

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.

Cities make us proud

And now, we wait. As our President talks of war, as the search continues for those who have been lost, as the numbers of confirmed dead at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon climb, we who have no immediate connection to the terrorist tragedy have begun to shake off our mantle of grief and fear.

We have returned to work and school, shuddering occasionally at the aftermaths — the daily body count as victims are recovered, the ripples of impact on our economy.

Everywhere there is an opportunity to donate — to the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, a fund for firefighters' widows and orphans and many, many local relief efforts. School children have spent their boundless energy crafting ribbons and collecting coins.

But amid all this hope, there are reminders we are still a proud, stubborn bunch.

Already, internet ScamBusters are warning about vultures asking for contributions to legitimate charities through their own websites, only to steal money and credit card numbers. (www.scambusters.com)

Across the state, gas prices shot up, generating 1,500 complaints and action by Attorney General Jennifer Granholm to stop price gouging.

News reports relate incidents of alleged retribution against Americans of Middle Eastern or south Asian descent, possibly including the slaying of a convenience store owner in Arizona.

While the venerable evangelist Billy Graham urged unity and peace during a national day of mourning, televangelists Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell proclaimed God has "lifted the curtain of protection" so our enemies can give us "what we probably deserve."

Together, they have laid blame at the feet of the federal courts, the American Civil Liberties Union, doctors who perform abortions, pagans, feminists, gays and lesbians for the Lord's "decision not to protect." Both have since recanted their remarks and apologized.

Hundreds confirmed dead, thousands

Millage deserves support

We'll start by saying we support Oakland Schools' request for two small millages that will support special education and vocational or "career-oriented" education.

Why? Because the intermediate district hasn't asked for an increase in funds for those two causes in decades, while costs have soared.

Because Farmington School District's share of this millage will provide adequate reimbursement for more than \$3 million already shelled out for special education — which still won't resolve issues surrounding the state's failure to adequately fund those programs.

Because our business community cries out desperately for skilled tradespeople and kids who choose skilled trades as a career need the facilities to prepare them for jobs at which they can make a living wage.

And that's just for starters. The biggest reason to support both requests is that the funds they generate will be distributed to individual districts. Farmington would receive special education funding of \$3,672,932 and \$348,640 for vocational education. Farmington Schools has had to dip into general fund

A salute to firefighters

We joke about their poker games. We give our votes to politicians who promise to make them work more for less. We measure them with a stopwatch and grumble when they fall short of our expectations.

But this week, firefighters and rescue workers all over America are standing taller and once again school children are answering the question "What do you want to be when you grow up?" by saying proudly, "A firefighter."

We have new heroes. More than 300 New York firefighters are missing and presumed dead following the attack on the World Trade Center. Survivors tell of passing firefighters on the stairs. While they hurried to safety, the firefighters climbed into the inferno hoping to save more people.

As New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani said about a fallen fire chief, he died the

more missing and still people bicker among ourselves, find ways to take advantage of others and seek to puff themselves up as they condemn those who disagree.

Free speech is a wonderful thing, isn't it? We are free to be argumentative, petty, hurtful and outrageous.

And we are free to be compassionate, loving, forgiving, humble and helpful. That's the choice we have seen in the communities of Farmington and Farmington Hills — a choice we hope residents continue to make.

Kudos to the government leaders in both cities for allowing their employees to publicly express their grief on our National Day of Mourning, to those gas station owners who have hidden out this crisis without taking advantage of their customers, to the leadership in congregations where messages of peace and unity took precedence over the language of blame and retribution.

Directed by a hard-working corps of volunteers, residents will have an opportunity to express themselves and offer assistance to the people most affected today and Sunday. This year's Heritage Festival — after a highly successful inaugural in 2000 — has a new theme, "Uniting for America."

Hosted by the Multicultural Multiracial Community Council, both cities and the school district, this event could simply have been canceled, as have many over the past week. Instead, the council and festival committee transformed it into a strong statement about the spirit of our cities, our state and our nation.

We're grateful to them for not giving up, even though this transformation took a great deal of time and energy, when both are in short supply.

