

Opinion

21898 Farmington Road/Farmington, MI 48024

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Communication

That's key to stopping assaults

OUR COMMUNITIES may be in for another sick roller coaster ride.

This month, two young men in Troy were abducted, handcuffed and sexually assaulted.

Police suspect the same man, who wore a ski mask and used a knife and gun, committed both assaults. The word "serial" has been attached to both attacks because the assailant took personal effects from each victim — souvenirs — a characteristic of serial rapists.

That word, unfortunately, is not new to Oakland County residents. Serial rapist Steve Szeman committed assaults against women in our communities. The serial murderer who came to be known as the Oakland County Child Killer is, for all we know, still at large.

Which is why we're now encouraging our police agencies to get an early start on cooperating with each other and sharing information that could lead to the arrest of the Troy assailant before he strikes again.

EACH OF OUR PAPERS, at one time or another over the years, has held its local police department up to the public light and complained about lack of access, bad information or poor communication with the community.

That's not our purpose today, though.

Police officers are a proud group of individuals who tend to keep to themselves. They think, independently and collectively, that no job on the planet is like their own, and only another police officer could possibly understand what they go through. It's that kind of camaraderie that helps good officers excel at their jobs.

It's also that kind of thinking, or pride, that sometimes keeps important information from crossing local boundaries.

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IN THE INTEREST of promoting better communication and understanding between our newspapers and local police agencies, we recently held a conference where police and media representatives talked about their common understandings and misunderstandings.

One thing that came across is that unless there is a compelling reason, local police departments don't have much to do with each other. That's due to a lot of reasons, like politics and the feeling of one department looking over another's shoulder.

That's not necessarily bad. We're not trying to tell law enforcement officers how to run their departments any more than we want them telling us how to run our newspapers.

We are suggesting they somehow share the information that's available now, so that all departments can support this effort. Steven Szeman was arrested in Ohio for assaults committed here — who knows where the Troy rapist lives and works?

If such a coalition, even informally, is already working, then we applaud the effort.

Rouge Rescue

Keep Earth Day spirit alive

GET OUT THAT Earth Day T-shirt — and wear it to Rouge Rescue '90 on Saturday, June 2.

Organizers hope the Earth Day spirit carries over for this year's Rouge Rescue.

The Rouge Rescue is a good followup to Earth Day because it gives people the chance to roll up their sleeves and do some needed work to help clean up the environment.

First organized in 1986, the Rouge Rescue has already made a difference. Log jams and debris already cleared have helped the heavily polluted Rouge clean itself.

Though there's much work still to be done, Wayne County officials are already talking about returning canoes to sections of the Rouge — something almost impossible to conceive just a few years back.

But the Rouge isn't vital to just Wayne County. It flows through many southern and eastern Oakland County communities as well.

IN A SENSE, Rouge Rescue organizers anticipated the environmental movement that's now sweeping the country. But there's a price to be paid for being ahead of the times. While interest

Earth Day told us we could make a difference. Rouge Rescue '90 gives us that opportunity. Call your city or township hall or Friends of the Rouge, 427-1234, for site details.

has remained high among a core group of workers, the Rouge Rescue needs new, energetic workers if it's to remain a vital area event. Organizers are hoping for 2,000-3,000 people this time around.

Earth Day told us we could make a difference. Rouge Rescue '90 gives us that opportunity. Wayne County cleanup sites are being offered in Livonia, Westland, Plymouth and Redford.

Oakland cleanup sites are being offered in Birmingham, Southfield, Farmington Hills, Walled Lake and on the Oakland Community College Orchard Ridge campus.

Call your city or township hall or Friends of the Rouge, 427-1234, for site details.

Fond farewell

OCC chief leaves lasting mark

STANDING ON the shoulders of giants, R. Stephen Nicholson was able to put his own stamp of advancement on Oakland Community College during his 4½ years as chief executive.

OCC started life 25 years ago with Jack Tirrell, the president who effectively got the show on the road and operating. Joe Hill was the theoretician on cognitive learning styles, which means different people learn by different techniques. Bob Roelofs brought many vocational-technical programs on stream for a changing industrial job market, and never let anyone see him sweat about the grim revenue picture of the big recession.

Nicholson — a sociologist, cultural anthropologist and former missionary in Japan — made OCC conscious of the area's place in a world economy.

His years produced a Futures Institute, scanning future scenarios for the county; two speeches by futurist Robert Theobald; a view of the World Game, an exercise in understanding world resources distribution developed by Buckminster Fuller; growth of the Business & Professional Institute; development of a college presence in

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downtown Pontiac; a computer integrated manufacturing program with the help of international corporate giants who happen to have located here; advancement of an OCC Foundation; leadership of a study group to Israel and Jordan ... and so on.

The attention he got in Jordan led the United Arab Emirates to recruit Nicholson as vice chancellor in charge of the country's technological schools. At 64, a man who has led community colleges in Las Vegas, Chicago, Oregon and Oakland County is heading for new adventures in the Middle East.

Fondly we wish him well.

And we wish the OCC Board of Trustees happy hunting in its search for a fifth giant.



