

## 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 do kids never learn? We teach them

Somewhere today, a 16-year-old young man is coming to grips with a tragedy that will very likely shape the rest of his life, at least in part because of his own irresponsible behavior.

Driving a Chevrolet Camaro at speeds witnesses said may have exceeded 90 miles per hour, the teen motorist tore up Orchard Lake Road and smashed into another vehicle. The accident killed Gerald and Barbara Gortez, retirees who were just blocks from home. Although the Camaro driver and his passenger escaped with minor injuries, they may feel the impact for decades to come.

Long after the wheels of the system have turned, after we have dissected what was at fault and by how much, we will still be faced with the same baffling questions that linger now in the shards of glass and bits of wreckage that mark the spot where youthful recklessness and painful reality collided.

How could this have happened? Why would a new driver take such a dangerous risk? Where were his parents? What was he thinking?

And perhaps most importantly: Can we keep this from happening again?

The only question with an absolute answer is the last: Sadly, no one has found a way to stop teenagers from taking stupid chances.

In a small southern Minnesota town last week, residents marked the 62nd anniversary of a car crash long considered the nation's deadliest. Eleven teenagers died that night, a 12th succumbed to injuries a few months later. They were just kids playing chicken on a rural road, driving recklessly and too fast.

And most people outside of Slayton,

Minn., have no idea this horrific accident ever occurred, much less why.

We've said it for decades and for decades, young drivers have ignored this simple truth: Speed kills.

Why won't they all listen? It's simply not enough to say young men and women behave recklessly because they believe they will live forever.

As often as we tell them to do otherwise, we still drive our cars 80 miles an hour down a busy freeway when we're five minutes late for a business appointment or a haircut. We still take both hands off the wheel while hurtling down a busy road, in order to talk on a cell phone, eat lunch or apply make-up.

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We're not saying this young driver shouldn't be punished, and punished severely if convicted. His reckless behavior contributed to the deaths of two innocent people, on their way home from volunteering in Detroit, people whose loved ones are left with the aching sadness and rage that comes with sudden, senseless death.

But before we hang this particular child in effigy, perhaps we could all stop for a moment and take a look at what he has learned from us.

## GUEST OPINION

## Demand equal pay law at state, federal levels

As proclaimed by the National Committee on Pay Equity, Tuesday, April 16, is EQUAL PAY DAY. A Tuesday has been selected for this observance because the average woman must work a five day week plus Monday and half of Tuesday the following week in order to earn as much as the average man does in a five day work week.

Nationally, women earn 73 cents on the dollar compared to men; in Michigan that drops to 67 cents, making Michigan women among the lowest paid in the nation, 47th on the earnings list among the 50 states. The Census Bureau report that women of color earn even less nationally, receiving only 65% of the pay of white men, Hispanic women just 52%.

The consequences of inadequate wages carry far beyond the immediate and obvious privations. Women constitute three quarters of the elderly poor, with incomes averaging 58% of that of older men. Sources of retirement income are threefold, all deriving from wages earned during the years in the paid work force: Personal savings and investments, pension plans, and social security.

Women who have to struggle to meet everyday expenses are unlikely to accumulate savings, or invest in IRA's or 401K plans. Employer financed pensions, when available, are based upon years of average earnings, as are social security benefits. Low wages translate directly into low income retirement.

Older American couples have the highest income among all couples in industrialized countries; older American women alone, by contrast, rank second from the bottom, with only Australian women being poorer.

The American economy is set up to favor men and marriage. Social security and pension plans reward those with long periods of unbroken service at relatively high wages, the principally male work pattern. Because of their domestic role, women leave paid employment at intervals, with each hiatus causing a loss of current, as well as future income.

