

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.

Support youth program

During the Farmington Hills mayoral campaign, a number of questions were raised about the after-school youth program offered through the City of Farmington Hills' Division of Special Services.

After making site visits, challenger Ron Oliverio charged participation was declining and suggested conducting an audit. He also wanted to know whether the program was effective in reducing juvenile crime.

We consider the latter a political "red herring," used by advocates to promote the program and by opponents to argue its worth. Neither argument has much merit, since an after-school recreation program simply can't be measured in objective terms.

We don't ask whether youth sports programs reduce criminal behavior or drug use, but we know that getting kids involved in sports boosts self-esteem and builds character. An after-school program helps protect kids from the dangers of being home alone or out on the streets.

The only important question to be asked is whether the majority of residents in Farmington and Farmington Hills feel it's important to maintain after-school and summer programs for kids. It appears they do.

Local residents voluntarily support this effort, in a big way. Most of the program's \$270,000 budget comes from a voter-approved millage and the Farmington Hills/Farmington Community Foundation, which collects funds through the Cornucopia Ball, an annual telethon, corporate and individual donations.

Are those dollars being used wisely?

The program is open about 220 days during the fall and summer, serving around 200 children per day, based on what we've seen. Using modern math, we come up with a cost of \$1,200 for each day of operation, or six bucks a kid, altogether.

Hills taxpayers who are concerned should know their "involuntary" contribution from the general fund is about \$20,000 a year - or about 45 cents per child.

And we don't think either of those figures seems unreasonable.

For all the table thumping that's gone on over this subject, no one has ever provided documented evidence that after school youth programs are a bad investment or poorly managed.

When you wade through all of the innuendo and speculation, all of the allegations and defenses, you find a group of kids who are much better off with their parents than at home alone. You find parents who appreciate having a safe place to send their children. And you find a hard-working bunch of volunteers who spend hours raising funds for a program that likely wouldn't exist without them.

This isn't some "New Deal" social program, run by the government. It's the combined effort of citizens and elected officials in two communities to address the needs of families in a society that virtually mandates both parents work to make ends meet.

Until we see people stop believing in it, we lend the after-school program our unconditional support.

Time to get back to work

Now that the dust has settled on another election, it's time to sit back and take stock of what's really gone on over the past few months.

Incumbents Jerry Ellis, Jon Grant and Cheryl Oliverio, re-elected by Farmington Hills voters, ran as a cohesive unit. They supported one another, held a joint fund-raiser and pooled their resources. Councilman Barry Bricker served as their treasurer.

Some charged collusion or nefarious conspiracy. Some suggested the three couldn't think for themselves, because they were part of a "group." But if these council members really believe what they've said during the campaign - that they work well together and believe in their ability to accomplish good things for the city - why would they campaign any other way?

Re-election to office by fairly wide margins, along with the overwhelmingly positive results from a recent city survey, lead us to believe the majority of residents approve of what this council is doing. But there's more to governing than popularity, as these folks are most certainly aware.

Mayor challenger Ron Oliverio's picking up more than 3,000 votes is an

indication that a fairly large bloc of residents have serious concerns. Oliverio campaigned on a laundry list of complaints, from council "secrecy" to misdealings, as regards the 11 Pines/San Marino golf course project.

The incumbents spent a great deal of time countering the ways they're open to residents. But if people don't agree with the decisions they're making, all the information in the world isn't going to make them feel informed.

We renew our suggestion council look into finding a way to provide a link with folks who feel their voices haven't been heard, just one person or a committee, with the idea of providing answers, creative solutions or simply an independent, in-depth look at the council's decisions.

This is a time to wrap up old business and to communicate toward adulthood. In the coming term, we believe the voters' confidence was rightly placed with incumbents. However, we urge any resident who has ever considered a run for public office to take a serious look at what the Hills will need next time around. The United Way campaign season begins, it's time for everyone to roll up their sleeves and get back to work.

Folks need help here, too

Following the tragic events of Sept. 11, Americans responded with an outpouring of generosity. The American Red Cross, the Salvation Army and numerous specially dedicated funds have received millions of dollars in contributions to aid the victims of that tragic day. In addition, many people found time to donate their skills in New York's massive cleanup efforts.

