

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.

Walkers strike a blow against breast cancer

These words won't mean much, because it's simply impossible to describe the scene at the Costick Activities Center in Farmington Hills Sunday. Even photos can't do justice to the Avon Breast Cancer 3-Day Walk's closing ceremony.

From Orchard Lake Road to the Southfield border, cars jammed the roads, lined the shoulder and laced sidestreets beginning in the early afternoon. Supporters by the score gathered on the huge soccer fields where nearly 3,500 women would end an odyssey that took them 60 miles in distance and deep within themselves.

Under a clear blue sky, an emcee shouted welcoming words, and they came. In groups, arms linked, marching down a fenced aisle, they came.

Dressed in dark blue and pink T-shirts that included the words "Impossible" and the names of those who've won and lost battles with cancer, they came. Some sobbed with relief, some hobbled on blistered, aching feet, and still they came.

More than just a chance to hail the conquering heroes, the event celebrated victory over apathy and malaise, over "I can't" and "Why bother?" Cancer's a powerful foe, but each walker who made it from Ann Arbor to Farmington Hills took a piece out of its hide this past weekend.

It wasn't just the money they raised, although that was considerable. It wasn't just the increased awareness about the prevalence of breast cancer. It was the boundless optimism, the amazing strength and the deep faith represented

in each walker's story that dealt a powerful blow against this dark and devastating disease.

There are some who have asked, "At what cost?" Palotta Teamworks, which coordinates these walks across the country, takes about 40 percent of the event's gross revenues. Sunday's final ceremony stood testament to what the money buys — everything from a medical team sufficiently staffed to serve 3,500 people to portable toilets set out at various locations along the route.

Professional management and support just doesn't come cheap, and both were absolutely necessary to ensure the safety of every participant.

And consider this: Even WITH what's taken off the top, the Michigan Avon Breast Cancer Walk raised \$5.25 million. Additionally, these efforts led to a \$500,000 donation from the Avon Breast Cancer Foundation to the Barbara Ann Karmanos Institute.

According to Rosemary Gilchrist, the Institute's chief operating officer and a walker, that translates into another 10,000 breast cancer screenings, another 200 women entered into experimental treatment programs. Early detection and wave after wave of new cancer drugs are part of the hope.

These women, these survivors, these heroes are the other part. We thank our local walkers and wish them well in the rest of their life's journey.

Road trips are hallmark of a Michigan summer

Summer is just around the corner. We know this because weeks of chilly, wet weather can mean only one thing in Michigan — Memorial Day has come and gone. The other traditional summertime signal begins next week when local kids say good-bye to classrooms and hello to "freedom," which these days means 10 weeks of structured outdoor activities.

For many southeastern Michiganders, this is the prime vacation season. Echoes of 9/11 still rumble in the background — not too mention recent publicity about possible new terrorist attacks. Throw in an economy that may or may not be getting back on its feet and this promises to be a different kind of summer travel season.

Recent polls bore this out. While two-thirds of Americans are planning spring and summer vacations, an overwhelming

82 percent say they plan to take them in the continental United States, according to a survey by RoperASW, a market research consulting firm. Some 69 percent of the people in the late-April survey expressed confidence in commercial airlines, up from 44 percent after the attacks. But most said they would stay close to home, two-thirds said they hadn't made plans and wouldn't likely do so until the last minute.

That's actually good news for the Michigan tourism industry, which relies heavily on people who travel by car, either from within the state's boundaries or our Midwestern neighbors. From Mackinac Island to Monroe, there are enough summer hot spots to keep area residents busy well past Labor Day.

Summer in Michigan has a lot to offer. We should all make the most of it.

GUEST OPINION Akouri is buffaloing voters

Usually dishonest politicians wait to start lying and deceiving the public after they've been elected. John Akouri obviously isn't going to be elected so he's chosen to start buffaloing the voters now. It is unfortunate that John got all nine of his friends to sign a letter that contains many inaccuracies. He has turned these signatories into unwitting accomplices to his lies. This is a truly sad state of affairs.

