

OUR VIEWS

Take the time to remember 9-11

In a few short weeks, it will have been a year. Have we changed since Sept. 11, 2001? Or have we simply turned our backs on the lessons we might have learned and gone on with our lives because we don't have the gaping hole in the ground or in our hearts to remind us?

In Farmington and Farmington Hills, several churches, organizations and emergency personnel will be offering opportunities to honor the memory of those who died. The Hills Fire Department and Farmington Public Safety Department's remembrances will be held at 10 a.m., to coincide with the time planes hit the World Trade Center that awful day.

In the evening, the Farmington Area Jaycees launches a new partnership with the American Legion - with help from Farmington Public Schools, the Farmington/Farmington Hills Multicultural Multiracial Council, Salvation Army and the Farmington Auxiliary - in a candlelight vigil that will also initiate a scholarship fund in honor of Josh Rosenthal, son of Books About owner Skip Rosenthal.

All of these events represent the work of volunteers who have selflessly given of their time and energy to not only ensure we never forget, but that we have a place and time to remember.

Let them remind us that the only things we truly keep are those we give away and that there is so much more to life than petty concerns and arguments, so much more to living than spinning our wheels in mud.

And let's follow the example of those volunteers whose efforts will bring us back around to those first few moments of stunned disbelief, in the hopes of reviving the best of us and burying the worst.

Set rules for police recording interviews

Requiring police to videotape interrogations of suspects and subsequent confessions may not be the easiest way for police to do their work. However, it does seem time to consider establishing a standard procedure to ensure fairness and justice for everyone.

The case of a Livonia double homicide at the Logan's restaurant spurred talk of the issue in this paper. In that case, the suspect had confessed to the murder, but in court the defense attorney wanted to know why the confession wasn't taped. The judge also wished it had been taped (while agreeing with the prosecution that the statement wasn't coerced).

Local police have their reasons for not taping: Operating the recorder breaks up the flow or rapport of an interview; recording equipment could fail or there could be claims of editing in the tape; and if you tape in one case, you'd have to tape in all cases. In addition, experts say the camera angle can be used to make a person look guilty or coerced.

All valid points. However, many would be overcome if there were a state or national standard. Videotaping, in capital cases especially, could be set up so that such recordings become second nature. Police interrogation rooms could be automatically set up to record. And angles could also be standardized.

If everything is recorded in these interviews, nothing can be subject to question. It's much like the in-car cameras which are now quite standard for police and which most often help protect police from charges of brutality or coercion.

Right now, Minnesota and Alaska mandate taped interviews, while it's standard practice in Great Britain. A special governor's commission in Illinois also called for videotaping. The commission was set up to determine the fairness of that state's capital punishment system and featured prosecutors, public defenders, trial lawyers, lawmakers, etc., who studied and researched for two years before reporting its recommendations in April.

That commission's first recommendation was "videotaping all questioning of a capital suspect conducted in a police facility, and repeating on tape, in the presence of the prospective defendant, any of his statements alleged to have been made elsewhere." It also urged that that state's eavesdropping ban should be lifted for homicide cases where the suspect knows the interrogator is a police officer.

While the issue certainly isn't as black-and-white as it might appear - after all the FBI doesn't use videotape - there are good reasons to come up with a national or state standard for local police to follow in capital cases.

As Redford Township's deputy chief John Buck said: "It provides you with a medium to present to the jury so they can see that there was no trickery and everything was done correctly."

Sounds like common sense.



Safety first

Spenser Bice, Max and Henry Majoros headed to Longacre Elementary on the first day of school. As the new year begins, motorists should take special precautions at crosswalks and around school buses. Remember - it's against the law to drive around a bus when its stop arms are extended.

LETTERS

Balance interests

Though our flower shop was once a member of the Chamber, we quit because they simply don't represent the interests of small businesses. On the political scene they have become merely another well-funded anti-tax, anti-labor, anti-government special interest group.

The final straw for me was an article in the regional Chamber magazine gloating about shutting down the ability of Michigan unions to raise political action funds from members. They had color charts showing the precipitous drop in union funds spent for political issues and candidates.

All this was at a time when corporate soft-money donations and contributions by top executives were skyrocketing. I'm sorry, but this is not about helping small business, it is about power politics and money buying discriminatory public policy.

I am running for the Oakland County Board of Commissioners in the 15th District, which represents the eastern half of Farmington Hills. I was concerned when I learned from the Farmington Observer that the Chamber said I had not returned my questionnaire.

In fact I never received a Chamber questionnaire. If I had I would have returned it, though I would likely receive their "unqualified" rating because I don't agree with some of their agenda.

As I have been walking door-to-door I have not heard a single person ask about a Chamber endorsement, or about any issue that I am aware the Chamber holds a public position. People are concerned about their jobs and about their public services, about paying taxes that are used to support growth out-county, about our water and sewer problems and about the local budget cuts and tax increases needed because of state budget shortfalls. People are paying attention, and a lot of them are worried. Change is in the air.

