

## 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.

## Keep sending anti-drug message to teens

From time again. Graduation's only a month or so away.

Time to send out a warning. But it's a pretty good bet that the people who need to hear this most will not be reading an editorial in The Farmington Observer.

It's also a good bet that even if they did read it, they wouldn't be deterred from doing what they're going to do.

Still, every year we make the same appeal in the hopes of reaching someone. Anyone who has been in community journalism for any amount of time is all too familiar with young lives ended too soon or ruined by a careless and stupid decision to give over self control to mind altering substances.

It's not as if the message isn't proclaimed loud and clear.

Since early in their school years kids have been exposed to DARE and other sincere anti-drug programs. Schools have exhibits with mangled cars and pictures of mangled bodies. Groups like MADD and SADD distribute literature repeating the effects of just one beer, one glass of wine, one shot of liquor. Young girls are warned that the possibility of unwanted sexual attention increases dramatically when alcohol is involved.

But too many young people turn a deaf ear because ... "We want to PARTY, DUDE!!!" "I can handle it, everything's under control." "A few beers can't hurt anybody." "Girls just wanna have fun." "Boys will be boys."

We could counter with "Dead is dead." Paralyzed, raped and criminally liable are other ideas we could suggest to the young and hope they understand.

School districts do what they can. For instance, Clareville High students were transported via comfortable motor coach to a river boat, where they enjoyed a prom night we bet they'll never forget.

Many parent groups work hard throughout the year to raise funds for all-night parties, which give kids a safe, alcohol-free alternative way to celebrate graduation.

Parents look forward to these mil-

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stone events. They give warnings. Then they send their young adults off with a fervent prayer that everything will be fine.

The sad thing is there is no telling who will make that fatal mistake. Sometimes it is the child of inattentive parents who set a bad example and encourage reckless behavior. But often it is the straight-arrow children of loving but strict parents, who once out of sight decide to take another direction.

As futile as it sometimes seems to be, we do urge parents to sit down with their children and tell them once again that drugs and alcohol are dangerous.

Tell them and tell them again. Keep the conversation going.

Be informed. Teach, don't preach. Be a good example. Show them that a happy life and a good time don't need to be fueled by alcohol and drugs.

## Putting SpeedLink ahead of SMART is a dumb idea

In the greatest example of putting the cart before the horse since the advent of the internal combustion engine, some supporters of a long-range mass transit plan are busy trying to kill off the possibility of additional taxes to support buses already on suburban roads. This, despite the fact that the operating mechanism for the so-called SpeedLink proposal is stalled in the state Legislature and nobody yet has publicly put a credible source of revenue on the table for the \$2 billion in startup costs — or \$200 million operating budget — the comprehensive transit plan will require.

We understand frustration with the existing SMART system, which has never really lived up to expectations as transportation link for suburban residents. But we just don't get the thinking that crippling current bus service would enhance the chances for some future major league mass transit overhaul.

The dissent against a millage renewal and increase for the existing SMART system isn't widespread, but it could be enough to derail the delicate balancing act needed to get the proposal on the Aug. 6 primary ballot. And much of it comes from an unlikely corner — a coalition of religious leaders, usually among the staunchest advocates for poor and elderly people who rely on mass transit.

After initial opposition to any tax increase, leaders of Metropolitan Organizational Strategies Enabling Strength (MOSES) said last week they would back a 33-mill renewal and additional .6 mills for two years to maintain existing SMART service and replace buses. The regional transportation authority is looking for a four-year millage increase. The SMART plan would generate \$44 million a year in revenue, pocket change compared to the projected costs for SpeedLink.

The coalition of 130 area congregations has indicated it will offer only lukewarm support for any SMART proposal, saying new tax dollars for SMART will discourage voters from addressing long-range needs.

Commissioners in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties are expected to weigh in on the SMART proposal in the next week or two. The plan needs approval