While all of this is commendable, many local charities are reminding us that they have immediate needs much closer to home. Those needs could become much greater in the months ahead as the economy continues to weaken and companies find it necessary to lay off their employees. In the last month, unemployment figures had the biggest one-month spike in more than 30 years.

Just as the country was reeling from the terrorist attacks, the United Way was launching its annual Truck Drive campaign on Sept. 17. The campaign ends Nov. 15 with a goal of \$75 million. As of Friday, the United Way reported it had raised pledges for nearly \$21 million. They have a long way to go and many needs to fill in their support of 130 local health and human service agencies.

The declining economy may increase the need for food, shelter, clothing and counseling in the metro Detroit area. In addition, should we face problems from a terrorist attack, many United Way agencies would be involved in providing emergency assistance.

United Way reports that last year it allocated \$3.9 million to the local American Red Cross and almost \$4.1 million to the local chapter of the Salvation Army, two agencies heavily involved in the recent rescue and relief efforts.

Those charities and others have obligations here as well. Karen Guersso, office manager of the local Salvation Army, said in a recent HomeTown Life story, "I want to say that we appreciate all the donations made to New York through the Salvation Army, but don't forget our own community. We'll need help here, too. There are a lot of new cases this year. Many people live paycheck to check. Getting laid off puts them over the edge."

The United Way says that for every dollar contributed, 91 cents goes directly to help those in need, leaving approximately 8.8 cents to cover fund-raising and administrative costs. This money assists more than 1.4 million residents in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties, or about one in three residents.

While some may find it difficult to give as much this year, any help that can be given to the United Way, the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, the Goodfellows and other charities will help those even less fortunate.

The next few months will be difficult times for all of us and whatever we can do will help smooth the rocky road ahead.



ANOTHER VICTIM OF SEPTEMBER 11

LETTERS

■ Arafat

Yasser Arafat has practiced terrorism against Israel all of his life.

He sided with Iraq in the Persian Gulf War. The U.S. sponsored his takeover of the Gaza Strip in 1994, and it is now a terrorist base. Mrs. Clinton hugged Mrs. Arafat after anti-Semitic remarks.

President Bush seeks this man's help in the war on terrorism. Arafat is an expert - he wrote the book on sky-jacking and suicide bombing.

Hank Borgman
Farmington

■ Thanks for exhibit

I would like to thank Nancy Coumoudouros, the Cultural Arts Coordinator for allowing me to enter art work in the Farmington/Farmington Hills Multicultural/Multicultural art exhibit. This coincided with the true Spirit of America program on the agenda at the time of the attacks on our great Nation.

This program was a tribute to our country and all our brave victims of the disaster. It also honored the thousands of volunteers aiding in rescue efforts, blood donors, and financial aid collectors.

A most stirring moment was the swearing-in ceremony of new citizens of the United States. This shows the true spirit here and the wonderful mix of different cultures and nationalities, now all Americans.

My artistry was on a wall surrounded by two huge American flags, on each side. I couldn't believe this: Perhaps the flag makers just put down the two flags because there was room for them there. I was impressed, even if it was accidental. I had photos taken of this and am quite proud of the results, as a memento of the whole exhibit.

I am most honored and grateful to have been a part of this project.

Leon I. Schlicht
Farmington Hills

■ I-275 questions

Now, while a special procedure, to lessen freeway noise, is being done to the newly reconstructed pavement of the I-275/96 interchange from 10 Mile Road (Farmington Hills) to the Jeffries Freeway (Livonia), I want to offer again some questions and comments: In Michigan, how really well are longtime residential areas being shielded adequately from the constant, extremely loud, highway traffic noise?

How really well do the so-called noise walls or barriers lower the traffic noise for residential areas along heavily-used, eight-lane (or more) wide, interstate freeways throughout the United States, especially since motor vehicle speed limits on such roads have been raised again to (at least) 70 miles per hour, as in Michigan?

What kinds and sizes of wall or barrier materials and/or types of construction are most preferred for highway noise reduction purposes? What kinds and sizes of such wall or barrier materials have been proven to be the most effective for the deadening or containing of such noise as mentioned?