I invited John to participate in the FARC's endorsement process. I even took time out of my schedule one night to meet with him at a Starbucks to address his "concerns." What a waste of my time that was. John constantly complained to me that it was unfair that I had also invited Terry Sever to apply for our endorsement, but I lectured him that the County Commissioner was not a "real" Republican.

Talk about party unity! In the end, John refused to sit for an interview and would return neither my phone calls nor emails.

Regarding the contents of his letter, allow me to point out a few facts. Our Endorsement Committee consisted of 10 people (not five). Our Board of Directors has over 20 members. Both groups are involved in our new process, which we adopted at our 2001 Annual Meeting (Akouri voted in favour of these new rules, by the way).

Valerie Knol offered to resign from our Board when she began her campaign, but

the Board politely refused the resignation.

Furthermore, Ms. Knol did recuse herself from the portion of our Board meeting where we discussed the State House endorsement, standing in the parking lot for an hour sipping a Starbucks coffee. In fact, it was from the same Starbucks where the sniveling Mr. Akouri had jerked me around during the previous month.

John should be put in his place...third place that is. He has shown all the leadership and accomplishment of a trained monkey. I think that his friends are supporting him based on the Akouri they knew years ago as a cute little boy. The Akouri the rest of us have only met in the last few years comes across as a lecherous creep.

His campaign and behavior has disgraced the party. He refuses to cooperate with our apparition in Lansing, and is not even a member of the county party. This has devolved to a point where John is a Republican in name only. The GOP is better off without him. He is a parasite who should be... kicked to the curb. Meanwhile, I invite all Republicans, real and unreal, to join me in preparing to defeat a certain septuagenarian (now there's a familiar word) in November. Akouri will be gone by then.

Christopher M. Cummins is Endorsement Chair for the Farmington Area Republican Club.

TYPICAL SUMMER ATTIRE



MICHIGAN SUMMER ATTIRE



LETTERS

Officers endorse Knol

On behalf of the Farmington Hills Police Officers Association and the Police Officers Association of Michigan, I am pleased to announce our endorsement of Valerie Knol for State Representative of the 37th District. The district includes the cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills and we feel that Ms. Knol has the right vision for the future of our communities. Over the years, Valerie has shown her commitment to the cities through her participation in numerous local organizations such as the Farmington Jaycees and Warner Mansion Committee, and through her political activism in the Farmington Area Republican Club.

The FHPAO and POAM feel that Valerie Knol's combination of business experience, community involvement and support of law enforcement (including Association issues) make her well qualified to be our State Representative.

Wayne Beerbower
Farmington Hills Police
Officers Association

Articles not balanced

Your paper features articles which don't include balance. Case in point. Yet another article featuring Aldo Vagozini much publicized walk to Lansing.

Not even the names of his Republican competition are mentioned. Since his defeat in the last election your paper has found it necessary to publish several articles of Vagozini doing "anything" but it was "news worthy." It's obvious you want the man elected.

Why not endorse Vagozini now? Part of the article made me chuckle that Aldo used the Rocky theme "Rocky Raccoon." Are you saying Aldo is a Rocky wannabe? Since you will continue to publish articles featuring the life and times of Aldo Vagozini why compare and contrast him with his much younger competitor? Your paper has lost credibility with many of its readers.

Fred Bromm
Farmington

Golf course absurd

It is absurd to think that the metro area needed another nine holes of golf at the expense of ninety acres at Eleven Pines. Over the past few years, golf courses in the metro area have had to lower their fees because of the competition for golfers.

Too many golf courses and not enough golfers. Not everyone plays golf you see. Maybe the golfers on the Farmington Hills City Council should have excused themselves from voting on the Eleven Pines project. Then again maybe there would not be anyone left to vote. Some metro cities have paid millions to purchase property to increase their parks size by just a few acres.

Farmington Hills is not one of these communities. Preserving green space benefits the whole community not just a few.

John Kenney
Farmington Hills

Kids want to be heard

In response to "Party Mayhem," I feel compelled to say that our teens are ignored, forced into a left brain medium for 13 years, and terribly lonely.

I am a teacher at North Farmington High School, a graduate from North as well as Dunckel, a parent and a resident

for 30 years. I have worked at all three high schools and savor every moment that I have with these wonderful kids, who study, perform, excel in sports — and go out into our community and show strength and compassion that many of us adults haven't the courage to even attempt.

