

Farmington Observer

Part of HomeTown Communications Network™

Joel Hubred
COMMUNITY EDITOR
Hugh Gallagher
MANAGING EDITOR
Sue Rosiek
PUBLISHER
Banks Dismhon
VP/COO

Jeanne Towar
VP, EDITORIAL
Dick Agninin
PRESIDENT
Phillip Power
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

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.

Protect kids' time, opportunities, with love

Kids can learn almost anything on the Internet these days, including how to cause themselves and others painful, disfiguring injuries.

Most probably don't set out with that goal in mind, but the sad and unfortunate fact is that, every year, more and more kids are falling victim to their own devices, in the home-based manufacture of explosives and fireworks. A recipe is easy to find as an Internet search, and with access in nearly every school and library, it isn't difficult to see how that information makes the rounds.

Paramedics and police officers can do little more than pick up the pieces when an accident occurs, like the explosion last week that seriously injured a 16-year-old Hills boy and an 18-year-old Livonia man. Hills Police Chief Bill Dwyer said it appeared the youths were experimenting with home-made explosives.

In addition to coping with their physical pain, both parents have to pay a great deal more attention than ever before. Chief Dwyer believes - and we agree - that it's not enough for kids who experiment with explosives to learn their lessons after the fact.

It's a lesson that should have sunk in long ago, but that's the trouble with kids. Sometimes they don't listen.

And that's why parents have to pay a great deal more attention than ever before. Chief Dwyer believes - and we agree - that it's not enough for kids who experiment with explosives to learn their lessons after the fact.

"Parents should be aware of what their teens have in the home," Dwyer said. "This is a major concern, and it can't be addressed reactively by the police department."

Unfortunately, it doesn't take much more than a few simple, household chemicals to create a pretty big bang.

Should parents lock up the Drano? With a teenager in the house, of course. With a teenager, it probably wouldn't do much good. Kids will find a way to do what they really want to do, so long as they have time and opportunity.

It's up to parents to jealously guard

both of those precious resources. A child's time is too often lost in the pressures of day-to-day life. Opportunities abound in our diverse communities for exploration and education, entertainment, activity and quiet reflection - all more positive than tinkering with a do-it-yourself fireworks kit.

Until our children become adults, we are charged with the task of difficult responsibility. The parents of the youths who were injured are no doubt agonizing over what they might have done differently, suffering as much as their sons - perhaps even more. Our

Parents should be aware of what their teens have in the home. This is a major concern, and it can't be addressed reactively by the police department.

hearts go out to them and we send our best wishes for their swift recoveries.

We don't mean to take them to task, either. No one can be faulted for this tragedy except the boys themselves, who were certainly old enough to know better and who will pay a much higher price than any of us can imagine.

We simply want to take this opportunity to remind all parents of how vulnerable our children are, how fragile life can be even for the very young and how important it is to know what your children are doing and what's going on in their lives, who their friends are and how they feel about life.

Most of all, we remind you to tell your child "I love you" at least once every day. True, sometimes kids don't listen.

But we can almost guarantee they'll pay attention to that.

Deadline looms for school board candidates

Have you been thinking about running for the school board? If so, it's time to stop thinking and start doing.

The deadline to file nominating petitions is just days away. If they haven't done so already, potential school board candidates will want to pick up nominating petitions and start obtaining signatures.

Qualified individuals who seek a seat on a local school board in Michigan have until next Monday, April 9, at 4 p.m. to gather their signatures and file the required paperwork.

Michigan law requires a candidate to be a registered voter in the school district that he or she wishes to serve.

In addition, a candidate must be at least 18 years of age, a citizen of the United States, a resident of the State of Michigan for at least 30 days, and a resident of the school district on or before the 30th day prior to the election.

To run for the school board, go to school district headquarters and ask for a nominating petition packet. A candidate will need about 20 signatures of qualified electors who also live in the school district. It is recommended that a minimum of 10 signatures be obtained to make up for any unqualified signers.

As we stated earlier, a candidate must file the petition by 4 p.m. Monday, April 9. That's next Monday.

School board elections will be held June 11, a Monday, this year. In most local districts and intermediate school districts where boards are chosen by popular vote.

Another important date concerning the upcoming school elections is Monday, May 14. That's the deadline for voters to register for the June 11 school election. Unregistered voters can become eligible electors at their city, township or village hall, or at a Secretary of State's office by 5 p.m. May 14.

