

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.

Why publish bad news? Because it's our job

Over the past year – and particularly since Sept. 11 – we've occasionally been chided for publishing so much bad news. And to be perfectly honest, we're guilty as charged.

Believe it or not, however, there is a method to our madness.

It may look as though we simply splash crime stories on the front page because it sells papers, but that's not true. In fact, we know people are tired of reading about murder, rape, child molesters, slave girls and drug busts.

If a crime story shows up on our front page, there's a good reason. Sometimes, the police are looking for suspects, additional victims or evidence. Publicity might jog someone's memory or convince someone to reveal information. Whenever the police are involved, your tax dollars are at work. The same holds true of government. We try to give our readers as much information as possible about what goes on at public meetings, with the idea that shining a spotlight on those activities will provide the incentive for citizens to learn even more.

Not all the news we publish is "bad." We'll tell you about school plays, community cultural events, local businesses – the kinds of things that make these cities a community. And now it's your turn to give us a hand.

In the coming weeks, the local Commission on Children, Youth and Families will collect stories about the value of good deeds. The commission is asking for

stories about any kindness or good deed – and its positive effects – done for you.

For instance, last week, we ran a letter of thanks sent by the folks at Antioch Pre-School, after some kind soul returned their registration banner. That may not seem like a big deal to anyone else, but the folks at Antioch were mighty grateful.

If someone's done something nice for you, tell the Commission, and we'll publish your story. Stories must be mailed or emailed by March 30 to: Beverly Papai, Farmington Community Library, 32737 W. 12 Mile Road, Farmington Hills, MI 48334; papabev@farmlib.org.

This is all part of the Farmington Community Library's "Everybody's Reading: Pay It Forward" program. The idea presented in the book and movie is simple: Instead of paying a favor back, pay it forward by doing something for someone they couldn't do on their own.

Trevor McKinney, the fictional child central to the book, had the idea that if one person helped three people, and those three helped another three, thousands of lives could be touched. We believe residents of Farmington and Farmington Hills can help make that happen in the real world.

For those of you tired of hearing bad news, here's your chance to make headlines. Frankly, we hope to be over-run by these bits of cheer.

Like you, we sure could use a little good news.

New Metro terminal may lift Detroit's turnaround

A New York Times writer once wrote he wouldn't rank Detroit Metro Airport as the world's worst airport. But that was only because an airport in Bangladesh was overrun with beggars. In its annual rating of national airports, the Wall Street Journal has regularly rated Metro at the bottom and has always had some tart commentary on the airport's dreary looks, inept service, inadequate parking, poor layout and confusing traffic patterns.

The political squabbling over contracts has further tarnished the airport's reputation.

But on Sunday, Wayne County Executive Ed McNamara, Airports Director Lester Robinson and the executives of Northwest Airlines are expecting the cheers to change to cheers with the opening of the Edward H. McNamara-Northwest World Gateway Terminal.

Preview open houses have already drawn oohs and aahs. The airplane-shaped Concourse A finally brings world class amenities to the Motor City.

Frequent fliers will think they've suddenly landed at the Oz airport – "Toto, I don't think we're in Kansas anymore."

Fliers will have a choice of entering at the old Meridian entrance or trying out the John Dingell Drive south road by exiting I-275 at Eureka.

They'll be able to park at the 10-story parking garage with more than 11,000 parking spaces.

Once through the gantry of up-to-the-minute security, ticket-holders entering Concourse A will find themselves in a sparkling clean building with a soaring ceiling. They can move to their gate (one of 66 gates in the concourse and a total 97 gates in the new facility) along moving sidewalks or take the millionong overhead tram. They can browse and buy at the numerous retail stores or eat at a wide range of restaurants, or maybe just grab a coffee at Starbucks or the Java Coast Cafe.

Increasing creature comforts is just part of the story. The new Northwest terminal and a new fourth runway will allow more flights in and out of Detroit. The old Smith and Davey terminals will be replaced over time by new facilities to provide more gates for other airlines, even as Metro continues to be a hub for Northwest.

The new terminal is the first step in what some visionaries see as a renaissance for Southeast Michigan's economy.

In a world that depends more and more on speed, a world-class airport is essential toward making the Detroit area a player again in the world economy.

The airport is a key element in several

Michigan economic developments. Despite cyclical declines, the auto industry is still a vital part of our local economy, but it depends on good air service for parts delivery. A new life-sciences corridor is taking shape linking science and medical facilities and biochemical companies from Detroit to East Lansing. Oakland County's Automation Alley and the area's numerous universities also depend on reliable air travel and air delivery services.

