

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.

Shutdown of VFW post a sad reflection on society

It may seem a little early to think about Memorial Day, but something happened last week — something sad — that brings this historic remembrance of our nation's war dead to mind.

In what must have been a bitter-sweet procession, members of VFW Broadhead-Farmington Hills Post 2269 had their first gathering at Lawrence A. Sims Post 3952 in Wixom May 2, after lowering the flag at their landmark Orchard Lake Road building for the last time.

Despite strong membership numbers, declining participation made it impossible for the post to continue even the most basic maintenance, never mind the volunteers necessary to run poppy sales, weekly Bingo games, awards dinners and the annual "Voice of Democracy" student speech contest.

Some have criticized the VFW's more stringent guidelines for membership, which require members to have received a campaign medal for service outside the U.S. But don't the Lions have different requirements than the Jaycees?

Declining membership in service organizations is a fact of life, brought about by the pressures of making a living, taking care of children and dealing with a world that seems to offer more opportunities and causes of stress every day.

That the VFW is closing is more a testament to the world we live in than an indictment of the organization itself. On the contrary, this organization has and always will fill an important niche for men and women who have served their nation under fire.

For combat veterans who have served overseas, the war is more than just a col-

lection of news items or pages in a history book. They've lived far from home, with the fear of losing their own lives, the horror of watching friends die or the unspoken pain of having to take someone else's life to protect the lives of others and their own. They have memories most of us can't fathom, some so painful they can't even put words to them. Their wives and families, too, are deeply affected by the aftermath of war, with which most of us have little experience.

Over the years, wars have changed. What has not changed is the debt of gratitude we owe the people who fight them in our stead.

This coming Memorial Day, Farmington and Farmington Hills veterans will host their annual Memorial Day parade down Grand River in Farmington. Men and women from the VFW, American Legion, Vietnam Veterans and other groups will march proudly and when they do, we urge our readers to be there. The parade starts at 10 a.m., which makes it a great way to kick off your Monday holiday.

And when our transplanted VFW Post passes by, give them an extra cheer, in honor and in memory of all they have done for the communities and veterans they've served — and continue to serve — so well.

Declining membership in service organizations is a fact of life.

Hospitals need to compete

In its 2001 annual Community Report, the Southeast Michigan Health and Hospital Council has chosen to focus on "the calling."

SMHHC isn't talking about the need for religious workers, rather the calling is for health care professionals — nurses, pharmacists, radiological technologists and similar positions.

While financial challenges — specifically federal belt-tightening for the Medicare and Medicaid programs — are affecting their ability to provide services, hospitals also are dealing with a staffing shortage and must now compete for employees.

It's not a problem endemic to hospitals. "Helped wanted" signs are out all over. It's been an employer's market and to attract workers, companies from fast food restaurants to Fortune 500 corporations are offering incentives. Higher wages, tuition reimbursement and signing bonuses are to employment what cash-back incentives have become to the automobile industry — a way of life.

Employers can't incentive in hopes of attracting qualified employees who will stay put. But, unlike their older counterparts, today's younger employees are job hoppers, changing employers every few years in pursuit of better pay and better benefits.

They also have seen what has happened to older workers who have long-term commitments to their jobs. Plant closings, downsizing and layoffs have left many a 20-year plus worker in the unemployment line.

And hospitals have seen employment become cyclical as workers sign on for the bonus, work for a few years and then head on to the next hospital and bonus.

In the southeastern Michigan, there's been a 30 percent decline in nursing school applications and graduations have dropped off 6 percent since 1996. And the current supply of nursing graduates will be insufficient to fill the hospitals' needs. SMHHC member say they are at more of a disadvantage. Health care careers are not a hot prospect, even though nursing is one of the better paying professions for women with an average wage of \$40,000 a year.

The reason may be found in a survey released April 19 by the Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals. The survey interviewed 700 current direct care nurses and 207 former direct care nurses.

What it showed is that the nursing shortage will be worse than the U.S. Department of Labor's projection that an additional 460,000 registered nurses will be needed through the year 2008.

According to the report, the number one problem facing nurses is staffing. Sixty-eight percent say large patient loads are a fairly or very serious problem, and 68 percent understand it is especially a problem because patients are sicker.

