

## 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.

## Now's the time to help improve education

With a multi-million dollar budget deficit, increasing costs for special education, controversy over school start times and new graduation standards on the horizon, this is a stressful time to be a Farmington School Board member.

It's also the perfect time to run for a seat on this body, which is charged with overseeing one of the community's largest enterprises. The school district, which serves more than 12,000 students, is at an important crossroads and decisions made today will have impacts that resonate well into the future.

In the past, District officials have been accused of "hand-picking" candidates from some mysterious internal pool of active parents who are sympathetic with the current administration. We can see how some might believe that, based on what happened in the last election.

Incumbent Frank Reid and challenger Pam Christian, who each won a seat, were actively endorsed by other board members. Board members Priscilla Brouillette and Cathy Webb took advocacy a step further, distributing a letter that denounced one opponent, Phil Neuman, for taking actions THEY described as devious, demoralizing and destructive.

Yes, we endorsed Neuman, but no matter who was targeted, that kind of campaigning does nothing more than discourage good people from applying for the job. We hope no one takes from that incident a sense of dread about challenging this year's incumbents, Webb and Jack Inch, whose years of service began at a point like this,

with the decision to run for public office.

Both have served their community admirably and worked hard, and we're not saying they don't deserve re-election. We're saying voters deserve to hear new voices, no matter what those voices have to say.

On the flip side, if committed, energetic candidates don't come forward from the community, school officials can hardly be blamed for encouraging people they know to do so.

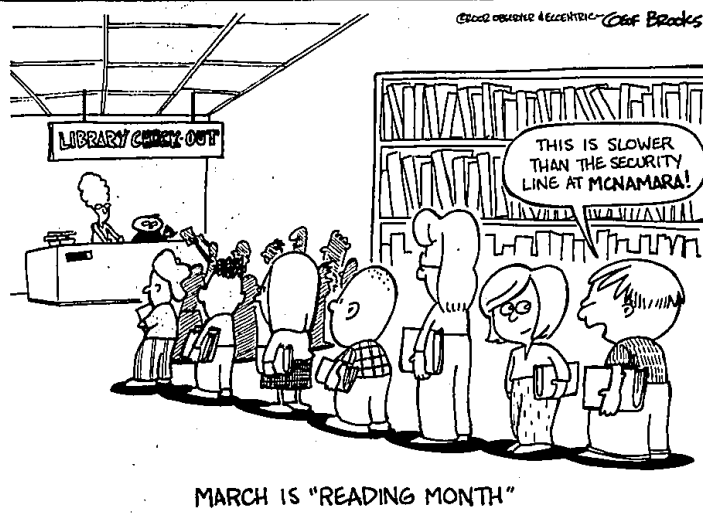
The solution to this problem is a simple one and is the basic tenet of any society where leaders are elected and not appointed by some benevolent despot: Men and women of character who have a vision for the future of education must step forward and offer to be part of the solution, instead of complaining about the problem.

If you're convinced school officials are somehow weighting the election in their favor, stand up and be counted. Whether you win or lose, no effort toward better government is wasted.

And the more candidates involved in the fray, the more issues will be brought to light. That's just politics.

Particularly in this time of financial shortfalls and tough choices, it is imperative to consider all angles, root out all possibilities and consider all actions when it comes to serving the district's primary mission: providing students with a top-notch education.

We look forward to this election season as a time to ask those tough questions and take a hard look at the future of education in our communities.



## LETTERS

### Enron enterprises

Enron was created to fulfill a need and make a profit, not bring America to its knees. Enterprising promotions attracted such "irrational exuberance" that the stock became a gold rush. Knowledgeable staff members sold — they knew it was overpriced. Can Congress prevent this from happening again?

Accounting firms measure profit and protect investment. When taxes confiscate working capital, every solution will be considered. Lower taxes would lessen the need to hide income.

Regulations make or break industries, and politicians are usually friendlier to campaign contributors. Fewer regulations would help, but Enron discovered their contributions purchased no friends in the current administration.

Perhaps "finance reform" has already taken place.

Hank Borgman  
Farmington

### Life predestined

In response to Keely Wygonik's review about Nancy Groves' book, "Faith and Illness, Reflections on God's Sustaining Love," where's the love? If God just stands by and watches you suffer, or if he can't do anything to help you, or won't, what good is he and why should we worship Him?

We rationalize, when terrible things happen to us, so that we can go on living; we say things are out of our control, so we must suffer.

Job suffered, but wound up renewed, rich and healthy. Christ suffered but wound up in heaven. But where do we fit in? No answer? Me neither, with all of my studying, praying and reading.