A candidate for a school board should be genuinely interested in and committed to public education and be motivated by a desire to serve the community.

It is important to have challengers run for open school board seats, rather than

just the same incumbents or other candidates who are favorite sons of the school board or administration. But fresh faces must also be informed, knowledgeable and committed.

School boards are important. They're made up of average Joes and Janes - non-educators for the most part - who set policy for school districts with multi-million dollar operating budgets and hundreds of employees.

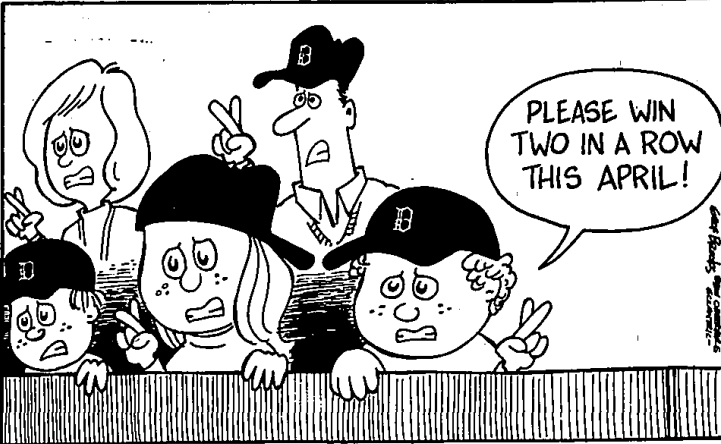
School boards are important. They're made up of average Joes and Janes - non-educators, for the most part - who set policy for school districts with multi-million operating budgets and hundreds of employees.

School board members are often underappreciated. They are often paid a little or no pay, and sometimes have to deal with contentious issues of the kind that can tear apart a community. Most candidates serve (or want to serve) because they care deeply about education, young people and their community.

If you think you fit the bill for a school board trustee, by all means take a trip to the school district headquarters and pick up a nominating petition packet. Additional information may be obtained by calling your school district or the Michigan Association of School Boards in Lansing at (800) 968-4627.

All Michigan electors should remember to register (if they haven't already) by May 14, and vote in the local school elections on Monday, June 11. Turnout at school elections is often shamefully low, sometimes dipping to 5 percent of the registered voters. Education issues, we think, are too important to be left to so tiny a minority.

As The Season Opens, Hope Springs Eternal...



Even For Tiger Fans!

LETTERS

Free speech?

In reference to free speech, Article I of the Bill of Rights states "Congress shall make no law... abridging the freedom of speech."

I wonder which part of "shall make no law" our leaders fail to understand? Whether in the form of a self-published pamphlet, calling pennies or a television commercial costing thousands, the government may not curtail speech. Why do simple definitions pose difficulty to our elected officials?

Steve Sutton
Farmington Hills

Works for families

U. S. Senator Debbie Stabenow, from the time she was a state representative, has worked quietly behind the scenes to help fathers reestablish relationships with their children following divorce.

There has been a bias against fathers in the Family Court system which has made fatherhood following a divorce difficult, if not impossible. The result has been dramatic increases in juvenile crime, psychological problems and general family misery. This problem knows no racial barriers and affects all families.

Ms. Stabenow was on the board of advisors for years to the Michigan Chapter of the National Congress for Fathers and Children, an organization that has helped fathers and mothers to achieve justice from a court system which sometimes does far more harm than good. Ms. Stabenow realized that mothers trying to raise children by themselves have an extraordinarily difficult task, as it takes the cooperation and efforts of both parents plus a small miracle to raise children successfully.

Ms. Stabenow, as a Democrat, took some heat from radical feminists, who hold the spurious belief that fathers are unnecessary to families except as wallets. The "chin music" did not deter Ms. Stabenow who put principle above politics. In my opinion, she is a great lady with a heart of gold.

Our own State Rep. Andrew Rackowski (R-Farmington Hills) is currently on the board of advisors, having replaced Mr. Stabenow when she won national office. I would like to say a loud and heartfelt thank you to Senator Stabenow for her work on behalf of Michigan Families and wish her the best.

Ron Oliverio, Former Vice President, National Congress for Fathers and Children (Michigan Chapter)

Working for us

As a family residing in the 37th district of the state of Michigan, our political voice in Lansing is Rep. Andrew Rackowski.