The outpouring of emotion and the heartfelt sentiments we've witnessed make us proud to call Farmington and Farmington Hills home. We urge residents to maintain the civility and compassion they've shown in the coming weeks and months, because this tragedy is far from over. The consequences remain to be seen.

And so, we wait.

revenues to pay for special education.

While the Durant fight continues, legal action takes years — and the need for funding is immediate. Career-oriented programs need to use a shot in the arm, because the world has changed a great deal since 1987, when the last millage was approved.

Half of the funds will go toward upgrading technical centers used by all students in Oakland County, including about 100 Farmington Schools. As Superintendent Dr. Bob Maxfield points out, funds received by individual districts could be used to create cooperative programs that share facilities like Farmington Schools' printing and publishing lab.

We do have some reservations. Although the millages themselves aren't monumental, they have no expiration date. Unfortunately, that's the way these taxes are set up.

This won't solve the district's financial problems, but it will allow officials some breathing room. With a battle looming this fall over education funding, they'll need all the help they can get.

However you vote, don't forget to go to the polls September 25.

The money they'll spend is yours.

way wanted to die. The fire chief knew the dangers and accepted them, because that's what a firefighter does. He could not do less.

And still, more than a week later, New York's firefighters, police officers and rescue workers, joined by professional volunteers from around the country, are working 24-hour shifts in desperate hope of finding survivors and in grim recognition that they are gathering last remains.

We join in saluting the undaunted courage and the unyielding dedication of New York's firefighters. And we are also reminded that our own local firefighters take the same pledge to duty and willingly endanger themselves to save property and lives.

Next time you meet a firefighter, say "Thank you!"



LETTERS

Debates qualities

According to Nancy Bates, she deserves to be re-elected mayor because of qualities such as "strong leadership, deals with constituents in a respectful manner, and is accessible." This is utter nonsense.

After waiting excessively long for fire trucks to arrive at my burning home, then having a Farmington Hills police officer threaten to "tear my house to shreds," having another Farmington Hills police officer tell me to go "urinate behind a tree," and reading missing letters to the file from two Farmington Hills fire fighters opining that my husband and I were acting very suspiciously — all this in order to cover up their bungled effort to contain the fire at my home — please, I am going to vomit.

When my husband and I asked to meet with Nancy Bates to discuss the unprofessional and arrogant actions taken against me and my family — in no uncertain terms, we were told that absolutely no meeting would take place. Only after bitter complaints and the ironic and humiliating revelation that a Farmington Hills ambulance was dispatched to shuttle Mrs. Bates from the airport, were we even granted an audience with Her Royal Highness, the Honorable Nancy Bates.

On numerous occasions, my husband and I have urged the administration of Farmington Hills to take a long hard look at how our city government ignores and harasses its citizens and business owners. We promised to never file suit if our requests were taken seriously.

While Mrs. Bates finally agreed to a meeting with me and my husband, that meeting ultimately was nothing more than an opportunity for Nancy Bates to mock us and our grievous concerns regarding our safety and the safety of all residents of Farmington Hills. That is why we were forced to file a \$10 million lawsuit against the City of Farmington Hills, which is now pending in Federal District Court.

The Farmington Hills administration claims that they want this case to go away. And we want nothing more than to move forward with our lives. Yet no additional action has ever been taken to promote the safety and security of my family and our neighbors.

To the contrary, Farmington Hills has now asked the court to gag my husband and prevent him from discussing this case with anyone who may have knowledge about the questionable conduct of Farmington Hills employees.

I therefore urge all citizens to fairly evaluate the alternative candidates that have stepped forward to serve our community.

Teresa J. Gordanier
Farmington Hills

Thanks, Observer

I am writing to thank the Observer for their recently published editorial, "Cops make life and death decisions for us." The members of the department extend their appreciation to the Observer for recognizing their work and taking the time to publicly display their appreciation.

The editorial was correct that the media should not be apologists for the police. There is always room for improvement and citizen complaints should never be swept under the carpet or lost in internal investigations. I remain personally committed to these

principles.