If I could afford it, I'd publish my own book. I've helped many non-paying patients get out of depression, etc. I've had plenty of experience with people, and I've got ideas and tales to tell. But who will listen to me, since I am not a doctor, nor licensed.

I believe we have no control over anything and our lives are predestined no matter what we say, try, do, or don't do. Maybe things will be different in heaven, if we ever get there.

Leon I. Scholtich  
Farmington Hills

### Success breeds jealousy

There's an old saying that goes "Success breeds success." Unfortunately, it appears success also evokes some very negative emotions such as bitterness and envy.

How else would one describe the sentiments expressed by Ms. Denise Albrecht in her letter to the Editor in the March 7th edition of the Farmington Observer? She goes to great lengths attempting to undermine what arguably is one of the finest, if not the finest, high school football program in the state of Michigan. John Harrington has run a reputable, and very successful football program at Harrison since the school's inception in 1970. That fact was never more evident than in 1999 when, after he discovered that he had used an ineligible player in two games (both victories) he made the difficult, but absolutely correct decision to report the violation to the MHSAA. The result, of course, was forfeiture of the two victories.

Despite the two forfeits plus two actual "on-the-field" defeats, Harrington went on to lead that team (clearly one not flush with an abundance of talent) to a third, in what has now become a state record fifth consecutive state champi-

onship.

Rather than speak in vague and non-specific terms as Ms. Albrecht does in her letter, I'll deal in specifics to address some of her questions. I moved to Farmington Hills from out of state after being relocated to southeastern Michigan by Ford Motor Company. A key element in my decision of where to live was choosing an environment where I felt my children would have the greatest opportunity for success.

Likewise, when deciding which high school they would attend, I sought an environment which best supported their needs and interests. After thoroughly researching all three high schools, Harrison was (and is) the clear choice for our family. No, Harrison did not recruit my family. My family recruited Harrison. And I am extremely pleased with the results.

Ms. Albrecht, I agree that the events of September 11 have changed forever the way we live here in the United States, and yes, we must all stand up for our beliefs. It is, therefore, my obligation to speak out against the false and unsubstantiated allegations you've made against the Harrison football program. The last sentence of your letter is absolutely correct. Every student athlete deserves a chance to play on a successful team. And every Farmington Hills student athlete who wants to play high school football for the best coach in the state also deserves that opportunity if he so chooses.

K.J. Woods  
Farmington Hills

### Schools of choice

In response to "more fair play needed," regarding Harrison High Schools football program and their so-called recruiting tactics.

When deciding on which school to attend, it is obvious that any student with particular interests will choose the school that best meets their needs. For football that is HHS, for soccer it is FHS.

What avid football player would not choose to attend a school that not only meets their academic needs, but also has an outstanding football program, giving them the opportunity to meet their goals? I would like to hear the facts to back up the accusations regarding students being recruited.

The families who move here from out of state did so after researching which schools were best for their children and not their personal requirements, not the other way around.

It is my understanding that six months ago, Mr. Schweinhart did address the accusations made, but Ms. Albrecht refused to meet to discuss the outcome. The question is why? Could it be because the accusations were proven false?

After witnessing the HHS football program, I can attest to the fact that it is the amount of time, determination, commitment and sheer hard work on the part of the students, coaches, administrators, teachers, alumni and parents that has made HHS state champs year after year, not "undue influence."

Harrison High School students should be proud of their accomplishments from all academics to all athletics, and their victories should not be diminished by others crying foul based on rumors and not facts, while using the 9-11 tragedy to further an agenda is in just poor taste.

Virginia Williams  
Farmington Hills

### Change when possible

I regret not having attended the town hall meeting on high school start times on February 28th. I would heartily sup-

port the change to a later start time for not only our high school students but middle school students as well (if funding were not a concern).

My sleep-deprived teenagers are classic examples of what the research clearly indicates: kids perform better in school, and are happier souls when they have more rest. No amount of parental harping can make a teen sleep when they are not sleepy at night.

Why make our teens get up before dawn and sit sleepily through their first hours of class so that we save money on bus routes and get everyone out by 2:30 p.m.? What's wrong with an 8:30 to 3:30 school day?

As far as after-school sports and part time jobs, I say, "Academics come first!" Let Farmington lead the way, as bumpy as the road may be, and other districts may follow suit. I understand that the change may not be immediately possible due to budget shortfalls but should be implemented at the earliest possible point in time.

Marianne O'Connor  
North Farmington High School parent

### Local help for OCD

Thank you for your recent in-depth articles about Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder.

The article of Feb. 17, describing OCD in adolescence and the study Dr. Joseph Himle is conducting, highlights one of the most shame ridden diagnoses teens may struggle with. Dr. Himle is my colleague on the Medical Advisory Board for the Obsessive-Compulsive Foundation of Michigan and often advocates for the "durability" of cognitive and behavioral treatments for OCD.

