

OPINION

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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.

Caring adults can make a difference

Love them no matter what.

That's sometimes not an easy task with kids, especially those who aren't your own. When you've been crowded by a skateboarder who isn't paying attention or nearly run down by a teen driver who's trying to make a cell phone call, it's tough to think kindly of children.

It's much easier to think, "Those teenagers are all alike, selfish and thoughtless."

We know that's not true. Scores of local kids invest hundreds of hours in community service. Our schools, churches and civic organizations teach children of all ages the value of generosity with programs that encourage volunteerism.

Good kids do good things every day. Those stories make it into print a lot more often than the occasional saga of a youthful offender. But people don't always remember them, because there are so many.

Think about that: because there are so many.

That's not true in every community, and it won't be true in ours, if we don't all remember to cherish and protect our children, our future. The Call to Action Coalition has asked us to do this by highlighting "assets," which researchers at the Minnesota-based Search Institute

have found are present in kids who succeed and make good life choices.

This quarter's asset is adult role models — parents and others who model good behavior. And because only 27 percent of our young people say they have that, we'd like to see more adults take an active part in making Farmington and Farmington Hills a great place to grow up.

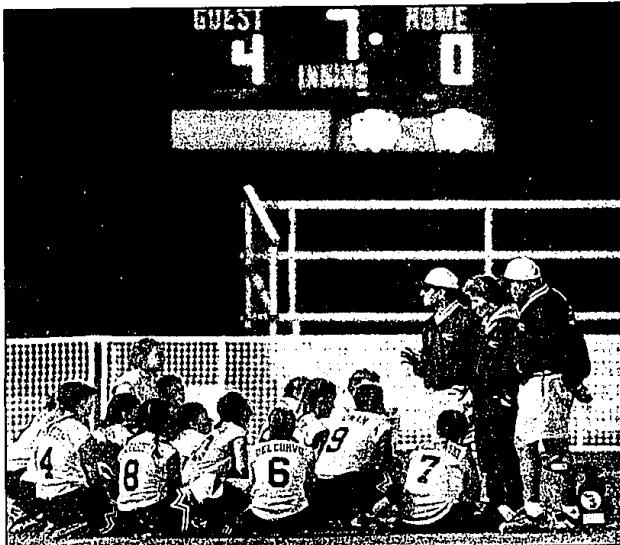
We're not saying you have to smile at every kid, every day. Frankly, that would be a bit much to ask even of their parents.

But moms and dads just can't do it all these days, and other caring adults can make a real difference in a kid's life.

As a community, we can make our young people a priority in planning, in budgeting, in the way we run our businesses. We can come together to support parents, who have the toughest job in the world: preparing a child for adulthood.

Those of us who have children in our lives can praise more and criticize less, use our ears more than our mouths, unwind with them and be honest. We can keep promises. Catch them doing something right.

And love them, no matter what.



The girls of summer: The scoreboard tells the story of Mercy High School softball team's bid for the state championship. Mercy lost to a strong Portage Northern team in a rain-dampened game held Saturday night at Bailey Park in Battle Creek. They and all our local sports teams made the 2001-2002 school year one to remember. Read more about the Mercy contest in today's Farmington Observer sports section.

LETTERS

Mud-slinging

It is encouraging that an honorable newspaper such as the Farmington Observer would elevate a cruel, trash-filled letter well above its importance by publishing it under the banner of Guest Opinion.

The recent letter from Mr. Cummings is just one recent example of the level that the Farmington Area Republican Club Endorsement has reached such vicious level that it has polarized Republicans in our area. FARC has resorted to mud slinging at an intensity that is usually reserved for mortal enemies.

I have made my opinion known to Mr. Cummings and the President of FARC. I believe Terry Sever would have been a better endorsement, but this does not make Valerie Knol or John Akouri bad people. Quite the contrary, we in the Farmington area are fortunate to have such a great selection of fine candidates from both parties. This is one reason that we have primary elections. We have an opportunity to pick the best of the bunch and we should do so in such a way as to not leave anyone "on the curb."

I have taken the opportunity to suggest alternative candidates but both Mr. Cummings and Ms. Jolicœur have been quick to point out that I am not a member and my opinion has little importance. After reading this recent letter from FARC, I can proudly proclaim it is true I am not a member and I cannot imagine ever being a member of any organization with leadership of this mentality.

I would ask, if there is a Republican Group in the Farmington area that believes in the values that I have suggested. If not, it may be time for Chris McRae, Terry Sever, John Akouri and others to create a new Republican Club in the Farmington area. Although I have only one vote, and according to FARC not a very important one, I would certainly pledge my efforts to this new organization.

In the meantime, I will be practicing phrases of congratulations in Italian. Something like buona fortuna! Aldo, in cosa è quasi fata, I am sure if I have mispronounced some part of this, Alito Vagozzi will advise me in a most gentlemanly manner.

Paul A. Molin
Farmington Hills

District lacks leadership

It is no wonder that Superintendent Maxfield calls our school board "the best in the universe".

While the Walled Lake school district is far too large for our athletes to compete against, our school board has decided that it is the same size when determining the superintendent's new contract. How did the comparable sizes of the two districts change so much in only nine months?

It seems that it was only last month when we were told that there would be program and teacher cuts due to a lack of funds, then all of a sudden there is an extra \$40-\$50,000 per year to give Dr. Maxfield. It seems that one of the requirements to serve on the school board is an ability to bend the facts to Dr. Maxfield's wishes.

