love.

My first assignment was trying to cover local government in Oxford, township and village, in north Oakland County. To call the beat "interesting" would do an injustice to the word. I witnessed history in the making as a unique partnership between the two governments, established to provide police and fire protection, dissolved amid controversy over an embattled police chief and accusations of misused funds.

After six months of endless meetings mired in vituperative rhetoric, I was ready for a change. I wanted action, I wanted a challenge, I wanted Bright Lights in Big City.

But I certainly didn't expect this. One of the first stories I covered in Farmington was the preliminary examination of a man who had stabbed his sister to death on Christmas Day. Within two months, I was writing about a career pedophile, a West African girl kept a virtual slave and a man in possession of the makings of a massacre.

Made me wonder just what I'd gotten myself into. As time went on, I began to more clearly see the answer to that question. I talked with Harrison High students who turned the tragedy of a friend's death into a campaign to improve safety in front of their school. I watched as a community struggled to save its annual festival.

I met a woman my own age who blissfully wel-

comed the arrival of triplets and a man who spent a year of his life on a cruise ship. I witnessed the swearing in of 150 new citizens and gained a whole new understanding of the word "American."

Most of all, I have fallen in love with Farmington and Farmington Hills, with the slopes of Heritage Park and the fountain in front of Hills City Hall, with downtown Farmington and the lights of the Civic Theater, with the respect for history and visions of the future that quite often clash in council chambers at both city halls.

Nowhere more than in these communities do residents care about the world around them. They turn out in droves at meetings and fill our pages with their opinions, their ideas and collective wisdom.

Nowhere more than in these communities do officials care about doing the best possible job for everyone concerned. Witness the 4-1/2-hour public hearing in the Hills over the shopping center at 14 Mile and Northwestern or the Baker Street House brouhaha in Farmington.

It's exciting to work in places like these, where all a reporter can do is try to keep up with the breakneck pace of activities and residents' expectations. For the past year, - and long before I arrived - the staff in this office has been dedicated to the mission of Observer & Eccentric newspapers: "to enhance the lives of our readers, nurture the hometowns we serve and contribute to the business success of our customers."

How could I possibly turn down the opportunity to captain a winning team?

I didn't come out here to be an editor. I came to rediscover my passion for community journalism, and thanks to the help of good friends and colleagues, these communities and this newspaper, I have.

So I'm taking one of those rare second chances life affords us now and then, but I'm going to need help.

Without question, my predecessor, Joanne Maliszewski, left big shoes to fill. My counting on our readers to continue making sure my feet are growing fast enough to keep pace with Farmington and Farmington Hills.

My door is always open, and I'll keep the coffee pot on. But if you want real results, bring cookies.

Jonl Hubred has taken a deep breath and plunged in her role as editor of the Farmington Observer. She welcomes comments, news tips and encouragement at 477-5450 or via e-mail at jhubred@oe.homecomm.net



Jonl Hubred



Phil Power

in Oxford, township and village, in north Oakland County. To call the beat "interesting" would do an injustice to the word. I witnessed history in the making as a unique partnership between the two governments, established to provide police and fire protection, dissolved amid controversy over an embattled police chief and accusations of misused funds.

After six months of endless meetings mired in vituperative rhetoric, I was ready for a change. I wanted action, I wanted a challenge, I wanted Bright Lights in Big City.

But I certainly didn't expect this. One of the first stories I covered in Farmington was the preliminary examination of a man who had stabbed his sister to death on Christmas Day. Within two months, I was writing about a career pedophile, a West African girl kept a virtual slave and a man in possession of the makings of a massacre.

Made me wonder just what I'd gotten myself into. As time went on, I began to more clearly see the answer to that question. I talked with Harrison High students who turned the tragedy of a friend's death into a campaign to improve safety in front of their school. I watched as a community struggled to save its annual festival.

I met a woman my own age who blissfully wel-

Tim Smith's complete coverage of Farmington schools appears every week in the Observer. Call him with story tips at 248-477-5450.

## LETTERS

### SOCC retirees

I worked for 37 years before I retired. I get my retirement income check from the state. These are the same people that set my pay scale for me.

How about the retirees getting a 35 percent raise in our pay check - after all - most of us retirees gave more than 25 years of public service and the years were not a gravy train diet.

Maybe a cost of living raise for the politicians after a battle with

a retirees committee and a health benefits I get. That should be enough for them. It would also show them how to live on less and put in a full day's work if I were on the wage commission.

In my opinion, I'd say a 2 percent raise would be enough. After all, they also have their own health insurance for retirement days, and they only work part of the year.

I might even consider an appointment to the State Offi-

cers Compensation Commission. After all it's not a full time job. Maybe they should all be retirees on the SOCC. Wouldn't that be a representative, responsible and accountable way to get a wage increase?

These points must be a consideration. Then this would not be a case of "how much does it pay?" but how much has my service done to earn my pay for what I've done.

