

## 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.

## More to Sorrows story than meets the eye

Balance in news reporting is a tricky thing. Our practice has always been to, whenever and wherever possible, report both sides of an issue and let the reader decide.

That's just not always possible. In the case of Our Lady of Sorrows school sharing time with Farmington Public Schools, we haven't been able to talk to the one person who could best present the case for having public school teachers take over art, music and physical education at the private, Catholic school: senior parish priest Magr. Walter Hurley.

This is an important story for several reasons, not the least of which is that it has infuriated more than 200 families in our community. More than that, however, it involves a public school system to which every property owner in the community pays tax dollars.

We've made several attempts to connect with Hurley, who admittedly is among the busiest clerics in the Detroit area right now. In addition to his service at Our Lady of Sorrows, he is heavily involved with efforts to address explosive child sexual abuse allegations against some parish priests.

We've made phone calls. Others have volunteered to intervene on our behalf. We've done our best to present both sides of this issue, interviewing parents and reporting what's gone on at Farmington School Board meetings.

But this isn't strictly a public matter, and the only people to whom Magr. Hurley need answer are his parishioners. Our Lady of Sorrows is a private school. The battle being waged inside the walls of this parish have only spilled out into the public eye because outraged parents brought it there, testifying at public meetings and sharing their opinions on local editorial pages.

We may never get the rest of the story. The venom and rage we've seen displayed on our editorial pages makes us wonder whether this is a story we really want to hear, much less tell.

However, the financial impacts and social implications of allowing public school teachers into private, religious schools are newsworthy issues, and they have been part and parcel of this ongoing story.

It's a story we'll continue to report as best we can, a story we hope won't go on much longer.

## Crazy or not, Aldo's long walk proves a point

It takes a special kind of person to walk more than 70 miles, from Farmington to Lansing, to prove a point.

We might argue it takes a CRAZY person, but we're convinced all politicians are crazy. Aldo Vignozzi, however, really is someone special.

This septuagenarian, who has a reputation for dogged Democratic politics and hugging women, finished his journey of a thousand steps yesterday in Lansing, at the State Capitol.

That's where the Farmington Hills retiree wants to go to work. He's one of four candidates who have expressed interest in the House District 37 seat, which both parties will likely target this fall. It was held for three terms by Republican Andrew Raczekowski, now a U.S. Senate candidate.

John Akouri, Valerie Knol and Terry Sever will vie for the Republican nod in the August primary. Thus far, Aldo is the only Democrat running.

Or walking. Aldo lost to Rocky two years ago by a fairly narrow margin, picking up nearly

50 percent of the vote in Farmington and Farmington Hills. He did a lot of walking, a lot of door-knocking and — of course — a great deal of hugging.

This time around, he decided to go himself one better. The walk to Lansing is largely symbolic. Aldo's stated theme is one of restoring balance to state government. But he's got another point to prove as well.

At 76 years of age, the World War II veteran is at least a couple of decades older than any of the other candidates. He wants to show folks that when it comes to assessing someone's fitness to serve, age shouldn't be a factor.

Tough to argue that point with a man who has walked through two pairs of shoes.

Politics aside, we admire Aldo. This long walk may have been politically motivated, but he has struck a blow for every senior citizen who has ever been told, "Sorry, you're too old."

In today's world, that's not true any more. And here in House District 37, we've got living proof.

## Listen to your children about teen drinking

The kids know. Just ask them. They may not admit to taking a drink themselves, but they'll tell you that a lot of other kids do.

"They'll tell you that many Monday mornings other students come to school with hangovers and stories. They'll tell you about parties where alcohol and drugs are a common, and to some necessary, ingredient to having a good time."

"It's very common," said Julie Patterson, a senior from Plymouth Salem High School, who participated in our May 9 forum of teenagers discussing the problem. "It's ridiculous, you come back on a Monday and you hear, 'Oh, I went to this party and everyone was so smashed.'"

They'll tell you about girl friends who found themselves pregnant after a party where they couldn't remember what they'd done. They'll tell you about friends they've picked up from gutters and put to bed.

You may even suspect that your son or daughter is experimenting. They come in late and go right to their rooms. They look a little too tired the next morning. They look glassy eyed. Their once stellar school grades have plummeted.

Experimenting is part of growing up. As adolescents we all want to try things that aren't supposed to be good for us but that we see adults doing all the time. When we're 16 we might wonder what's

so magical about being 21 that suddenly makes it OK to have an alcoholic drink. We might wonder what all the fuss is about marijuana.

That's why lecturing the young is so ineffective. They are masters at hair splitting. They are masters at throwing your own behavior back at you.

Even their own experiences don't often convince them. A friend's death in an alcohol-related accident may give them pause. But young people often see themselves as indestructible.

Our young panelists have all made a decision to postpone drinking until they're adults. They've seen adults drink responsibly and they've seen adults and their peers abuse alcohol. As one panelist said, she didn't want to be in a situation where she didn't have control over herself.

Graduation is a particularly tempting time. Young people want to celebrate the way adults often celebrate.

We urge them to consider the dangers of losing control. But most important we urge parents to ask their sons and daughters about these issues, talk with them about what they've seen, heard and done. Be open, honest, fair. Listen.

That's what our forum was about but the real conversation needs to go on in every home of every graduating teenager.



## LETTERS

### Shared time for kids

Much has been written in the Observer and Eccentric Newspaper concerning the Shared Time proposal with Our Lady of Sorrows School and the Farmington Public Schools.

At times the debate has been decidedly emotional. As a result, some may think that disharmony is the prevalent spirit at OLS.