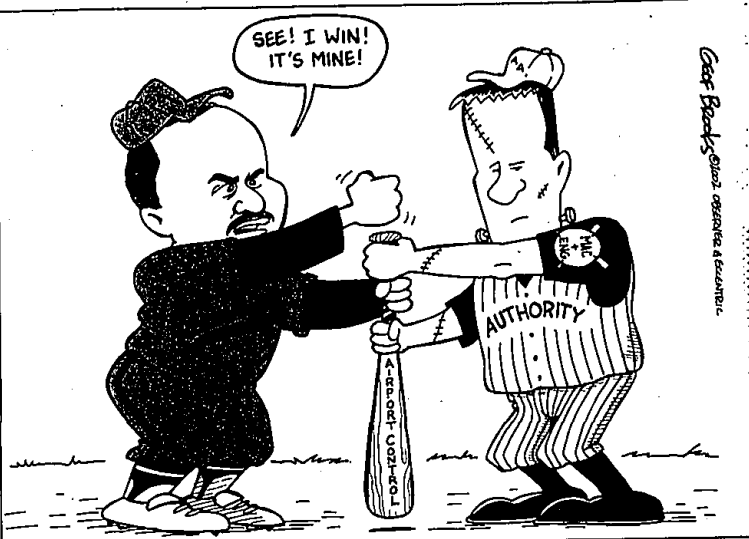
from all three commissions to make the ballot. The Wayne County Commission tabled the matter last week and was scheduled to take it up again on Tuesday. A committee of Oakland commissioners has recommended that body give the proposal the green light. In Macomb, some commissioners have been vocal in their opposition and a vote has been delayed until sometime in May.

Then there's SpeedLink. The revolutionary (well, for Michigan anyway) plan calls for a combination of high-speed, dedicated bus routes and traditional bus routes that would crisscross the tri-county area over the next 20 years. The agreement came out of a summit last summer between state and local officials, along with area business leaders.

What the plan doesn't have is money behind it, or even a timetable for getting there. Now that it's approaching crunch time, SpeedLink's carefully crafted support network is starting to split at the seams. A state Senate bill to set up a regional transportation authority "is dying of its own weight," said Sen. Thaddeus McCotter, R-Livonia. Lackluster support from Gov. John Engler, outright opposition from some suburban lawmakers and union concerns about job security — along with election-year politics — may put the plan on the back burner.

Add to that a general public that doesn't put mass transit in any form at the top of its agenda. A University of Michigan survey released last month taken in the five counties that make up southeastern Michigan revealed that only five percent of the population uses mass transit and just a third of those surveyed would pay higher taxes for it. The one bright spot was that 69 percent of the respondents said reliable and safe public transportation is a key factor when it comes to quality of life.

Keeping SMART on life support may not be an attractive idea to those dreaming of the kind of big-time transit system common in other metropolitan areas. But given southeastern Michigan's history on the issue, we believe it's something voters should at least be given the chance to decide.



## LETTERS

### ■ Candidate corrects

I want to thank the Observer & Eccentric for recently running an article (Sunday, April 21, 2002, Three file for two seats on Cville board) on my candidacy for the Clarencville Board of Education. It was a wonderful introduction, hopefully giving the voters a chance to become familiar with myself. However, there were two items which I need to clarify. First my stepson's name was in error, it is Nick. Additionally, and most importantly, "Caitlin, 12 and Nick, 15" are my STEPchildren.

My stepchildren are a very big part of my life and I am actively involved in their education. I regularly attend the parent meetings at their schools (Clarencville High School and Middle School), and am also a member of the Band and Choir Booster Clubs and volunteer at the Athletic Booster Club's Football Concession Stand.

In addition, I am a member of the Jackson Early Development Center's PTA in Livonia, where my three year old attends preschool. Other biographical information not mentioned is that I am a graduate of Walpole Central High School and hold a Bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan - Dearborn.

Evoone Meili  
Livonia

### ■ Posthumus on track

I find it interesting to see that the only people against Lt. Governor Posthumus' 3/5 plan are his opponents and the liberally biased media.

Perhaps they lash out because they know that Dick Posthumus has a plan that is right for Michigan taxpayers. Maybe the reason they strongly oppose his plan is that they've lost sight of what the voters want for themselves and their families. What the voters want is comfort in these unstable economic times. They want to know that the money they earn will stay with them and their families, not in the hands of Lansing lawmakers. They want to know that when lawmakers start proposing tax hikes, they will have a battle on their hands.

Lt. Governor Posthumus knows this, and so does his opponents for the Governor and in the media. They know that Dick Posthumus is on the right track and they are scared.

Diane Dettler  
Farmington Hills

### ■ Lost a vote

I take great exception to Eric Borregard's letter, which appeared in the April 11 Farmington Observer.

Do you think, Mr. Borregard, that America invented war? History has taught us that man is a territorial, power-hungry animal, and he has always been willing to fight for those two things. You call America ugly. How dare you? While I am the first to admit that this democracy has problems, this democracy has also set the standard for freedom around the world. Can you explain why millions of people around the world want to come to America, want to be called Americans? Can you understand that this small country has the most powerful economy in the world?

We support many countries with our good, trade and plain old money. Pundits say that those countries who don't work with us will forever be "out of the loop."

