

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.

Hearts, darts to the best and worst of the past year

As we begin a new year, it is time to take a measure of the old. In the annals of American history, 2001 will not go down as the age of interplanetary exploration as once envisioned by Arthur C. Clarke and Stanley Kubrick.

It will be remembered, instead, as a year of terror, war and economic displacement. But like all years, 2001 had its share of good and bad, heroes and villains, joys and sorrows.

Here we present our Hearts to the best and our Darts to the worst of 2001.

Hearts... to all the organizations, groups and people who found their humanity touched and goodwill stirred by the horrible events of Sept. 11. The collections of money, teddy bears, blood and even just expressions of support have been and continue to be truly inspiring.

Darts... to the auto companies who are forcing major cuts in employee benefit packages - higher deductibles, no more 401K contributions, etc. - and, we fear, leading other companies down that thorny path. Will a further, deepening economic slide mean more and more uninsured people? And, will that lead us more quickly toward federal health care?

Hearts... to state lawmakers, prodded by Rep. Laura Toy (R-Livonia), and Clarenceville school officials helping to push lawmakers to remove the ban on cell phones to be carried in schools, allowing discretion for local school officials, more local control and better connections between parents and kids.

Darts... to the court system that threw a monkey wrench into Michigan's high school sports scheduling system, all in the supposed name of fairness. In reality, it seems the true motivation is scholarships. But isn't sports about participation? And would the result of this ruling mean fewer students will be allowed to participate? Either that or spending on school facilities will balloon.

Hearts... to Wayne County Executive Ed McNamara on the near completion of the new midfield terminal and other improvements at Wayne County Detroit Metropolitan Airport. The terminal has finally been named in his honor.

Darts... to Gov. John Engler and the state legislature for devastating cuts in

state funding for schools and municipalities. While the decline in state revenues makes cuts inevitable, the broad brush approach will leave many hurting and doesn't properly address needs.

Hearts... to local school officials who are at least considering the possibility that starting school at the crack of dawn may have a negative effect on high school students. We hope they dig a little deeper than just the lateness of the hour - it's possible that kids who stay up until 1 a.m. studying because they've worked all evening or are over-involved in activities would benefit more from a class in setting priorities than in an extra hour of sleep.

Darts... to State Rep. Andrew Rackowski (R-Farmington Hills), who can't seem to decide what political race to run after his final term in the House. To back to this country's earliest days, when lawmakers went to the capitol for a period of time and then returned to their families and jobs, allowing fresh perspectives to enter the system. Instead, too many politicians jump from one level of government to another, focusing far too much attention on their personal political futures and, perhaps, losing that valuable "real world" perspective.

Hearts... to anyone who worked hard to help our communities recover from the shock of Sept. 11, to rebuild faith and hope. That includes the Multicultural/Multiracial Commission, which turned its September Heritage Festival into a time of remembrance and outreach, and the Farmington Hills/Farmington Community Foundation, which pushed forward with the annual Cornucopia Ball in November, a primary source of revenue for local youth programs.

Hearts... to area Muslims who shared the history and meaning of their religion with the rest of the community. Members of the Tavheed Center opened their doors and their hearts to help us all understand the true nature of their faith.

Darts... finally, to those fanatics who chose to express their rage at modern life by destroying the lives of thousands of innocent people. Nothing could ever justify what they have done.

Humane society's work benefits our community

We've all seen the pictures of cute pets available for adoption through the Michigan Humane Society.

Perhaps you've even responded, going to the shelter on Marquette in Westland to adopt an animal. Animal adoption is certainly an important part of the humane society's work, but there's much more.

Having difficulty with a new pet you've brought home? The humane society's Marta Duffen reports you can call the shelter and ask for help. There's written information on behavioral problems, too. Of course, the society's also an advocate for animal well-being and, among other issues, spaying and neutering of pets to prevent overpopulation.

The humane society, known locally for its shelter and clinic in Westland, as well as facilities in Rochester Hills and Detroit, is turning 125 this year. Its anniversary will be celebrated in various ways, but the day-to-day work of the organization will go on.

Since 1877, the Michigan Humane Society has advocated for the well-being of animals, primarily dogs and cats but also some more unusual species. In a recent Observer interview, Duffen noted

with pride that adoptions were up in 2001.

