

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.

Time for event changes

When it comes to class and charm, it's tough to beat the annual Cornucopia Ball, a fund-raiser for the Farmington Hills/Farmington Community Foundation.

This year was no exception, despite some last-minute jitters over whether to hold the event in the wake of a national tragedy and continued concerns about safety and security. Bosch Corp.'s spacious dining room provided a classic backdrop, and the food was, quite simply, superb.

For the past seven years, organizers have stuck to the same basic plan: a ritzy dinner, silent and live auctions, celebrity emcees and music for listening and dancing. This isn't a fund-raiser for the average pocketbook; ticket prices shot up \$25, to \$150 this year.

It's the kind of event to which women wear formal gowns and men don their tuxedos or classiest suits, where wallets and checkbooks leave a great deal lighter, thanks to auction items with minimum bids of up to several thousand dollars.

And believe it's an event that could benefit from a little change.

We're not suggesting a complete conversion — like making it, say, a sock-hop. But this year's event was just the old Cornucopia Ball in a new place. We'd like to see something new. Something different.

Something... Farmington.

Not the city. The community.

The increased ticket prices concern us, since we know there are folks who didn't attend this year for that reason. We believe boosting attendance and funds

Every community event needs a little new life breathed into it now and again.

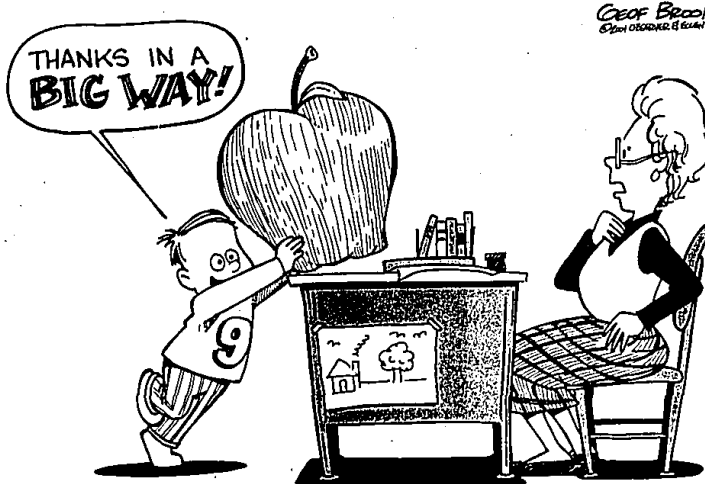
could be accomplished by making the event more affordable to a greater number of people.

Reducing costs might help. Maybe instead of a full, formal dinner, the Ball could feature hors d'oeuvres, desserts or a sampling of ethnic foods. Since the date is always close to Halloween, why not a classic masked ball?

We encourage the organizing committee to tap into some new ideas, think about ways to encourage greater attendance and make this an event that grows and gets a little better every year.

There's nothing really wrong with the status quo (except those sky-high ticket prices), but every community event needs a little new life breathed into it now and again.

Idea, anyone?



NATIONAL EDUCATION WEEK, NOVEMBER 11-17

LETTERS

■ Youth program

We'd like to thank you for the earlier article on the Farmington Youth Center. As residents of Farmington and school counselors with Farmington Public Schools we have seen first hand this wonderful program at work in our community.

It is with great appreciation that we would like to commend Todd Lipa and his staff for the after school program which services a large portion of the 800 students in our building. The various athletic as well as academic opportunities ensure that these students have access to supervised activities which make good use of their time.

We are confident that the environment at the Youth Center is safe as a result of firm rules and expectations for good behavior. It is understood that any violation of these rules may jeopardize privileges in the program.

We hope that the solid relationship between the Youth Center and our schools continues to strengthen and grow.

Kurt David and Kris Miner
Farmington

■ Enjoyed car shows

I would like to thank all who helped in sponsoring the Monday night car shows in downtown Farmington from May to September.

Coming from a family who has always been interested in cars, it is always fun to go downtown on these evenings in the summer.

The car show is a great place to meet new people. At the same time, it is also a perfect time to get together with old friends. It is very conveniently located behind Pasta Stop and Baskin Robins. People of all ages come together to see the cars and listen to music.