It is important for people to be aware that there are local resources available they can also tap into, including the OCD Foundation of Michigan at 313-438-3292.

In addition, Dr. Himle and Dan Fischer, of University of Michigan Anxiety Disorders Program, Dr. Nissenon and I will be presenting a Cognitive Behavior Therapy Training Institute on May 11. The program is presented by the OCD Foundation of Michigan and is for both the public and professionals. Information is available at the above number.

I applaud Dr. Himle and I applaud the young people and families who seek treatment. The average time from onset to effective treatment is 17 years. Consequently, for those with OCD, I urge they seek care sooner rather than later.

Antonita Caretto, PhD, Licensed Psychologist and Partner  
Davis Counseling Center,  
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.

Mail:  
Letters to the Editor  
Jonl Hubrad  
Farmington Observer  
33411 Grand River  
Farmington, MI 48335

E-Mail:  
jhubrad@oe.homecomm.net

Fax:  
248-477-9722

## During reading month, set an example for kids

March is reading month.

Here at The Observer that's very important. We do everything we can to encourage young readers, hoping that someday they'll become regular newspaper readers.

But beyond those selfish motives, we understand how important it is to read.

Words are magical. They allow us to communicate lots of information in a relatively compact package. They are a source of knowledge, entertainment and inspiration.

Technical writers lead us through complex operations. Historians explain where we've been. Journalists tell us where we are. Novelists take us on adventures. Poets make music of words and transport us to new understanding.

We know that many things vie for the attention of the young. The television, computer games and socializing all compete for time.

But books have been holding their own in recent years. Millions of young readers have actually turned away from the televi-

sion to read a book. The phenomenal success of the Harry Potter series is proof that young people will always respond to a well told story.

In time, they'll also find that the words that entertain them can also teach them. Once they master the words, the words will take them on many adventures, real and imagined.

Adults need to show the way. Read to your little ones. From Dr. Seuss to Captain Underpants, the world of children's literature is wide and varied. Then encourage them to read themselves, whether it's serial mysteries or funny stories or the fantasies that have been absorbing so many. Talk to them about what they read, ask questions and let them ask questions.

Turn the TV off and pick up a book, magazine or newspaper. The best way to encourage reading is to set a good example.

And your reward will be that you, too, will be transported to a world of adventure, knowledge and inspiration.

## GUEST OPINION

### Nursing home complaints are political

This letter is sent in response to an article by Mr. Aldo Vagnozzi titled "State campaign seeks quality nursing home care."

As a typical politician looking to jump on the latest "problem," as noted by the media, Mr. Vagnozzi seems to have decided that having a "concern" for nursing home care may be the way to get him elected to another public office. This is fine if the "concern" is genuine. After reading his article, it seems that it is just another speech on a soapbox.

Mr. Vagnozzi's article is full of references to the "problems" in the nursing home industry, but not one solution to any problem is offered. Mr. Vagnozzi's article list different sources citing problems but he offers none found by him while visiting any nursing home.

Mr. Vagnozzi, as a Democrat, blames the Bush Administration for not fixing the problems of the nursing home industry. The previous Democrat Administration and Congress also chose not to make the changes he has offered.

The nursing home industry is currently one of the most regulated industries in the country. Once, and possibly more, per year each home is given an inspection by the state. This inspection takes place over four days and the homes are not notified when the state inspectors are coming.

Mr. Vagnozzi states that 9 of 10 homes lack adequate staff. Adequate staff for what

and as decided by whom? Each home must meet the staffing requirements as set by the Medicare and Medicaid programs. If these staffing requirements are not met, the facility can receive stiff fines or removal from the programs.

If it were more fully investigated, it would be found that the vast majority of the homes with low staffing are 100 percent funded by Medicaid. The Medicaid program pays a fixed amount per day to the home to care for a resident. This reimbursement does not come close to covering the actual cost of care for most residents.

I believe that the nursing home industry is not against more staffing or improving conditions, the problems is that no additional reimbursement is being offered to cover the additional cost which will be incurred. The current minimum-staffing requirement as set by the state is 2.25 hours. As noted in the article, at 3.8 hours Michigan homes are well above this staffing requirement.

Finally, you can work for nursing home improvements not by joining an organization with a fancy name but by visiting nursing homes in your area. After your visit write a letter to your state and federal representatives letting them know what you have found.

I think you will find that despite of the latest media frenzy regarding nursing homes, the vast majority of homes provide exceptional care to their residents.

Dennis J. Atkins, Lourdes Campus  
Waterford