

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.

Festival sailed smoothly

"We're back."

That's how Farmington Hills City Manager Steve Brock described the scene Thursday night at the Founders Cafe, home of the Farmington Area Founders Festival Ox Roast. It being a weeknight, one might have expected a limited crowd, but Dennis Page, owner of Page's Food & Spirits, said he'd served 300 sandwiches by 7 that evening.

By the end of the festival, he estimated having served "thousands."

The Founders Cafe became a gathering spot for friends and former classmates. On Friday night, people packed in to the point where gate attendants couldn't let anyone enter until an equal number of folks left. Traffic clogged Grand River all three days so that it occasionally took five or six stoplight cycles to make a turn on Farmington Road.

And parking? Well, one gentleman, in from out of town for Saturday's parade, was forced to leave his car in an adjacent neighborhood and needed help finding it.

"Art on the Grand" had an amazing inaugural season, with 64 artists participating, including the Farmington Artists Club. Hosted by the Hills Special Services Department, the event drew participants from as far away as Florida and Georgia, with wares that ranged from jewelry to blown glass to original music.

Cultural Arts Coordinator Nancy Coumoundouros reported Monday that

one artist said he'd sold more than at the Plymouth Art Fair; another commented it was their best fair ever. The quality of the work was of a caliber seen at any premiere venue, even the venerable Ann Arbor Art Fair, held the same weekend.

Every corner of downtown Farmington appeared jammed, what with crafters' booths, rides and well-attended stage shows in the Downtown Farmington Business Center parking lot, the merchants' sidewalk sales and, of course, the Magical History Tour, which took visitors into the heart of our community.

We heard a few suggestions to keep in mind next year — like moving the Teddy Bear parade into the cooler morning hours, better signs directing people to the shuttles and perhaps publishing a map to show where activities are being held. But these minor details occur to people only when the major stuff goes so well.

This year's Founders Festival was an unqualified success, and we congratulate every one who volunteered, every one who visited and especially the Farmington Area Founders Festival board of directors and administrator Suzanne Lichtman, who were not afraid to listen to and act on last year's concerns.

It takes guts to admit you've taken a wrong turn and then engineer a course correction midstream. But in this case, it all led to nothing but smooth sailing.

Still time to run for office

We hate to bring this up during these busy, crazy days of summer, but anyone who has an inkling about running for city council in Farmington and Farmington Hills or for mayor in Farmington Hills ought to decide quickly.

The filing deadlines are Aug. 17 in Farmington and Aug. 28 in Farmington Hills. There's barely enough time to get signatures, and anyone starting a campaign now has some ground to make up. The road isn't easy, but we believe it's still well worth the effort.

In this day and age, volunteering to run for public office means opening one's life to scrutiny. Mayoral candidate Ron Oliverio and council member Cheryl Oliverio have already had the details of their divorce dredged up by a daily publication. Both candidates have made it absolutely clear they don't want their past to enter into this. We applaud their stand and the

dignity with which they've conducted themselves in this regard.

The truth is, running for public office requires a tough skin. But it's also a unique opportunity to make a significant contribution in our little corner of the world.

To date, only Ron Oliverio has filed to run against incumbent Hills Mayor Nancy Bates. Incumbents Cheryl Oliverio, Jon Grant and Jerry Ellis have two challengers so far — Randy Bruce and Ken Massey. In Farmington, incumbents Mary Bush, Jim Mitchell and Arnold Campbell are expected to run again.

This current crop has no present representation. We simply believe more candidates make for a more interesting and informative election season, one that may well get more voters to the polls.

And isn't that the whole idea?

A fresh look at the river

The situation this summer at Newburgh Lake and the Rouge River is regrettable.

Mother Nature has given the lake and river a one-two punch, with wet weather and low water helping make bacteria levels high. Wayne County advises people not to make full body contact with the water, which means County Executive Ed McNamara won't be swimming in Newburgh Lake as he promised when it was clean enough.

His swim was part of a high profile campaign for Newburgh Lake after it was drained and dredged and chemical contamination removed. As part of a parks millage, the boat house at the lake was revamped and the waters were paddle and row boats for rent at the lake.