Good representatives, at whatever level, should be pro-business, but they should also be pro-labor, pro-consumer, pro-environment, and pro-citizen. It is not an either-or proposition; it is a balance. In a representative democracy we are all the government, and we get the future we vote for.

Jim Nash
Farmington Hills

Sign up or shut up

To all of you who always fail to volunteer but never fail to criticize, I have one thing to say to you: Sign up or shut up!

From a Founders Festival volunteer and business owner who doesn't know the meaning of "spare time."

Annelise Morrison
Farmington

Break in the signs

I am asking my supporters in the recent election to take my signs off their lawns and put them in storage. I am also asking them to put the signs out in late September or early October in time for the November election.

I hope the same is true about other candidate signs. We don't need them out from now until November, especially the billboard-size signs which contribute to visual pollution.

Aldo Vagnozzi
Farmington Hills

Supports Vagnozzi

It would be refreshing to have an election in our city, without any negative campaigning.

Unfortunately, this did not happen in the Republican State Representative race. I am referring to the exceptionally nasty piece of campaign literature that Valerie Knol put out about Terry Sever. What is appalling, is that she stated that he currently owed tax money to the State of Michigan, which is incorrect.

According to the article in Sunday's Observer, she was basing her information on a document from the county dated February 2001. Valerie Knol calls herself accountable... Doesn't she think it's her responsibility to make sure her information is correct? She says she wanted to show Mr. Sever's mismanagement.

It seems to me that if she felt this was such a big issue, she would have brought it out earlier in the campaign, so it could've been discussed, instead of at the very end, when Mr. Sever couldn't respond. Could it be she knew the information was incorrect? This is ethical?

Let's talk about this supposed mismanagement. Sometimes unfortunate things happen to nice people, who have nothing to do with mismanagement. Maybe when to do with mismanagement. Maybe when Miss Knol grows up someday, and experiences life a little, she'll understand this.

In November the residents of Farmington Hills will have a choice for their State Representative... Valerie Knol, who has shown herself to be unaccountable and unethical, with "the end justifies the means" attitude, or Aldo Vagnozzi, who has shown through his years of community service that he is ethical, accountable, and someone who can be trusted.

I am urging all residents of Farmington Hills to join me in my support of Aldo Vagnozzi for State Representative in November. I would like to offer a challenge to Valerie Knol... Do you think you are capable of discussing issues in the general election, or will you and your supporters resort to the same nasty campaigning you stooped to in the primary?

Are you up to the challenge Valerie?

Cheryl Oliveira
Farmington Hills Councilmember

The truth hurts

As a newer resident to Farmington Hills, I was not aware of Mr. Sever's disregard for paying taxes over the past 20 years.

Although Mr. Sever may not think it is an issue voters need to be aware of I do. When interviewing for a job, your past positions held and performance in those positions is a topic of discussion in the interview. Running for public office is no different.

If the newspaper had reported this information for us newer residents, since they say it is old news anyways, maybe Knol wouldn't have had to bring it up. For the newspaper to say Knol lacks compassion for bringing up this issue is a slap in the face to speaking the truth.

I say Knol is the one with the character - I can count on her to speak the truth in Lansing even if it is bad news.

Hilary Lubin
Farmington Hills

Enjoyed festival

I just got done reading two completely different ideas about the Founders Festival.

I have lived here for 20 years and apart from participating in the parade with my Cub Scouts or the ice cream social with First United Methodist Church, I never attended the festivities. I always considered it too crowded and noisy and expensive. I was looking at it as a local who just had to put up with it once a year.

When the debate that was the Festival in '99 with Watts Up, I was truly turned off. While I still have issues with a couple of decisions like renaming the parade after Botsford Continuing Care, (I don't care how much money they pumped in, I lost a bit of respect for both them and the festival), and the choice of the grand marshal (I am proud to say I have never watched a moment of any of the "reality" shows), it should have been some of our local heroes, I like the idea of the Festival trying to get back to the way it was.

So in honor of that goal, I attended this year and was pleasantly surprised. I walked up with my children and we toured all of the booths and they rode on the blow up rides, I bought a few trinkets and got cards from artists I hope to follow up with.

I have to agree with the first letter I read talking about all of the happiness she saw. I am struggling with Mr. Stevenson's opinion. He is saying the goals of the festival are to "boost downtown businesses, and make Farmington a choice for local as well as nonresidents year round." Who is to say this has not happened? Of course, the locals are going to make up most of the participants and it is "something to do to on a hot summer weekend" something fun, I might add.

He says the people running it are local business owners with "extra time on their hands" and no experience running something of this magnitude. I say thank you to the business owners who step up to help. If he can do it better... let him go for it. He says we need to hire professionals. DUH, we are still recovering from the professionals we tried to hire.

I don't know what the goals are supposed to be, but I hope we are not trying to be the Ann Arbor Art fair which I stopped going to years ago, but I have friends who I saw again at the festival I have not seen in years and had a blast. If the festival never reaches the magnitude Mr. Stevenson seems to want, more power to it.

Connie Kalo
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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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.

QUOTABLE

We have good days and we have bad days.

Farmington Public Schools bus driver Sue Kinn