Certainly superintendent Maxfield record speaks for itself. In his eight years, the district has dropped nearly one full grade in the Detroit News annual rating. Our high schools presently spend about 16% less time

teaching the basics of math, science, and English to allow for more classes like Auditorium Tech and Net Sports.

The percent of top scores on the AP tests has dropped. The percent of top scores on the SATs and ACT have dropped. The percent of students attending top colleges (tier one colleges) has dropped. Our student athletes are eligible to participate with even though their report cards show two "F"s and four "D"s. I hear Dr. Maxfield talk about excellence in our schools but his actions speak an entirely different language.

I have seen in the last eight years time after time that he is willing to take credit for the high achievements of our best students, even though those achievements are despite, not because, of his policies.

All this saddens me. Through various volunteer activities I have worked with many of our young students. I am constantly impressed with the intelligence and maturity of young people today.

Our school district has a number of outstanding teachers who manage to actually teach despite the restrictions imposed by the administration. All we lack is leadership that is committed to producing excellence rather than talking about it.

Terry Elsey
Farmington Hills

Why not true heroes?

Every day, I pick up a newspaper and read something that makes me want to cry. Usually, I put down the paper and go on with my life.

Once in a while, however, there is something I feel I need to respond to. This happens to be one of those things.

I just read that Michael Skupin of "Survivor II" has been chosen as this year's "Celebrity Grand Marshal" of the Farmington Founders Festival Parade.

No, this is not a tragedy like the death of the Gorzicks, or a world-shattering event like September 11. But it does speak volumes about values. This year, more than most, we and our children need real heroes. As I recall, immediately after September 11, a group of local firefighters went to New York to help with the work at Ground Zero. Why weren't they, or someone like them, chosen to serve as Grand Marshal? We need heroes, and we need "celebrities". At least we didn't get Eminem.

The entertainment and media industries exist to make money. They give the public what they perceive that the public wants, and they are not going to change their ways until people send them the message, loud and strong, that they want change. Many, many people are sick of the "celebrity culture" and want heroes and role models who have substance and who are making a real, positive difference in the community, in the country, and in the world. I am disappointed that those responsible for the selection of the Grand Marshal bought into "pop culture" instead of giving our community someone of whom it could truly be proud.

I love the Founders Festival and have attended every year since we moved to Farmington Hills in 1975. In many ways, I think it is getting better, and its planners and sponsors are to be thanked for that. Let's just hope that this year's selection of the Grand Marshal was an anomaly, and not a true reflection of the values and priorities of this community and this country.

Nancy Downie
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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COMMUNICATIONS
N E T W O R K

Consider method, cost of merging elections

Haven't we heard this song before?

The State of Michigan is nearly \$700 million in the red, and it's time for lawmakers — many of whom won't be back to look voters in the eye next year — to decide how and where to make up the difference.

Last fall, state officials managed to head off a nearly \$1 billion deficit, but all they did was push the state's problems farther into the future. We've still got underfunded schools, a mental health care system that is criminally abysmal, jammed highways and crumbling infrastructure.

What's worse, legislators are talking again about taking money away from cities, villages and townships, which are the last bastion of service to their citizens.

Maybe state revenue sharing has been reduced to the point where it's no longer critical to the survival of our communities. But local budgets have taken some pretty big hits over the past couple of years.

In Farmington Hills, the cumulative loss is nearly \$400,000. That's not peanuts. And what will state officials do when state revenue sharing dollars bottom out? What will they take next?

We stand firmly behind our city officials as they fight to keep the state from balancing its budget on their backs yet again, and we urge them to keep talking until our legislators listen.

It's time to start solving problems in Lansing, rather than just shifting them out of the Capitol building.

Consider method, cost of merging elections

Electoral reform legislation now before the state Legislature could hit close to home — and the pocket — for area residents.

The legislation, if approved, would consolidate elections, although the method and degree are under debate.

What is clear is that the time and number of elections at which voters cast ballots could drastically change. Those changes would have an impact on local municipal clerks' offices and the flexibility of the school districts in holding elections.

While the concept of limiting elections is, on its face, worth merit, the practicality of the matter leaves substantial concern over how and whether it should be pursued.

Voters owe it to themselves to study the proposals, since local control over the timing of school elections would be lost.

Now before the state House are two bills by State Rep. John Pappageorge (R-Troy), which are a substitute for bills passed by the State Senate.

Pappageorge's bills are now before the elections committee, and he admits it's unlikely they will be reported out of committee during this legislative session.

While the Senate's proposal would allow only four elections yearly, Pappageorge's plan would provide for six elections over two years.

It would be an "election day" in June, the only one allowed each year for school elections.

However, millage and bond proposals could be voted on at any of the three elections held each year under his plan.

Other elections would be held in alternate years — a primary and general election for all local offices one year, and a primary election for state offices the next.

Some school officials argued that education issues would get lost in national and state elections.

School districts have long been accused of holding special elections for a millage or bond at times when voters aren't expecting them.

While voters in Farmington and Farmington Hills make a good showing in general elections, school board races are another story.

On June 10, less than one percent of voters cast ballots. In Cheneville, barely 100 out of more than 5,000 registered voters made it to the polls — and that nearly tripled participation in the last two elections.

It is a Pandora's box, and not everyone is in agreement as to what should be done, if anything.

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To resolve the issue, we encourage our legislators to go forward with a careful study of this good, but very complicated concept.