The editorial noted the 35 officers and 16 civilians who recently received departmental citations and specifically commented on the dangers several officers encountered to earn them. These dangers are usually not the theme of the media coverage. I recently reviewed the in-car camera videotapes of the three suspects arrested at 12 Mile and Kendallwood on Aug. 17 as they fled from an armed bank robbery at the People's State Bank.

The videotape depicts an accelerating suspect vehicle fleeing from Officer Brian Moore. The tape shows Officer Don Fradette stopping directly in front of the fleeing vehicle. Officer Mike Fluhart can be seen laying down his police motorcycle and quickly confronting the suspects.

These officers all risked their lives to quickly capture dangerous, fleeing felons and protect citizens from a high-speed chase. The recent bank robbery arrests illustrate the theme of the editorial, "Cops making life and death decisions," and "Making our communities safe."

William Dwyer
Chief of Police

Disgusted by story

This is in reference to the headline story in the Sunday, Sept. 2, paper, entitled "Cops make life and death decisions." As a decent at the museum I am utterly disgusted by the story and the entire scenario.

What happened to the "Who, What, When, Where and Why" that conscientious reporters used to use when preparing the facts? Who would select a family — who in 12 years had entered the museum only once — as an example of the "active supporters of the historical building?"

Did Joni Hubred talk to any of the truly active supporters (the people who spend hours every week organizing tours for groups, opening and maintaining the building on a regular basis, etc.)? Is she aware of the destruction of museum property that has occurred in the last few months by some "Blue Circle" members?

This article smacks of the type of sensationalism that you can read in the tabloids as you check out from the grocery store. What is the Farmington Observer turning into?

Carol Brichford
Long-time Decent at the
Governor Mansion

Over-reaction?

I am writing in response to "An Open Letter to Mayor Nancy Bates" from Mr. Ron Oliverio.

I no longer have my August 30th copy of the Observer, but my recollection of the article to which Mr. Oliverio referred was that it was an interview of Mayor Bates for the upcoming election. At some point in the interview, Mrs. Bates was quoted as saying, "I'm no bomb thrower."

I do not believe Mr. Oliverio's name was mentioned and I fail to understand how he took such extreme offense. Now, Mrs. Bates simply made a statement that she is not a bomb thrower — and I think her record will show that. I have never known Mayor Bates to run such a campaign and why would she start now. She won the last election with 80 percent of the vote. As for her not showing respect for our citizens — that's absolutely not

true. May I encourage all readers of the Observer who do not do so now to watch some of the council meetings.

If you were to watch a few of these meetings, you would see that Mayor Bates and, for that matter, the entire Council, display an enormous amount of patience and good manners. Mrs. Bates listens to every word anyone wants to utter.

She treats our citizens with the utmost amount of respect and never fails to thank them for speaking — even when some have rationally — or irrationally — just ranted her out.

It does appear to me that Mr. Oliverio over-reacted more than just a little!

Ann Hiner
Farmington Hills

Vote Sept. 25

Sept. 25, 2001, is just one of many insignificant days in the Farmington area. Not so, to the Farmington Public School system and its many special education students it is a very meaningful date.

Sept. 25 is the date on which we can vote "Yes" to approve additional millage to augment the special education program. Special education in all of its forms has been mandated by the state and federal governments but they do not fund what they require.

To meet their commitments, the school board has had to tap the general fund — rob Peter to pay Paul — to make up the underfunding. If this trend continues it will soon affect the entire system, music, sports, AP programs and such are not mandated therefore they can be cut to provide the funds for the mandated special education programs. We should not blame the handicapped children but step up to our responsibilities and provide the necessary funds.

For those of us that own a home valued at about \$200,000 it works out to about \$2.50 a week. This is a small amount to keep our school system viable for the years to come. We know that a healthy school system means a healthy community and a healthy community puts money back in our pockets. That \$2.50 a week soon grows into a valuable community asset.

These special students deserve our support as does the entire school system. Mark your calendar to visit a polling place on Tuesday, Sept. 25, and mark "Yes" on your ballot, twice.

Dick Carvell
Farmington

Share your opinions

We welcome 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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