It is a great way to bring the community together in a fun way. The families and pets that come to these get-togethers are all very friendly and all seem to have a blast in the oldie atmosphere.

Thanks to all the people that made it possible for this fun event to happen all summer, and thanks also to the people of Farmington for coming to participate in it, it wouldn't even exist without you.

Laura K. Proven
Power Middle School

■ Typical teens

Sometimes we feel that we are the only voice of reason in this city.

Once again, we have a picture in the Observer of Mrs. Bates' favorite adopted son, Mr. David Kinchen. This time, Dave is congratulating Mrs. Bates for her recent re-election. It has been highlighted in the Observer numerous times that Dave is the poster child for the after school program and has enjoyed well deserved recognition from our mayor.

Dave is the only young man out of dozens of suitors our oldest daughter has dated, who we even begin to approve of. Make no mistake about it, our personal opinion about Dave Kinchen is that he sets the standard to which all other young men are measured.

Naturally, Dave and his mom are ardent supporters of Nancy Bates. But we feel that Dave and his mother, Veda, are selling themselves short.

We have heard it repeated many times and through many sources, including David himself, that some-

how, somehow, Dave would never have emerged from a shy, introverted young teen, into a world class citizen, if it weren't for the Bates After School Program.

Well, have we got a newsflash for Dave, his mom and Nancy Bates. It was Dave's parents (especially considering the untimely death of Dave's dad over 10 years ago) and the personal decisions of Dave himself that have charted the course of this exemplary young man.

By comparison, our youngest daughter who is homeschooled, is now attending an extra-curricular after-school activity in West Bloomfield. Her feedback to us is that almost every student is engaged in drug dealing on their cell phones while waiting for their parents to pick them up. She asked us to be waiting in the car before the class is dismissed, as she is fearful of being victimized as an innocent bystander.

Yes, we understand that West Bloomfield is not Farmington Hills. But we are willing to bet, that anytime there are groups of teens with cell phones and a few moments where the adults turn their backs, that all hell can break loose in an instant.

The true challenge would be to engage and measure a more typical example of our youth in the much touted youth program. Let's see if there really is a difference when kids go home after school or attend a supposedly supervised after school program where time, peer pressure, beepers and cell phones can be used to find a lot of trouble in a matter of moments.

With all due respect, it's time to stop showcasing Dave Kinchen as a "typical" American teenager. He never has been and never will be "typical." And we thank God for that one small favor.

Mark and Jean Gordanier
Farmington Hills

■ Laugh out loud

I look forward to reading the letters submitted weekly on your opinion page.

In all due respect to Mr. Borgman's opinions as well as all others, I have to admit the letter sent in from Charles Paul made me chuckle out loud.

Jo Fleck
Farmington Hills

■ Intolerance?

Osama bin Laden labels all those who don't believe as he does infidels. Such religious intolerance is frightening and unacceptable to the majority of Americans. That Carol J. Lucas seems to express the same kind of intolerance in her letter of 11-09-01 in the Observer criticizing Christians and Muslims joining in prayer is of concern to me.

I strongly espouse Christian values, among them "Judge not lest you be judged," and "Whatsoever you do unto me, I will do unto you." Mere mortals are not qualified to judge others, and we are urged to show compassion and care for others.

I fervently trust that Ms. Lucas' opinions are not shared by the majority of (local) residents. I also suggest that if she wishes to evangelize further, she arrange to be a guest speaker at local temples, mosques, synagogues and other non-Christian houses of worship.

Anna M. Kiraly
Farmington

■ Grumpy and proud

I'm glad Charles Paul enjoys reading my "nasty tirades on all subjects."

Pleasant observations are seldom published because they create little interest. Newspapers attract more readers when they print all sides of an issue.

He correctly described my style: "There is a dark side to every silver-lined cloud." I was a member of the Grumpies, a diverse group of published letter-to-the-editor writers. The Livonia Schools asked us to give a lecture to promote writing, and I opened my session with, "I'm Hank Borgman and I'm looking for an argument. You must have an opinion that interests the editor."

I then argued about some school policies and asked my young opponents to state their views in a letter. I don't know if any students were motivated to write, but I was not invited back. Universities that deny access to conservative speakers like Ward Connerly and Clarence Thomas substitute indoctrination for education.