Last Saturday evening, 370 (of a planned 300) persons gathered at the OLS Family Center for "A Night in the Tropics." This event, sponsored by the school's PTG, had the purpose of raising funds for student enrichment throughout the year.

Among those enjoying the evening were our pastor, clergy, administration, faculty, parents from all sides of the debate and numerous friends and parish members. We all gathered together and "shared time" for the benefit of our children.

While opinions may differ on issues within our parish school, it was evident to us that we are united as one faith community. It does our heart good to be associated with these people. We wish The Observer was present to witness the event.

Don and Karen Deisenroth  
Farmington Hills

### Council was wrong

Recently, Farmington residents were shut out of an important civic process by our city council.

Farmington Mayor Jim Mitchell, along with council members Mary Bush, Arnie Campbell and Joanne McShane and City attorney John Donahue went to great lengths explaining how the manner in which our new council member was appointed was legal. The council decided to keep the appointment process closed to the public.

Although legal, what our elected representatives did was wrong. They know it was wrong. They know Farmington residents view it as wrong. Still, the council chose that path.

The council chose a sequestered method to fill the vacant council seat and explained how much work the process was. The solution would have been an election for the position.

That would have been no work at all for the council members. An election is a trial and true way to hear the thoughts of the candidates and the voices of the citizens. Apparently, the council did not want to hear.

Private actions from a public body create doubt and mistrust. We wonder what other decisions, that should be made publicly, are being made without our knowledge — decisions that affect us all.

I invite the council to change the way vacant council positions are filled, which requires changing the city charter. Vacancies should be filled by an election.

The citizens want to be involved and, in this case, were not given the opportunity.

The Farmington City Council is on the hot seat for their actions; so are we as residents. What have we done to affect the process? How many called to voice their opinion? Do you attend council meetings? How many attended when the appointment was made? How many voted during the last election?

Your elected officials are members of your community. Seek them out and

voice your opinions. One would think that in such a small city, the citizens would take a more active role, especially at the voting booth. Farmington needs residents' involvement in order to be vital in the years to come.

In the end, apathy was the winner. The council knew that there would be insufficient noise from the public on this controversial appointment process. They were right.

Get involved.

Scott Freeman  
Farmington

### Reaction to Prop A

Here's my reaction to Phil Powers' article on Proposal A: I'm tired of government officials assuming that just because I can afford to get screwed out of a few more dollars, I should be.

If they want to increase our school tax again, then let them reduce the sales tax back to 4 percent. If they're worried about fairness, let the people with five kids in the school system pay more than the families with two.

And finally, before they ask me for another dime, let them justify how throwing more money at the schools will improve the children's education. Powers can't seem to make up his mind about Proposal A. On one hand, he praises it for closing the gap between the richest and poorest school districts.

Then he complains that the richest districts can't spend more money. He cites the example of Birmingham and Bloomfield Hills spending over \$11,000 per pupil. If that's not enough money to educate their students, what amount would be?

It seems he got one thing right. If the government continues to interfere with school funding, the only guarantee will be that all students get an equally mediocre education.

Too bad he didn't think to make that argument before Proposal A was presented to the voters the first time.

Glynette Volk  
Farmington Hills

### Stamp out butt-litter

I have a genuine concern about the increasing number of cigarette butts that are strewn around our cities these days. Have you noticed this as well?

You really can not go anywhere without seeing one lying around somewhere. I find them in the parks, near the creeks, on nature trails, along the roadside, and even in my own backyard (located next to Power Rd.) I have also noticed how many drivers simply flick the butts out of their car windows and don't seem to understand that they are NOT BIODEGRADABLE!

I am currently trying to get information, posters, bumper stickers, etc. to help educate the public about this matter. It's time to start respecting one another and the planet we must all inhabit. Please read the following facts I obtained from the cigaretteindustry.org Web site. I think you will find them as compelling as I did.

Fact: There is a lot of misinformation out there regarding cigarette butt litter. The biggest myth is that cigarette filters are biodegradable. In fact, cigarette butts are not biodegradable in the sense that most people think of the word. The acetate (plastic) filters can take many years to decompose. Smokers may not realize that their

actions have such a lasting, negative impact on the environment.

"What happens after that butt gets casually flicked onto the street, nature trail, or beach? Typically wind and rain carry the cigarette into the water supply, where the toxic chemicals the cigarette filter was designed to trap leak out into aquatic ecosystems, threatening the quality of the water and many aquatic lifeforms. Cigarette butts may seem small, but with an estimated 4.5 trillion butts littered every year, the toxic chemicals added up!"

Could you please address this problem in your publication and maybe together we can start a campaign to educate the public on this problem.

Lisa Matthews  
Farmington

### Recycling compliments

Kudos to the residents of Farmington and Farmington Hills. A record number of you participated in the recent household hazardous waste collection that was jointly hosted by the two communities.

Nearly 40 tons of hazardous material and computers were safely collected for recycling at the enormously popular event, and the old attendance record was shattered. Your involvement is a real symbol of the area's commitment to environmental protection.

As many of you know, the overwhelming popularity created unexpectedly long lines for participants. Your patience was very much appreciated, as was your recognition that large crowds are part of the price of success.

Everyone involved in the HHW program is taking lessons from this year's event, working to identify a new and better site for next year, and striving to improve upon the event's efficiency, effectiveness, and safety.

The responsible manner in which the cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills deal with the issues of solid waste, hazardous waste, and environmental protection serves as an example, and important benchmark, for other communities across the state and country. Continual improvement and a sustained commitment will ensure that this community maintains its status as a leader in environmental protection.

Michael J. Crapo  
General Manager  
RRASOC

### 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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