What studies, comparisons, and/or evaluations of actual noise walls or barriers are now available or have been available in the last 25-30 years? What has happened to the existence and effectiveness of the federal Noise Control Act of 1972?

Cars, trucks, and other motor vehicles are well appreciated creations but not when horribly loud traffic noise from the continuous passage of speeding vehicles, intrudes into the peace and enjoyment of our homes.

This is historic preservation in Michigan?

Joan Barber
Northville

■ One God

While I am delighted to see the country turning to God in this time of crisis, when I see Christians and Muslims joining in prayer together I wonder to who or what they are praying.

There is one God and one way to salvation, this is not my opinion, this is what God has said. While it may seem kind and loving in the name of tolerance to blend beliefs, it is neither loving nor kind to allow people embracing this world vision to perish in Hell.

The Christian God is one God, made up of three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit - the Trinity. The Christian God is active in the lives of believers. He is not an impersonal entity, but a loving Father reaching out to his beloved children. He does not want even one to perish, we are all precious to Him.

The Bible is supreme over any other religious writings. Just some of the ways this is demonstrated is in its historical reliability; no archeological find has ever run contrary to biblical teachings.

Christianity is unique in that we do not follow the teachings of a dead prophet, but God Himself. Christians do not earn their salvation through works, it is a gift, the price of which was paid in full by Christ. One need only sincerely ask forgiveness and put their faith in Christ alone to claim this gift and obtain acceptance into God's kingdom.

Unity in America is important in these uncertain times. And I will gladly stand side-by-side with my Muslim neighbors in the fight against terror. However, make no mistake, we do not worship the same God. My prayer is that someday we will.

Carol J. Lucas
Farmington Hills

■ Walk thanks

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my thanks and gratitude to Jim Eltin, a fire fighter/paramedic with the Farmington Hills Fire Department.

For those in the community that have not heard of the Bridge to Bridge Side by Side walk, allow me to give a short history. Jim thought of an activity other than fund-raising to attempt to lift the spirits of the FDNY and New York City Police as well as fire, law enforcement and rescue personnel across the span of five states.

He thought by organizing a 740-mile walk from the Ambassador Bridge in Detroit to the Brooklyn Bridge in Manhattan he could demonstrate the unity and support that all these agencies share for our fallen brothers and sisters as well as the survivors of the World Trade Center disaster.

The walk took nine days with walkers and runners traveling non-stop 24 hours a day. The event was a greater success than could have been imagined with hundreds of professionals participating along the route. Jim provided an outlet for countless more civilians in the traveled commu-

nities to also show their support and love for this country as they greeted us all along the route with cheers, hugs and many tears. His efforts resulted in endless memories and a once in a lifetime opportunity for me and 10 other fire fighters to experience a feeling of unity that is extremely rare.

There is no doubt that without Jim this event would not have been such a great success. On behalf of all the dedicated participants, thank you.

Bruce Belsky, Inspector
Paramedic, Farmington Hills
Fire Department

■ Rescue thanks

The night of Sunday, Oct. 21, my stepfather collapsed and went into cardiac arrest at my house. I administered CPR as my son dialed 911.

The Farmington Hills EMS and Fire Rescue were at my home in less than nine minutes, and came equipped with a cardiac unit and several rescue personnel. My stepfather was rushed to Detroit Hospital in critical condition from a heart blockage.

The care, speed and efficiency of these men saved my stepfather's life. On behalf of my family and I, we thank the Farmington Hills Fire Rescue Team which has once again saved a person's life. They are the greatest.

Ron Oliverio
Farmington Hills

■ Likes letters

I thoroughly enjoy reading Hank Borgman's letters which you publish each and every week. Apparently, you like them as well.

I have a recommendation: give him his own column. He clearly has an opinion on everything, and it seems like you want to give him the space. So why not formalize the relationship with a weekly spot all his own.

In keeping with the tone and theme of his on-going letters, here are some suggested column titles: "I'm an old guy and everything on earth annoys me." Or, "I can find something negative to say on any subject." Or, "There's a dark side to every silver-lined cloud." Or, "Even if you don't want it, here's my opinion."

You get the idea. His weekly nasty tirades on all subjects would be a focal point whenever we readers need a dose of a sincerely unpleasant attitude to bring us back to reality.

Charles Paul
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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