It was our new vision for the Rouge system. It was no longer our collective sewer for industrial and human waste — it was going to be our playground.

It was an admirable vision. But rivers and lakes have a way of defying our political agendas.

Wildfowl still use the lake as a toilet and Mother Nature has a way of drying things up on certain years.

It's now time to take a more serious look at Newburgh and the Rouge. The lake itself isn't really a lake. It's the backwaters of the Rouge.

The Rouge itself is a dammed, controlled river. It's not a wild, free-flowing stream like others in the state. In a way, it's been a managed drain for western Wayne County.

When water is withheld from a river, water levels and flowage suffer. On a recent day this week, the river in Hines Park was barely moving. When that happens, bacteria levels rise.

The solution to getting the river and lake cleaner is to get the state Department of Natural Resources involved. Wayne County has run Hines and the water system in it as an urban park. That's the politics of the county and it's

the expertise the county has. What's needed now is the vision of fish biologists and others in the DNR with wildlife and forest management experience.

One solution is to remove the dams and improve the flow of the river. Removal is being proposed for the Huron River that runs through Ann Arbor. Dams hold back the river flow, and slow the natural cleaning process with the present representation. We simply believe more candidates make for a more interesting and informative election season, one that may well get more voters to the polls.

They also create ponds and lakes like Newburgh. It would be difficult for us to give up the lake. However, it would be interesting to see what DNR types would say about the elimination of dams on the Rouge.

Wilcox Lake, upstream from Newburgh, has a dam, which created the lake. It would be interesting to find out if its removal would increase the water flow enough to improve the water quality in Newburgh and the Rouge.

The real challenge facing western Wayne County is how we look at the Rouge. Are we going to let it limp along as a managed park, or are we going to try turning it into a wilder river?

Wild rivers tend to flood sometimes because there are no controls. Downed trees and other natural debris often collect in river bends, creating ponds and wetlands. Beavers do do their work of creating their own ponds as a place to live. All those natural ponds create wildlife and fish habitat.

Western Wayne County residents have done a good job of cleaning up the Rouge. Now it's time for us to step back and find a natural habitat for Newburgh Lake and the entire watershed.

We need to see parks in a new light. They should be more than baseball and soccer fields. The Rouge watershed should be returned to as close as a natural state as possible.

Getting the DNR involved would be one step. And looking at removing dams another. It's time to take a fresh look at the river system.



LETTERS

■ A miracle in Wixom

Imagine the shock of losing a new, black, Coach purse with cash, credit cards, IDs, keys and check book. It happened to me at Wixom's McDonald's on Friday, July 13.

I left it behind and drove away without missing it until three hours later. I thought I would never see it again. But I did, thanks to these fabulous people:

1. The very kind female volunteers at the greeter's desk at Mount Clemens General Hospital made many phone calls to help me locate the correct McDonald's. Their hugs, when we heard the purse had been turned in to the manager, indicated their heartfelt happiness and the belief that people really are good at heart.

2. A huge "thank you" to the honest person who turned the purse in to the manager. Without your part in this, I would still be heart sick, replacing driver's license, canceling credit cards and checks, replacing keys and missing the bag, which was a Christmas gift from my husband.

3. A huge "thank you" to the managers of McDonald's at Wixom, Mike Jedro, who was given the purse, and Arjon Vasha, who later found it in safe keeping and returned it to me. The staff at that restaurant was so friendly and helpful I wanted to hug each one of them when the ordeal was over.

4. And lastly, a huge "thank you" to you, Ms. Editor, and your paper for allowing this vehicle to extend my thanks to all the wonderful and many anonymous people who were part of the miracle in the Detroit area the day I lost my purse. May God bless you all.
Beth Kuhn
Perrinton

change sides by resigning. This bill should represent the voters when congressmen do not know which side to vote on. After you quit, go back to the voters and see if they still want you.