Charles Paul found "something negative to say" on the subject of Hank Borgman. He is an excellent writer and I hope he finds something else that annoys him because I enjoy his views.

Hank Borgman
Farmington

■ NU-CLEE-AR

Dear President Bush: I wish you would please learn to pronounce the word, nuclear, properly.

It is not NU-CLEE-AR. It really grinds me to hear our president, of all people, mispronounce the word. It somehow gives me the impression you are lacking in the basic fundamentals of the job. And right now, I need all the confidence in you I can muster.

Kenneth Kemp
Farmington Hills

■ Election thanks

I would like to thank the residents of Farmington Hills for supporting me for re-election on Nov. 6. Your continued confidence in me as your elected official means a lot to me. I would also like to thank the Farmington Observer for their endorsement. Quality of life is my first priority. Together we can work to make Farmington Hills the number one city in America.

Cheryl Olivetto
Councilmember
Farmington Hills

■ 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.

Mail:
Letters to the Editor
Farmington Observer
33411 Grand River
Farmington, MI 48335
E-Mail: jhubred@homecomm.net
Fax: 248-477-9722

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A place to take a stand

"Education's purpose is to replace an empty mind with an open one."

Malcolm S. Forbes

This is American Education Week, Nov. 11-17. Under the sponsorship of the U.S. Department of Education of 12 national organizations, the week is set aside to celebrate the American public education system.

That system has been a whipping post for groups from the left end of the political spectrum in the last few years. Many have advocated for the superiority of private and parochial schools.

Public schools are assailed for poor teaching, lax discipline, overspending. Their more vociferous critics deride them as cesspools of immorality.

We've seen a growing interest in voucher systems to help private schools; and we've seen the spread of specialized, narrowly focused charter schools.

And though much can be said about the high quality of many of our local private and parochial schools and about the success of some charter schools, recent events have helped to remind us of the special glory of American public education.

Our public schools are the foundation of a free and open society, a place where ideas are born and challenged. And while some would like America's public schools to advocate for a particular political, religious or social point of view, the system's strength comes from being open to various points of view.

This is a theme running through the press material for American Education Week, that we are together in our differences and our respect for each other's point of view.

The press material passes along these quotes: "The highest result of education is tolerance," said Helen Keller.

"Education is a vaccine for violence," said actor Edward James Olmos. "Good schools, like good societies and good families, celebrate and cherish diversity," said educator Deborah Meier.

Of course, at the elementary level, children are taught the basics — reading, writing, arithmetic, the basic principles of the republican form of government. As they grow older they are encouraged to ask questions, to challenge and test concepts, to draw conclusions from applying the methods they've learned. In the American system, the goal is to learn how to think and apply that thinking creatively.

Public schools are open to everyone in

the community. They are a place where children from different family and ethnic backgrounds, different religions and different economic circumstances come together to learn. They accept children with any and all physical or mental limitations, something their non-public counterparts don't face. And they face security challenges that come with public schools' open-door mission.

'It is in public education that the American dream begins to take shape.'

The majority of our much maligned public school teachers work hard to bring out the best in their students. They put in long hours in and out of the classroom. They struggle through reams of red tape. They are assaulted each year with the newest "in" theory on how to educate children and handle the abuse with a large measure of goodwill. They deal with parents — most well-meaning — who have their own views about what public education should be, and insist on being heard. They compete for the attention of their students with CDs, radios, television, movies, video games and the Internet.

They must try to educate a wide variety of children, some gifted and some struggling to learn the most basic concepts. Each year they must confront children from broken homes, children who have been abused and children without strong parental support.

And through all of this, public school teachers continue to provide an education that is superior to most other systems — more open, more technically advanced, more diverse.

A good public school system is a partnership. Parents, students, teachers and school administration all need to be involved. Working together we create something that is one of the great triumphs of American democracy.

In the words of news anchor Tom Brokaw: "There is a place in America to take a stand: it is public education. It is the underpinning of our cultural and political system. It is the great common ground. Public education after all is the engine that moves us as a society toward a common destiny... It is in public education that the American dream begins to take shape."