Much of the praise for that goes to hard-working staff and volunteers, who don't always see animals at their best but continue to care for them. Euthanasia, a last resort, is the end for some animals who have behavioral problems or infectious diseases, but many others go out to loving homes to live happy lives.

The shelter in Westland's a bit noisy with all the barking dogs, but it's also clean and well-lit. If you have room in your home for a four-legged friend, consider stopping by to talk about an adoption.

Pets need considerable care, some more than others, but also bring great joy into owners' lives, with memories that last for years after the animal has died of old age.

The Observer congratulates the humane society on its 125th anniversary and praises the organization for its worthwhile work. We wish humane society staff and volunteers all the best in the future.

Botsford Boys set good example

Hats off to the Boys of Botsford! With a grant deal of aplomb and dignity, a dozen senior gents who reside in Botsford Commons presented a \$4,140 check this week to Farmington Hills fire and police chiefs, the proceeds from a fund-raiser that still has the Ladies of Botsford talking.

Their "Boys of Botsford Calendar," which featured a different hunk posing each month, was a local sensation, garnering lots of media attention. That they posed for a good cause was a wonderful gesture. The funds will go to the Farmington Hills Police Benevolent

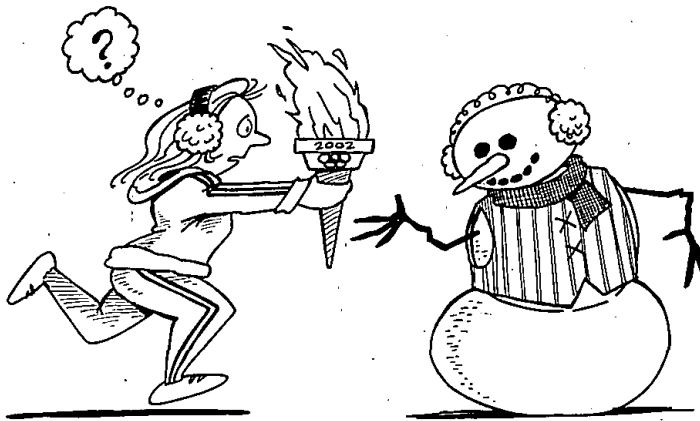
Association, which assists emergency services people and their families, and to the families of New York firefighters.

More importantly, though, they've reminded us that there is life after retirement. We are useful and alive as long as we want to be, after all.

So thanks to the Boys of Botsford, for showing everyone it's never too late to have fun, come up with a unique idea or contribute to the world around us.

And, as the Ladies of Botsford can attest, that we are never too old to be attractive.

RUNNING THE OLYMPIC TORCH THROUGH MICHIGAN



Geoff Brooks' 2002 Observer & Eccentric Concerts, Runways!

LETTERS

Appreciates FHPD

I am writing this letter in order that I may express my deep gratitude for the outstanding performance of the Farmington Hills Police Department this past year. My experience with the Department has shown its staff to be nothing short of exemplary, professional, and responsible, while maintaining the safety in our community.

An event that has enabled me to realize a closer understanding of the Department is my involvement in the Farmington Hills Police Benevolent Association golf outing, in which I am a participant each year. The Association is responsible for raising funds that benefit police officers' widows and children's medical expenses, as well as any other needs of families in the surrounding communities. In the event of tragic illness or death.

My opinion as a business owner in Farmington Hills is that the police department's staff is genuine, hard working and dedicated, and that is indisputable. They deserve our support.

**Sam Sheena, Proprietor
Farmington Hills Wine & Liquor**

Driver supports radios

This is in regards to Paul Beaudry's editorial, Yea for you.

I got such a happy feeling when I read your editorial. I have been a Farmington school bus driver for 27 1/2 years.

Since I started driving a bus back in 1974 I have always had a radio with me. Back then, I carried a portable radio and only the students who sat near the front could hear, so everyone tried to sit as close to me as they could.

Needless to say, I really have never had a big problem with students. I would even have 11th and 12th graders who did not have cars sit up front, and we would talk along with listening to the music.

As years have gone by, the buses started coming with radios because they found out it did control behavior.

I have tried over the years to listen to all types of music. My son grew up when rap started. Believe me, I could never get used to it.