I also feel that I am qualified to write because I have faced drug addiction with my own children, bailed students out of jail, held hands in the emergency room after an overdose and attended funerals of kids who saw no future.

Our kids are screaming to be heard! If the parents are providing the best schooling, housing and opportunities for them, but aren't available, it is the job of the schools, churches, coaches, synagogues, bosses to be sensitive to cues. We see your children more than most parents. We love them and notice changes in behavior.

Having taught at all three high schools, I have to praise North as having the most insightful teachers, most compassionate administration, and most eclectic programming. Of course, we can't determine the ultimate choice of a kid on a Friday night when junk is offered, but we can offer them a conscience to know right from wrong and loving guidance to divert them from something that could potentially harm them. I honor my job and responsibility and thank Rick Jones, our principal and alumni, daily for giving me an environment in which each child is valued and most importantly, listened to.

Jan Brachel
Farmington Hills

Made fools of

With all due respect to the distinguished panel who signed the Guest Opinion column regarding the FARC endorsement process — each and every one of you need to have a serious chat with whoever the true author of that piece was.

With no less than six ignorant and/or laughable "facts" or assumptions in the first three paragraphs, I dare say that "someone" has unfairly made fools out of an otherwise distinguished panel of dedicated community activists. If the citizens who signed this Guest Opinion column consider the true author(s) a friend, I would seriously recommend searching for higher quality friends.

Mark Gordianer
Farmington Hills

What can we do?

Repeat a rumor often enough, add a few innuendos each time and it becomes almost credible.

It is the job of security personnel to protect the nation and inform the president of unusual dangers. If he divulged confidential information, counter intelligence strategy would be compromised and terrorists could adjust their schemes to available options. Grounding airlines based on rumors would have created a panic and solved nothing — the hijackers would take a holiday.

"What did he know and when did he know it" is irrelevant. "What can we do and how can we do it?" is appropriate for America today. Recriminations are political campaigns in need of reform.

Hank Borgman
Farmington

Editorial unfair

I would like to reply to your editorial

about the candidates running for the Clarenceville School Board Trustee positions. I think it is shortsighted and unfair to all of the residents who will be voting on June 10th. I would like to make a few things clear for the residents of our wonderful district.

Yes, all three candidates are dedicated, active and passionate about our district. However, your editorial was highly unfair towards Kim Czech Bibik and I believe that the residents of our district should be given the opportunity to know more about her.

First the Czech and Bibik families have lived in the district for over 40 years and have long supported our schools.

Second, Kim graduated from Clarenceville High School in 1979, being a graduate, she has first-hand knowledge of Clarenceville's past reputation. Her children are now SECOND generation students in the district. In today's transient society, it speaks volumes when a parent believes so strongly in their childhood school district that their children now attend.

Kim is very actively involved with children in our district. She is a respected Cub, Boy and Girl Scout Leader for the past eight years. For the past four years she volunteered to assist the Boy Scout Detroit Area Council, Sunset District's Annual Mom and Me weekend, the last two years as chairperson. This event has an annual attendance of 400+ Moms and first graders with a staff of 25 or more. Being a Scout Leader, she is a teacher for today's youth and tomorrow's adults.

Third, Kim holds a Concentrated Associate Degree in business and is completing her second degree in business. Your newspaper left out this fact, although it was discussed with your reporter. I bring this matter up because your editorial implied that Kim didn't have any higher education background.

Fourth, your editorial implied that Kim doesn't have knowledge of the issues. This is absolutely false. Kim has a strong understanding of the issues at both the elementary and secondary levels. She is aware of the tough issues the Board of Education faces, i.e.: Dr. Tat-tan's replacement, community education, staffing, rising insurance costs, etc. Kim's first-hand knowledge of where our district was not long ago cannot be learned; it can only be understood by being part of it. Ask any Detroit Public School parent, who knows best how to manage the district: the residents of Detroit, or Lansing?

Maxine Bibik
mother of 5 Clarenceville grads
Livonia

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@oe.homecomm.net

Fax:
248-477-9722