John Kasarda, a professor of management and director of the Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise at the University of North Carolina, says that metro Detroit is overdue in developing a new business district linking Wayne County's two airports – Metro and Willow Run. Kasarda, working as a consultant for the county, sees the airports as a magnet for attracting software companies, e-business phone centers and warehouses which depend on fast turn around on filling orders, food cold storage centers to guarantee freshness and even corporate headquarters for companies that need to be close to their operations.

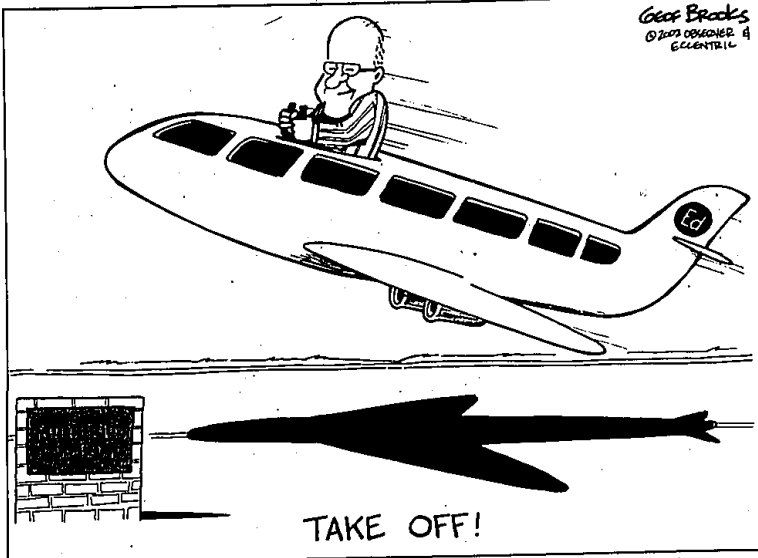
In addition to the new area, that Kasarda dubs an "aerotropolis," would generate activity for restaurants, shopping centers, hotels and resorts. The county's proposed Pinnacle Aeropark, south of the airport, will be an 1,800-acre mixed use project that will include an 18-hole golf course, office and commercial space. The public-private development is projected for completion by 2016 and will represent an investment for \$1.6 billion and is expected to create 25,000 new jobs.

Plans are also being drawn to develop a "ring road" connecting the two airports with an office, warehouse and commercial development.

For all these reasons Sunday, Feb. 24, will be an important date in the history of the Detroit economy.

Despite the long political rancor over airport operations and construction and the many questions that still need to be settled, the county executive can leave office at the end of the year with a sense of real accomplishment. It has been Ed McNamara's vision, drive and, some would say, cunning which have finally lifted Metro into the ranks of modern airports.

And if all the pieces come together as McNamara envisions them for a new urban center linking the two airports, McNamara's legacy will be a stronger, wealthier and more vibrant Wayne County and Southeast Michigan.



Geoff Brooks
OZOS OBSERVER &
ECENTRIC

LETTERS

■ Lawsuit problem

The dollar limit in Michigan small claims court has recently been increased to \$3,000. But it is still only for actual monetary costs to the plaintiff.

The big problem still exists – that is – a plaintiff must be able to sue in small claims court for other than actual monetary costs. A plaintiff in small claims courts needs to be able to sue for the same things for which he can sue in a civil court, but without an attorney and with the same \$3,000 limitation. A little higher would be okay too.

It would make life a lot easier for claimants with small civil claims which do not justify the cost of an attorney. It would be less paperwork for both claimant and the court, and would help unclutter the civil court system. It would greatly reduce the intimidation factor inherent in civil court because no attorneys would be allowed.

In a nutshell, it would simplify justice. Other states do it. Why should Michigan citizens take a back seat when it comes to our justice system?

Kenneth Kemp
Farmington Hills

■ Goodfellows say thanks

The 2001 Goodfellows year is over, and our pledge of "No child or senior without a Christmas" was successfully completed. Our delivery date was Dec. 22.

With the economy on a slight downturn this year, the Farmington Area Goodfellows helped 159 families, which included 334 children under the age of 12. There were 162 seniors that received assistance and 38 disabled adults.

This program happens each year because of the many generous people who live or work in the Farmington area. The two weeks before delivery day we had over 14 people at our headquarters each day to help sort and pack the food boxes. Many people came in the evening to help with the toy packing and the home boxes for the seniors. We put others to work typing gift certificates and sending out thank-you notes to those who sent us money in response to our "All Community Mailing."