As long as a woman has access to the income of a man, she is unlikely to become poor. Unfortunately, half of all marriages in the United States end in divorce; some women never marry; and

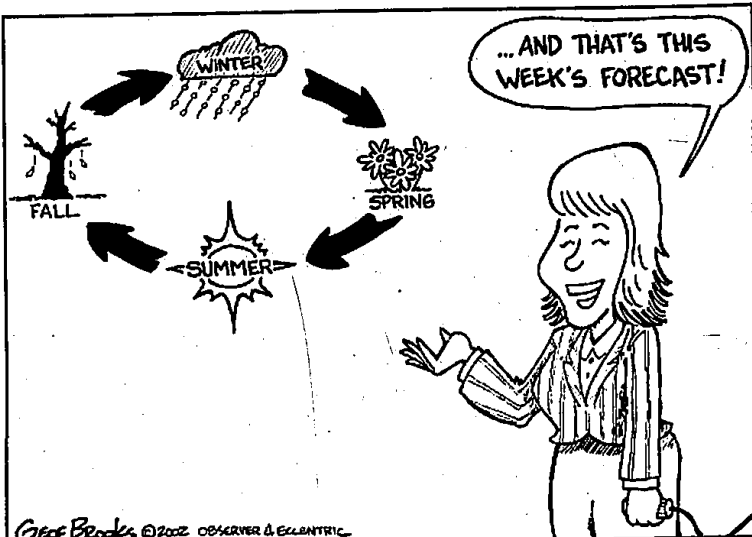
60% of wives survive their husbands. Despite their heavy influx into the paid labor force following World War II, women remain clustered in sales, service and clerical jobs, where wages are low and fringe benefits, like pensions are skimpy or non-existent. However, the women who have risen to managerial positions are also victims of pay inequity.

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A recent study by the General Accounting Office revealed that the gap between male and female manager in ten different fields has actually widened during the past five years. Having a "career" as opposed to a "job," is no protection against wage discrimination. Pay Equity would compensate workers based on the skills, education, training, degree of responsibility and working conditions of a particular job. It would eliminate sex or any other personal characteristic of the job-holder as the basis for the wage determinant.

The poverty of any individual or group is a concern for all of us. It robs people of their dignity, swells the welfare rolls, and burdens the taxpayers. It is especially deplorable when it results from a genetic characteristic one cannot control. We should all be demanding Pay Equity legislation from our representatives in Washington and Lansing.

Virginia Nicol is past president of the Michigan Chapter of the Older Women's League. She lives in Farmington Hills with her husband of 61 years, Ron, a golf instructor.



Geoff Brooks ©2002 OBSERVER & ECCENTRIC

## LETTERS

### Response to letter

I would like to take this opportunity to respond to Mr. Cummins' concerns regarding my candidacy for county commission.

First off, I think Paul Pace wrote a great article, and I would like to thank him for his questions, and for reporting my responses accurately. He reported that I would have five resolutions ready to go upon my election to the county commission and that I would introduce those resolutions within the first few months of office.

Those resolutions include a revamping of the flu shot program, televising county commission meetings, and renewing the environmental infrastructure fund when it expires soon to help with drainage and sewage issues. The other two resolutions include a reduction in the 911 telephone surcharge, and a small reduction in county property taxes.

Mr. Cummins would like to know how I plan to pay for the flu shot program. The Health department always budgets additional money to be used in "health fairs" where they vaccinate people already. I am simply going to request that some of the money that is budgeted go to a program held once a year in the Costco center. It's simple, it's affordable, and it's right.

Mr. Cummins would also like to know my views on mass transit, and "what I know about roads." This might have something to do with the fact that my only other announced challenger works for the Oakland County Road Commission. I have several employees who use the SMART bus system to get to work, but the system is far from perfect. The current system has many flaws including problems with transporting disabled people.

I think we need to look at the problem regionally in a different way, and I look forward to helping shape a new more efficient mass transit system. It should be noted that the county commission has very little to do with the county roads.

County roads are funded by the state, and the money is spent by the county road commission. County commissioners do appoint members of the road commission, and there are several residents of our two cities that are on my short list to be appointed.

Ryan Gesund  
Farmington Hills

### Late start time

This letter is in response to the many letters I have read that are against the later starting times for high schools.

As a member of the late start committee, I believe the research that those of us on the committee were exposed to should have been distributed to the public at the town hall meeting. Saying that only the pros of the issue were discussed and no cons is just ridiculous. After reading all the research available you will discover that there are no cons.