One in five current nurses, 21 percent, say they expect to leave nursing within the next five years. Those ages 18-59 plan to leave not because they want to retire, but because they are fed up with working conditions.

More than half, 53 percent, of current nurses say the job has become too stressful and physically demanding and 20 percent say they would rather have a job with more regular hours.

Then there's the 68 percent who say morale is fair to poor and the situation is most severe among hospital nurses, with 74 percent reporting fair to poor morale. Among those nurses who expect to leave nursing in the next five years, 42 percent say better pay would persuade them to stay, 36 percent say better staffing levels would help, 21 percent cite better schedules and 12 percent say they need more respect.

SMHHC has formed a region-wide task force to look at the issue of staffing. It's come up with short-term and long-term strategies for reviving interest in health careers.

But it's not enough? While we would like to say yes, we doubt it. In this day and age, money talks, and hospitals seem stuck in a rut in that regard.

Discontent among nurses isn't something that just surfaced. It's been around for years. So has the conflict within the nursing ranks between two-year and four-year degrees.

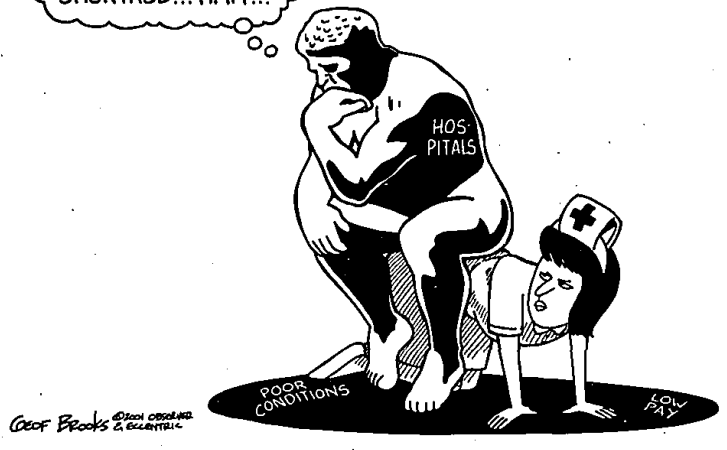
Hospitals need to address the internal problems and find ways to retain employees. It's a proven fact that word-of-mouth is an effective tool in advertising and a contented worker tends to say more positive things about his employer than a discontented one.

They also need to become pro-active and get out and market health careers. They need to blow their own horn about the good aspects of health careers and be creative in attracting people.

Maybe it's time to revisit hospital nursing schools or programs like the military's ROTC that provide the education in exchange for a work commitment.

Companies big and small have discovered that to stay in business in today's economy requires competitiveness. It's time for hospitals to do the same. No one will come calling unless they know there's a big welcome mat at the door.

HMM...I WONDER WHY WE HAVE A NURSING SHORTAGE...HMM...



LETTERS

She's supportive

I am writing to tell you how excited I am hearing that Pam Christian is running for the Farmington School Board. This letter is to let you know that I support her candidacy and election.

As a volunteer myself at Forest Elementary School, I am very impressed at her willingness to always pitch in. Pam is at the school as a PTA Board member, a Girl Scout leader, a classroom volunteer and most importantly as a mom.

To be able to say that I am supporting Pam Christian is just one side of the picture. She is such a child advocate. In today's political society of issues involving many different things, she is truly running for the School Board for the goodness of the children. Pam Christian is there to support all children in our district and has their best interest as her common goal.

Rarely do I see someone of Pam's integrity. Pam Christian is truly a quality person who puts morals and honesty at the top of the list.

Yes, I support Pam Christian's bid for School Board. Yes, I will be voting for Pam Christian in June.

Lisa Muscolo
Farmington Hills

Thanks for coverage

Thank you for coverage of the 50th anniversary of the Korean War. As the United States continues to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the war, our committee is working to ensure Korean War veterans receive proper recognition they so rightly deserve.

With your continued support, together we can educate Americans and give them understanding and appreciation of the lessons, history and legacy of the Korean War and the contribution that our veterans made to maintaining world peace and freedom. We cannot achieve our goal without your help. The items we have published help us thank and honor Korean War veterans. On behalf of the committee, I extend heartfelt gratitude to you who knows that "Freedom is not Free."

Your efforts are vital in changing the legacy of the Korean War from "The Forgotten War" to the victory that it was.