My son is almost 27 now, and he loves the music I grew up with. I listen to easy rock 100.3 on the bus. They play a great variety with no rap or hard banging music.

The district has told us over the years to use good judgment, and I feel we all do a great job. As far as the parent who said her child had listened to the radio about the terrorists, I don't know how because we were commanded not to have them on. The students were to find out about it when they got home and were told by their parents. There are stations over the years we have been told not to listen to, and we do as we are told.

Again, I say yes to you. If that parent or any other has a problem, come learn how to drive a school bus. We always need drivers.

Maybe you could drive your own child, then you can turn off your radio and just listen to all the yelling, loud laughing, hitting, along with all the traffic, bad weather, construction, pedestrians, bikers and everything else for eight hours a day, five days a week.

By the way, our days start at 4 a.m.

for some and do not finish until 6:30 p.m. before we get home and then do our jobs there too.

**Anita Martell
Farmington Hills**

FHPD respected

I would like to take this opportunity to compliment the Farmington Hills Police Department.

As a business owner in the community for over 20 years, I have only the highest respect for the men and women of our police department. Since the events of Sept. 11, their jobs have become even more difficult and I am thankful for their protection.

**John Ginopolis
Ginopolis Restaurant
Farmington Hills**

Rights for criminals?

Should the Department of Justice allow war criminals the same rights our citizens receive? That depends.

Albert Taubman created the shopping centers we proudly see as a symbol of Americanism. Does his trial by jury produce fair results? Prosecution witnesses were promised leniency as a reward to testify against him.

The government unfairly focused on Taubman's wealth, including mansions around the world, knowing his jury of "peers" included citizens hard-pressed to meet their monthly mortgage payments.

They were entitled to be envious and found him guilty of violating laws that would never harm them, or anyone else.

Michael Milken proved to Wall Street that start-up "junk bonds" were more profitable than blue-chip stocks and provided entrepreneurs the funds to overthrow lethargic big-business leaders. Milken earned \$560 million in one year and created enough prosperity to boost the national economy.

The Justice Department overlooked irregularities by Ivan Boskey in exchange for his testimony. Milken paid \$1.1 billion in penalties and went to jail, leaving behind an ailing father and a new breed of millionaires.

Leona Helmsley was a hard-working, successful hotel owner. The government used the testimony of an embler to imprison this elderly woman who had paid more in taxes than most of us earn in our lifetimes.

Job creators are maligned because they take home more pay than their employees. Wealthy sports champions and entertainers can espouse sympathy for lower income people because they have no payroll to meet.

Union leaders and politicians convince the public we could all be rich if the few did not have so much! After all, Russia and most of Europe have used this economic system for years and look how well off they are.

**Hank Borgman
Farmington**

Media brainwashing

It is quite amazing the extent media can brainwash the general public. It is almost, if not literally an art form.

It is done by telling people over and over again what they want to believe, that something is extraordinarily better than it really is.

Often, it is accomplished by over and over again telling, for example, that uniformed persons, such as police, firefighters and military personnel are heroes and extraordinarily good human beings.

We want to believe they are all really good persons and heroes, just by virtue of their wearing the uniforms or their job titles.

We need real heroes in our lives to fulfill our emotional needs in a world of chaos. Right now, after the Sept. 11 destruction, the call for heroes is in full swing.

Perhaps we have all gotten carried away by the volume of media coverage, jamming it into our minds day in and day out. We want our heroes to protect us when we cannot protect ourselves.

But the truth of the matter is, real heroes are few and far between, and putting on a uniform, badge or gun does not a hero or a good-guy make. More than likely, because of human nature, just the opposite. Sometimes it is difficult to separate fact from fiction.

A heroic act is when a person in spite of their fear and all possible negative consequences to themselves do something to help other persons.

Putting on a uniform and being given authority creates often overwhelming temptation to abuse that authority, and frequently, that person succumbs to the temptation.

But because the general public has been so successfully brainwashed that anyone wearing a uniform is a hero or a good-guy, the uniformed persons begin to count on people believing it, and frequently abuse their authority, knowing they can get away with it.

Things are not what they seem. The same thinking applies to non-uniformed persons in positions of authority and/or responsibility.

It is human nature to abuse authority and I think the media is providing a disservice to the public with all its misinformation, perhaps naively unintentional.

**Kenneth Kemp
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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