SHARON LEMIEUX/Staff photographer

Time to remember

Memorial Day holds a special place in the hearts of Farmington and Farmington Hills residents, as evidenced by the moving, well-attended observance held each May at the Veterans Memorial at our community's most historic crossroads, Grand River and Farm-

ington Road. Monday's program (above) was no exception. We, too, salute the memory of the servicemen and servicewomen who paid the ultimate price — their lives — in pursuit of world peace.

Time for board to address how to assess school plan

THE BIG city papers and TV news shows missed it, of course, because it's hard to sensationalize. But a revolution is brewing in the schools.

Last month the State Board of Education adopted a plan to develop a core curriculum for all schools. It is a fundamental change in direction for our kindergarten-through-12th grade system — away from specifying hours of study and years of attendance and toward defining subjects and testing students for what they actually learn.

Here's how it's supposed to work:

THE STATE board has set out five broad subject areas — arts (such as music and painting), health and physical education, language, math and science, and world studies (history, civics).

Next, "Measurement of student attainment of the desired educational outcomes at the state, district and building levels is an integral part of a good core curriculum model." I think this means: "Students will be tested to verify they have learned what they are supposed to."

Local school boards also are supposed to comment on the proposal to the state board during summer.

In September, the state board is scheduled to approve the model core curriculum and distribute it to every public and non-public school. By July 1991 all districts are to start working to the new standard.

UNTIL NOW, a high school diploma has been one of our society's greatest rip-offs.

To parents and prospective employers, a diploma has been marketed as a proof of education. In fact, a

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diploma proves nothing except that a kid sat in class 12 years without being expelled.

The state board says it will require that Michigan children learn, and be examined in, specified subjects. I didn't see anything in the handout from the state Department of Education about denying diplomas to kids who fail the exam, but it seems silly to test and do nothing about those who didn't measure up.

Just maybe we are developing an education system interested in outcomes and not process — i.e., one concerned about what kids actually learn instead of the process by which they are supposed to learn.

GOOD. NOW we should focus on the way we test in America.

American school kids take more tests than kids in any other country. But those tests are almost always about small bits of fact or answers to little problems. They don't assess a student's ability to think or put facts together into a pattern.

Worse, few Americans are ever subjected to an external exam — by someone other than their own teacher. Until recently, achievement tests



Philip Power

prepared and administered by a body independent of the local school were rare. The Michigan Education Achievement Test is now routinely administered to children in our schools. The results (or lack) are driving the state to introduce a core curriculum.

Even worse: The tests with significant effect on a kid's career — like the SAT college entrance test — are deliberately designed to be outside the school curriculum. There is no syllabus to be followed in preparing for them, on the theory that students aren't supposed to "cram" for them.

Result: Our education system doesn't clearly reward academic efforts of either students or teachers. Unlike athletic coaches, who know what kind of contest their teams face and can both coach and motivate their squads, academic teachers are cut off from effort, achievement and reward.

While the state board is preparing its new core curriculum, it might well think out how it will assess success. We shouldn't make old mistakes while starting in new directions.

Phil Power is board chairman of Suburban Communications Corp., the company that publishes this newspaper. His award-winning column will appear periodically.

Farmington readers' forum

Letters must be signed, original copies and include the address and telephone number of the writer. Names will be withheld from publication only for sufficient reason. We reserve the right to edit them. Send letters to Readers' Forum, Farmington Observer, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48024.

Campaign bias wrong

To the editor:

In following the current election for school board trustee, I have noticed that, for the most part, the process has been very positive, with constructive dialogue addressing the issues being the rule.

This was marred at the candidates night May 23, when Mr. DeVries found himself the object of negative questioning directed at him only, with the other candidates not being asked by Mr. Cotton and Ms. Rensselaers. Other negative questions were asked by individuals who were with Ms. Pruett. Nobody else acted in a negative manner.

Why do members of the board act biased against one particular candidate? Is someone afraid to have Mr. DeVries on the school board? Is there something going on that makes them afraid of Mr. DeVries? Are they afraid that he is not going to be

a yes man?

This is not the example that we should set in our community. If they would take the time to understand his vision of a brighter future for our children and our community, they might see that Mr. DeVries would be a breath of fresh air and a source of new ideas in our schools.

I urge the voters of this district to focus on the programs and visions of the candidates, not on the "behind the back" negativism recently being promoted.

Lorne Leon,
Farmington Hills

State aiding older adults

To the editor:

Your recent series of articles on adults caring for elderly parents in the home was excellent.

This is an issue that will gain more attention as people and society as a whole become more aware of the

growing number of people caring for their elderly relatives outside of traditional caregiving facilities.

One weakness of the article was the minimum attention given to state legislative efforts to provide some relief for the seniors themselves as well as their caregivers. There are currently over 50 bills in the House and Senate dealing with these issues.

I have proposed a variety of measures over the years to enable caregivers to better bear the hardships that many people endure when they take on this huge commitment.

I have four measures pending now before the Senate that would provide a series of tax credits for senior citizens as well as those who care for seniors in their home.

In fact, my Senate Bill 283, which would provide an additional income tax exemption for the support of specified seniors, was amended to another Senate bill that passed the Senate in April and is currently in the House.

Jack Faxon, state senator,
Farmington Hills

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