I recommend the Web site, www.sleepfoundation.org, "Sleep and Teens." In other research Patricia W. Mercer, a psychologist with the Sleep Medicine Center at Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago, states that "students are being reared to go to school when their circadian level is lowest." The teen's biological clock is toward a later sleep-wake cycle. As a result, when it's time for school, the teen's body says it's still night time, leaving them with too little sleep to be alert. This is why 30 percent of students

have trouble staying awake in school.

It's so sad that the high percentage of people attending the town hall meeting opposed to late start were not educated on the issue. I believe that if they were, they would not have been opposed to this change. It's also very distressing when parents are willing to put athletics ahead of academics when the benefits to students would be so overwhelming if late start was implemented.

It is regrettable that this committee was faced with fiscally difficult times, and that late start times for all high school students will probably be impossible in the coming years. However, one possibility discussed at the end of our last meeting could be a possibility with parent and teacher support.

A survey of students conducted at all three high schools has shown an approximate 60/40 split in favor of late start. I believe the students should be given the choice of starting at the usual time or starting an hour later. Students who choose late start will stay an extra hour at the end of the day. With a group of teachers willing to start one hour later and stay at the end of the day, this plan would please everyone.

Athletes who need to be out of school at the usual time would be able to start at the same time, and students who are not worried about after school activities would be able to concentrate on academics and start later.

Transportation would have to be provided by the students who choose late start in order to keep this plan cost neutral. Let's hope the administrators will consider this plan, which will please everyone if it can be worked out.

Rhonda Katz  
Farmington Hills

### OLS will share in 2003

During the past few months, we, as a parish community, have experienced a diversity of opinions and actions related to the exploration of a shared time program with the Farmington Public Schools.

Unfortunately, some of the negative opinions expressed and the actions taken have created a climate of suspicion and ill will rather than the Christian attitude and values that we all hold dear.

In light of all that has transpired and my recent involvement in Archdiocesan business, I have finalized a decision to move forward with a shared time program for Our Lady of Sorrows School with an implementation date for the fall of 2003. A delay in implementation enables the administration to involve and work with faculty, staff and parents to achieve a better understanding of all aspects of a shared time program.

This implementation plan, while being developed in collaboration with public school personnel, will address many unanswered questions and also greatly diminish rumors currently circulating in the parish and local community.

Cardinal Maida, in a letter to several "concerned parents" wrote, "From the perspective of the Archdiocese, our review of the matter indicates that there need not be any risk for diminishing Catholic identity through this arrangement; it has been done elsewhere without problems. In short, Monsignor Hurley has acted appropriately and prudently and has my support."

I want to assure you, that Our Lady of Sorrows School will continue to

receive support from the parish to fulfill its mission and to make stronger and more visible its Catholic identity.

To achieve this purpose, decisions to move forward will continue to be made in collaboration with established representative consultative bodies, namely the Parish Pastoral Council, the School Committee and the Stewardship Commission.

For years now Catholic parents have sought some way to receive equitable returns on their tax dollars. Shared time allows this to happen and, for us, greatly enhances an already well established academic program. It is a win-win situation for the Farmington Public Schools and Our Lady of Sorrows School.

I am grateful to all who support the shared time initiative and encourage your interest and participation as we join efforts to plan, develop and implement a shared time program for the 2003-2004 school year.

Rev. Msgr. Walter A. Hurley  
Our Lady of Sorrows

### Longacre memories

Thank you for the Observer article about the Blue Circle's "Cafe on the Porch" beginning June 18 at Longacre House.

As a longtime resident of Farmington Hills, your article brought back many fond memories. Both of our daughters held their wedding receptions at Longacre House; one on a beautiful June day and the other on an equally lovely August afternoon.

The house and the grounds are both historic and beautiful. I knew Eleanor Spicer and I remember when she used to ride her horses up and down the valley and along Farmington Road before it was paved.

My husband and I attended a dinner party at the Spicer home many years ago. I still have Elmo's recipe for veal stroganoff. Mmm good! As a 47th District Court judge, I performed a wedding for one of the Spicer sons on the terrace of their home some years ago.

We are indeed fortunate to have these treasures in our community. Thanks for reminding us.

Margaret Schaeffer  
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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