Ernest T. Parker,
Major, U.S. Army,
Washington, D.C.

CCW means protection

The new legislation on carrying weapons is the most important law written in the past five years. What are you afraid? Do you think the bad guys worry about us protecting ourselves now?

This new law will have them moving out in a hurry! They won't only have to worry about the person they are robbing/raping, they will have to worry about everyone near!

Even people that don't opt for the weapon will benefit because the bad guys won't take a chance in a fair fight, they will move on to easier prey. Florida's cocaine cowboys are a thing of the past. Why? Because every citizen is a potential cop!

Opposition of this bill means that you are dependent on law enforcement to protect you! That is a fairy tale that

the courts have dispelled in the late '80s and early '90s, the police are for picking up the pieces after the fact ... Well, I say let them pick up the pieces of the bad guys and let us protect ourselves in the best and safest manner possible, with a handgun.

The bad guys only think of one thing when they obtain their illegal gun, getting their crack/robbery/rape victims dead so they can carry on with their evil intent. Well it's time to let the evil doers beware, Michigan is coming into its own. Go straight or go away.

T. Centofanti
Livonia

Congratulations

The trend in Oakland County is undeniable ... the Republican Party must broaden its appeal to attract and keep moderate voters — and it can accomplish that by recruiting and supporting mainstream candidates for public office.

I applaud L. Brooks Patterson in his attempt to expand the base of support for the Republican Party in Oakland County. Traditionally, this county has a well-educated, financially successful, independent population. In the general elections, more and more residents are casting their vote for candidates that reflect moderate, mainstream America.

By welcoming back into the Republican Party those who would not deny a woman her decision concerning reproductive rights and striving to become the Big Tent that was envisioned in years past, the party can again become a political force. Until that happens, look for more losses by the socially conservative Republicans to mainstream candidates in partisan races in county, state and national elections.

Jan C. Dolan
retired state legislator,
Farmington

Reality check

In response to Mr. Leo Weber's letter on April 5, I take offense to several of his remarks in regards to our city and comments made about my previous letter to the editor.

It is apparent that Mr. Weber is not happy with this city for some ungody reason, as I do recall other letters of his were also very negative. Sure, there are things that are not perfect in our city, but believe me you could live in much worse, trust me. And are you really sure about how extremely high our taxes really are? Come on now, have you ever looked at what someone pays in the city of Detroit or Birmingham?

This brings me to a point in your letter about your being a long-time resident, well so is my father, he turned 80 last October. You know what he did on his 80th birthday? He enjoyed himself at a party that my two brothers and sister threw for him and about 120 guests, dancing for hours. My dad also goes to line dancing, exercise classes and even classes during the week, all because the city of Livonia offers it. It seems that some of our taxes do some good after all.

It's also a shame that you don't have the friendliness that I have with several of my neighbors in regards to helping each other in time of need. No, Mr. Weber I am not old enough

to remember "Leave it to Beaver" and I don't look at the world with rose-colored glasses, but this is just the plain fact. Some neighborhoods have good neighbors, period.

One last thing, I am not a teacher or have any affiliation with the city of Livonia. I am a 44-year old owner of a computer graphics company in Southfield, after being a longtime employee. And if you'd like to call me sometime and get educated about who I am and what my life is really like, feel free, my number is listed in the phone book.

That's probably where the mayor found my name when he called and left a voice message about the article I had wrote. Better yet, why not give my father a call, he could probably tell you how much fun seniors have in this city of ours. Then again, maybe you could just write another letter, you seem to enjoy doing that.

Arnold R. Weingart
Livonia

Don't get it

Thank you for printing my letter in the May 3 Observer. However, as the accompanying editorial showed, you just don't "get it" when it comes to CCW (concealed weapon) reform.

On the one hand you acknowledge the right of self defense and its corollary, the right to bear arms. Yet you insist that CCW applicants be required to "show a need." Why should one have to show "need" to exercise a right?

That is the problem with present law, and what is behind the drive for CCW reform. That, and the power of County Gun Boards to arbitrarily issue or deny permits.

As for your fears of the "Wild West," Macomb County has been issuing CCW's rather freely for several years now, and is in fact home to about half the CCW's in the state yet I'm not aware of an epidemic of gun violence there.

John M. Patrick
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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Letters to the Editor

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