Have you taken at least a small look at the American people? They are, by and large, the most generous, compassionate people anywhere. Would you call them ugly? In medicine, science, technology

and other fields, we lead the world because we have the freedom and economy to do so.

The media doesn't define us as a nation. The political process is still at work; perhaps it's not to your advantage. We are not ugly! We are beautiful. My flag is waving today, and it will continue to wave. And, by the way, I wouldn't vote for you under any circumstances.

Carole Barker  
Farmington Hills

### ■ Crisis in Israel

The crisis in Israel, and our government's inconsistent support of that besieged nation has baffled me, and I did some independent research.

Israel occupies one percent of the land in the Middle East. The Arabs have the other ninety-nine percent. Evidently, the Israelis are begrudged even that one percent by their hostile Arab neighbors, some of whom have vowed to wash Israel into the sea. The people of Israel have been terrorized for decades. It is not surprising they have had enough. What amazes me at this point is not Israel's military reaction, it is their restraint.

Ariel Sharon has been like an old Testament warrior king for the people of Israel. He is dealing with forces which want his country and people annihilated, and General Sharon is defending his country in the best and only way he can. One cannot reason with fanatics.

General Sharon is dealing with a Jihad, a Muslim Holy War whose ultimate goal is the destruction and genocidal gain. Israel's fight is not for territorial gain, it is for survival, and the spirit and courage of the defenders of Masada lives on in the Israeli people.

The contribution the Jewish People have made to humanity is immense beyond measure. They deserve a secure and guaranteed homeland in which they can be free from persecution and preserve their ancient and priceless legacy. Even plans to restore the magnificent Temple of King Solomon have been delayed for years as the Israelis have not wanted to upset their Arab neighbors.

Israel has literally made a desert blossom through hard work. It is only a belief in creating something better, virtues which they share with the founders of America.

Personally, I hope the State of Israel, whose creation was a miracle in itself, is able to once and for all affirm its right to live in peace with its neighbors, without fear from terrorists nor invasion.

Ron Oliverio  
Farmington Hills

### ■ No compromise at OLS

Taxation without representation. Sound familiar? It should. Monsignor Hurley has put his own spin on this concept at Our Lady of Sorrows.

His only "established consultative body" he actually speaks with regarding the topic of shared time are self-appointed and reply with the input and feedback he expects and commands.

When people do speak publicly in opposition to his thoughts, ideas and decisions he categorizes it as "not our finest hour." I happen to think it's a pretty "fine hour" when people have the guts to speak and stand-up for what they believe in!

Additionally, now that the Farmington School Board has shown it's support for the shared time concept, which will remove prayer and crucifixes from some OLS Catholic school classrooms taught by public school teachers, maybe the Board will also support future proposals

which introduce prayer and crucifixes to public school classrooms taught by Catholic school teachers. I'm sure they won't and can't support the latter scenario anymore than I support the first.

Maybe Monsignor Hurley and the Farmington School Board can craft a shared time plan to compromise Christian values for the almighty dollar at some other Catholic school in the district. Just don't do it at Our Lady of Sorrows!

Bill Campbell  
Farmington Hills

### ■ Community ed facts

Your recent editorial in the Farmington Observer concerning the possible closure of Clarencville Community Education programs included a number of assumptions concerning the definition and role of Community Education. As members of the Oakland County Community and Adult Educators, we feel compelled to address these issues.

It is important to understand that Community Education is more than occasional crafts or computer class offerings for adults. Community Education is often the vehicle through which a school district can fulfill its potential to be a "full service" school system serving its taxpayers. In many districts, Community Education operates essential programs such as school age child care, alternative education, day care, and instructional programs that foster and facilitate improved quality of life, as well as parental involvement in children's education. To educate the parent is to educate the child.

Community Education encourages individuals and businesses to:

- Become active partners in the educational system.
- Improved the skills of the workforce, thereby fostering student achievement.
- Act as role models and mentors, thereby fostering student achievement and success.

In building a community that values education and lifelong learning for everyone, Community Education does more than simply offer classes and fill leisure hours. It creates a community that seeks to understand its members, to resolve conflicts together, to build tolerance in place of prejudice, and a community that continues to grow and strengthen its members both individually and as a group.

Joey Spano, O.C.C.A.E.  
President  
Director, Farmington Adult  
and Community Education

### 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  
Jon Hubred  
Farmington Observer  
33411 Grand River  
Farmington, MI 48335

E-Mail:  
jhubred@ob.hometown.com

Fax:  
248-477-9722