I had heard and read comments concerning Mr. Rackowski. His presence was often viewed at various civic and political functions, however I had never spoken to him personally.

Last Thursday, my husband and I were privileged to hear Mr. Rackowski speak to a special audience at a CPC Banquet. Later, he warmly greeted everyone (the majority of whom were not even his constituents) with sincere and genuine kindness and respect.

I was able to speak with Rep.

Rackowski and learned of some of the areas in which I could make a difference in our community. I will go on to share these facts with my friends and neighbors.

What a blessing to have a man of Mr. Rackowski's caliber as our voice in Lansing. He is indeed a man of high moral character and integrity, as evidenced by his presentation, past and present involvement in multifaceted areas in the public and private sector, his passion for serving the people he represents and his genuine concern for the quality of government.

There is no doubt in my mind, that he is working for us and making a difference for us as Farmington/Farmington Hills residents. Thank you, Andrew, for serving as our representation in Lansing!

Ellen Grider
Farmington Hills

Dismayed about Gill

I watched last week's board of education meeting with growing dismay during the discussion of the motion to end the Gill School Year-Round program.

Specifically to make sure that our young son would be able to follow his big sister into the year-round program or the myriad of reasons why we believe the year-round program is the future of our educational system. Here's what I heard our board members say:

1. That discussions to end the program due to declining enrollment actually began a year-and-a-half ago, while the parents were informed Nov. 28, 2000, that this was even being considered, let alone that if we failed to increase enrollment by March, 2001, the program would close. The parents put forth tremendous effort and did raise enrollment but not to the level set by Superintendent Bob Maxfield. If this was known so long ago, why were we not notified earlier, giving us the real possibility of saving the program, instead of the sham of giving us so little time?

2. We were told that most district parents attended school on an agrarian calendar and had an inherent bias against the program. Bias is changed through education, yet most parents never knew the year-round program existed. We were told that it is not the parents' job to market the program to build enrollment. Somebody has to do it, nothing sells itself and the board has failed miserably in their lack of support for the program.

3. We were told that the board had to weigh the good of the few versus the good of the many, and the additional \$55,000 in expenses for the year-round program could not be justified in light of the budget constraints. One example of an expense the board is facing this year is \$88,000 to resurface a tennis court at Harrison High School (unanimously approved by the board). So once again, sports takes precedence over academic excellence in our school district.

Dr. Maxfield, the year-round program is our "tennis court" and if the parents are willing to raise funds to offset the additional expense while we build the program to sustainable levels, shame on you and the five board members who voted to end the program for being so short-sighted as to believe tennis courts are more important than year-round school.

Year-round school is thriving in other districts. The discussion to close

Farmington's program is proof of the school board's failure to clearly see the future of education, it is indicative of their failure to support and exchange the program and their failure to include the passionate dedication of the year-round parents to make this program the jewel of the school district.

School board elections are set for June; I don't think I'll suffer any confusion in the voting booth.

Jeanne Keshishian
Farmington Hills

Different solutions

While I was reading James Nash's column, I found it interesting how often I was disagreeing with his views.

I say interesting because I too am concerned with the emotional hardening of our society, over-emphasis on materialism and the economic afflictions felt by some of our citizens. Perhaps I just have different solutions.

I could make many points, but in the interest of brevity I'll stick to only two. Where Mr. Nash sees "greed" within the tax cuts, I see an opportunity for leadership. Our economy is in a recession and we need to rebound as soon as possible. These cuts, in their own way, would be a tremendous help.

Personally, I don't think the present plan goes far enough, but it's a pragmatic first step in the right direction. People are hurting and we need a stimulus.

Furthermore, if anyone wants to live in a utopia where there are restrictions on gun ownership, high taxation, and lots of socialism, then they should consider moving to either Canada or Australia. Or perhaps Ant Arber.

Christopher M. Cummins
Farmington Hills

The Farmington Observer welcomes longer articles for guest columns. Send them to the editor at 3541 Grand River, Farmington, MI. 48335 or e-mail them to jhubred@oe.hometown.com

Share your opinions

We welcome your letters to the editor. Please include your full 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.

E-Mail:
Letters to the Editor
Farmington Observer
3541 Grand River
Farmington, MI 48335

E-Mail:
jhubred@oe.hometown.net

Fax:
248-477-9722