George Strelczuk Farmington

### 10 Biggest Mistakes With IRA / 401(k) / 403(b)



Do you feel like this when you think about how to pull money out of your 401(k), 403(b), or IRA? Whatever you do, do NOT make one of the 10 biggest mistakes when you withdraw your money. It could result in extreme regret. Come to a free seminar on "IRA/401(k)/403(b) Mistakes". Maybe we can save you some unnecessary grief. Do you know:

- What a "stretch" IRA is?
- That you may access your IRA money prior to age 59½?
- That having too much money in IRA's could mean an unnecessary tax bill in the future?
- What an Irrevocable Life Insurance Trust is?

If you have ever thought about these questions or are unsure of yourself, attend this seminar. It will cover the ins and outs of IRA's, 401(k)'s, and 403(b)'s. We will discuss different distribution techniques as well as educate you on how to stretch your dollars out the farthest. Please call 1-800-466-2473 to reserve your seat.

### FREE IRA SEMINARS

<b>PLYMOUTH</b> Mon, Feb 19 8-9:30 pm Plymouth Cultural Center 525 Farmer St.	<b>LIVONIA</b> Wed, Feb 21 11:30 - 1 pm Civic Center Library 32777 Five Mile Rd.
<b>NEW HUDSON</b> Tue, Feb 20 8-9:30 pm Lyons Twship Library 27005 S. Milford Rd.	<b>CANTON</b> Thurs, Feb 22 6:30 - 8 pm Summit on the Park 46000 Summit Parkway

### Protect Your Estate From Taxes & Probate



Are you confused about your options for planning your estate? How to avoid probate? How to minimize the federal estate tax? Come to a free seminar about the benefits of living trusts and proper estate planning. Topics covered in the seminar include:

- Living Trusts
- Wills
- Power of Attorney
- How to avoid probate
- Minimize or eliminate federal estate tax

### Free "Living Trust" Seminars

<b>PLYMOUTH</b> Mon, Feb 19 6:30 - 8 pm Plymouth Cultural Center 525 Farmer St.	<b>NEW HUDSON</b> Tue, Feb 20 6:30 - 8 pm Lyons Twship Library 27005 S. Milford Rd.
<b>LIVONIA</b> Wed, Feb 21 10-11:30 am Civic Center Library 32777 Five Mile Rd.	<b>NORTHVILLE</b> Wed, Feb 21 7-8:30 pm City Hall 215 W. Main
<b>FARMINGTON HILLS</b> Thurs, Feb 22 1-2:30 pm Covick Activities Center 28600 Eleven Mile Rd.	<b>CANTON</b> Thurs, Feb 22 8-9:30 pm Summit on the Park 46000 Summit Parkway

Presented by Strategic Legal Services, P.C. & Strategic Financial.

Call 800-466-2473 Now to reserve your seat.

Receive a FREE 1 hour consultation to discuss your personal situation, when you attend a seminar. A \$150 Value. Refreshments Served at all Seminars.

Corner of Orchard Lake Rd. and Ten Mile in Farmington  
Call Ahead for Special Orders  
476-0974  
Fax: 248 476-1890

Your Hometown Savings Headquarters

<p><b>GROUND BEEF CHUCK</b></p> <p><b>\$1.29</b> lb. 3 lbs. pkg. or more</p>	<p><b>BEEF BONELESS ENGLISH ROAST</b></p> <p><b>\$1.99</b> lb.</p>
<p><b>BONELESS, SKINLESS CHICKEN BREAST</b></p> <p><b>\$1.99</b> lb.</p>	<p><b>RED &amp; GREEN SEEDLESS GRAPES</b></p> <p><b>98¢</b> lb.</p>
<p><b>TROPICANA ORANGE JUICE</b></p> <p><b>99¢</b> 12 oz. can</p>	<p><b>FROM OUR DELI TURKEY BREAST, CORNED BEEF OR ROAST BEEF</b></p> <p><b>\$3.99</b> lb.</p>
<p><b>KEMP YOGURT OR ICE CREAM</b></p> <p><b>\$2.99</b> 1/2 gal.</p>	<p><b>7-UP</b></p> <p><b>\$2.99</b> 12 pak cans +dep</p> <p><b>PEPSI COLA</b></p> <p><b>2/\$6.99</b> +dep 12 pak cans</p>

WE ACCEPT

**DOUBLE MANUFACTURER'S COUPONS**

UP TO **99¢**

See Store For Details

Sale Starts 2-15-01 thru 2-18-01

ADVERTISER'S POLICY: WE RESERVE THE RIGHT TO LIMIT QUANTITIES. Each of these advertisements is required to be readily available for sale. If you do not see an advertisement, we may have sold your copy of a limited quantity. Some restrictions, restrictions, restrictions. Please call us at 477-5450 for more information.