On delivery day we had over 50 students from the three high schools (National Honor Society) to help with delivery of the boxes and packages. The volunteers of the Farmington area are the greatest. However, most residents don't realize the amount of time and effort that it takes to make the Goodfellows program happen.

We have 14 standing committees who start working in early November to do the work needed to complete our mission. And, of course, we are all volunteers, no one is paid.

We have many folks that spent countless hours working at our headquarters, but one person put in more time than any of us, and that's Jim Dale, our warehouse manager. Jim had a very able assistant this year in Don Graff. There are three others that I must mention – Joy DeFranco, who was in charge of the toy packing, Lisa Ellis for sending out the thank-you notes, and Aleta Bame of Metro Bank, our treasurer.

This year was also a time for the Goodfellows organization with Frank Grady, a board member, passing away this January. Frank was a dedicated

member and could do more with a camera than anyone I know. His pictures were able to capture the moment and tell the story better than anyone could put into words. Frank will certainly be missed.

All of us on the Board of Directors want to extend our most heartfelt thanks to all those who were part of the team. We hope you enjoyed what you did, that it made you feel good to help others, and that you will consider helping us again next year.

Richard L. Tupper
President and General
Chairman
Farmington Area Goodfellows

■ Not less, not more

Since the Mayflower, America has been the ultimate goal of those seeking a better life. Their skills, morals and dedication created this melting pot of prosperity proudly named the United States.

Has immigration become a threat to our existence that must be stopped? We cannot block everyone arriving illegally by land, sea and air in this enormous country. We cannot return millions of aliens to their homelands. We can halt legal immigration, but illegal arrivals would increase and be difficult to monitor. We should return to the basics of Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness to encourage those that improve society.

Halt free medical care and welfare benefits to discourage ill and unskilled people that come for handouts. Permit everyone to work. Talent and ingenuity create jobs that did not exist – they do not take jobs from others.

Provide all children an education taught in English, our common language. Multiculturalism separates people by race, religion and language, making integration into the American mainstream difficult.

Permit them the same opportunity our ancestors had – not less, and not more.

Hank Borgman
Farmington

■ Culture shock

Let us forget for just a moment the fiscal irresponsibility of the late start proposal for Farmington high school students. I would like to offer yet another perspective.

In listening to the various arguments for this ill-conceived proposal, it is obvious that in addition to over-codding these kids today, they are being set up for culture shock in the not to distant future. Once they leave the fantasyland that is high school, they will be immediately slapped in the face with the reality that only those who adapt to the system, and not expect it to adapt to them, are met with success.

For those that go onto college, there will be zero sympathy when they feel that the 7:30 a.m. Biology Lab, which is required even though their first choice was the comfortable 9:00 a.m. slot, conflicts with their ability to watch Seinfeld re-runs the night before.

For those who don't go onto college, because of that choice, they have set themselves up for a lifetime of being at the mercy of other's scheduling requirements. As for the members of the administration who support this, it appears that they are attempting to eliminate or at least reduce the posi-

bility if not probability that not everyone will succeed in their academic career. They need to be reminded of this simple fact, we cannot foster greatness in our children if the possibility of failure is not evident.

Recently, at a committee meeting considering this issue, a representative from the teachers union offered this gem: "The current start times amount to child abuse." This distorted sense of reality is a perfect example of why public education in this country is quickly becoming a cocktail party joke.

Robert Blair
Farmington Hills

■ Taxpayers, OLS will lose

This letter is in response to the February 7th article describing the plans for the Farmington Public Schools to assume the costs for instruction at Our Lady of Sorrows school.

Before this becomes a reality, I'd like to call everyone's attention to the winners and losers in this proposition:

The Winners: The taxpayers of the Farmington Public School District, the Teacher's Union and the parents of OLS Students. Through creative use of state laws, net revenue will be provided the public school system and teacher's ranks will grow while simultaneously freeing up more OLS parent-paid tuition for additional religious uses. Win-Win.

The Losers: The taxpayers of Michigan, OLS Teachers and the parents of OLS Students. Does anyone think that this private school revenue allocation will stop here? Other school districts will jump on this effectively shrinking the overall state funds. Win now, pay later.

After OLS teachers lose their jobs, how long before will it be before the issue of union and non-union teachers working side by side comes to the forefront? And most importantly, parents of OLS students must understand that public school instruction is non-secular. There will be no "Christ" in Christmas, no music of Jesus asleap in the manger, etc. Only Santa Claus, Peter Cotton Tail and the like. Lose-Lose.

As the parents start to lose some of the reasons to send their children to OLS, consider if a Catholic education is really necessary. Over time, maybe not. Let all buyers beware.

Tom Gurka
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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