I would be pleased to assist any congressman that would write a bill to represent the voters. I'm only one, but I'm sure there are more of you, including veterans out there, who agree with me. Write to your congress person and see what or if you get a reply.

This is not the first time this has happened, and there should be a punishment to go with the process. The ones voted into office are not afraid to commit crimes. Just look at the records — assault, drunk driving, rape, murder and more.

With as many organizations as there are out there says to me there are people that care. Why can't someone help stop this fraud, which affects all of us?

George Strelczuk
Farmington

■ Three cheers

Kudos, congratulations and hurrah to Suzanne Lichtman and everyone associated with this year's Founder's Day Festival.

What a success. From the moment I saw the new logo for Festival 2001, I knew it was going to be a great event. The festival committee's attention to detail was evident. And in talking with various shop owners, sales were going very well.

The festival just had a good feel about it this year — and I wanted to be one of the first to say "thank you" for restoring the Farmington Founder's Festival. It was the best ever!

Suzanne Paul
Farmington

■ White-collar fraud

There seems to be no end to white collar fraud since Bill Clinton showed everyone how to do it and get away with it, even to the extent to be a dictator with his executive orders.

Each one of our Congressmen will not stop white collar fraud. If they did, there would be a law passed immediately to stop Jeffords from switching parties in mid-term so he is assured of employment and a fat cat retirement when he does retire. There then will be no break in work service.

The senator's office should be declared empty until the next election, because the people who voted for him now are being fraudulently represented. He is a traitor to the country not only to the constituents.

There must be something in the constitution that could prove he is a fraud. Time change and so laws. Now is the time for a change and a law to declare his seat vacant. He should not be allowed to vote on anything.

I have no fault with his running as a Democrat. But do this in a proper way: Say "I am a Democrat," and let the people elect him as such if they want to. But for me, I would touch him with at ten-foot pole. He has proven he can't be trusted.

I am a senior and a vet of World War II and Korea. I say this to prove I'm qualified to make such a decision, and I managed little league ball so the youngsters had good guidance with the umpires we had to deal with. I didn't always agree, but it was my job to make sure every boy or girl had a chance to play.

I pray that some congress person will have the guts to write a proper bill to vacate a seat if someone wants to

■ Festival thanks

This year's Founders Festival has come and gone and based on comments received, was widely regarded as a success.

From additions such as the Founders Cafe featuring the Ox Roast, Art on the Grand and the Magical History Tour, to old favorites (hooray for the return of the Great Wall!), this year was positioned to be a winner, thanks to all involved.

In the coming days and weeks, we will be analyzing various pieces of statistical information to further evaluate the event and look for possible improvements to be implemented in 2002. However, there is one key component that can't be scientifically measured, but one I believe to be of utmost importance, and that is the amount of heart that went into this year's festival. The community came out in full force to lend their support and, as time went by, the positive spirit and enthusiasm spread like wildfire.

In my role as festival administrator over the last five months, I have been overwhelmed at the number of volunteers and supporters who devoted an inordinate amount of time, talent and heart to this effort. While it is nearly impossible to name all of the volunteers involved, I would like to publicly thank this year's committee chairmen: Dave Boyer, Nancy Coumoundouros, Julie Devine, Brian Golden, Gail Green, Gary Lichtman, Holly Owen, Dennis Page, Dick Tupper and Deb Watson.

Additional thanks go to the Farmington Area Founders Festival Inc. Board of Directors, the city of Farmington, the city of Farmington Hills, the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce, our participating merchants, sponsors and the community at large for their respective commitments. I would also like to extend a very special thank you to Wendy Strip-Sittasner and my husband/business partner, Gary Lichtman, for their involvement, assistance and unwavering dedication to this project over the last several months.

As a non-profit 501-c organization, Farmington Area Founders Festival Inc. relies greatly upon the generosity of our residents, businesses and friends. Thanks to those who came through to sustain the viability of this cherished community tradition.

Suzanne Lichtman
festival administrator
Farmington Area Founders Festival

Share your opinions

We welcome your letters to the editor. Please include your full name, address and phone number for verification. We may edit for clarity, space and content.

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