

Thanks for. . .

'Special' things about our towns

Being thankful is certainly in the eye of the beholder. So while you sit back and relax on this all-American holiday, we'll give you some examples to contemplate and, perhaps, tickle your fancy.

Many folks in Livonia say they give thanks because Neiman Marcus chose the Somerset Collection in Troy to call home, relieving their hometown of the traffic congestion. But Wayne County's largest suburban city is about to become the mother of all Target Stores which will be located along its Golden Corridor facing either Haggerty or I-275, or maybe both.

The council, concerned about the aesthetics of having the back of a department store facing the freeway, required that the new Target have two fronts, one facing Haggerty and the other I-275, making the development truly unique — the only two-faced Target in America.

Baby waited

Farmington Hills City Clerk Kathy Dornan is thankful that her baby waited until after election day to arrive. She was very pregnant and counting votes that evening. The baby, Matthew William, arrived one week later — and five weeks early — on Nov. 10.

President-elect Bill Clinton should be thankful that the majority of the nation doesn't hold the same political views as residents in the greater Birmingham-Bloomfield area, who solidly supported George Bush for re-election.

Southfield hotel owners are giving thanks — though not in public — for the expected demise of the Ramada Inn on Telegraph and I-696, clearing 253 hotel rooms out of the city's overcrowded innkeeper market.

Southfield school personnel are giving thanks for their combined 15 percent pay increase over the next three years — and the fact that Gov. John Engler failed in his efforts to sway voters into believing the increases were a good reason for passing Proposal C.

Motorists in Plymouth, the Wayne County capital of railroad crossing delays, will have smoother sailing for once when the CSX railroad crossing on Main Street is finally fixed. Workers are repairing the crossing which has long caused problems and has drawn complaints at the city commission meetings.

No Tigers

Meanwhile Plymouth Township residents are thankful that the Detroit Tigers didn't show up, we mean in the township. We know they didn't show up for the season. The St. John's property was thought to be a likely place for a new Tiger stadium. But all that talk came to a halt when the team was sold this year.

Visitors to the new Rochester Eccentric office in Rochester Hills are thankful there's plenty of free parking, even though city of Rochester coffers are a bit lighter because of the move. Employees of that office are just as thankful with their spiffy new quarters and invite all who are interested to drop by and say hello.

In the damned if you do, damned if you don't category, Redford Township residents are embroiled in a debate over the expense of the street sweeper making its rounds. A few years back,

the burning issue was what dust palliative to use on Redford's miles of dirt roads. Redford residents should be thankful that they now have some paved streets on which to drive.

West Bloomfield Eccentric editor Philip Sherman believes that residents in that township should be thankful for having a system in which the supervisor is elected by registered voters. Some West Bloomfield politicians recently made a stab at making that system an appointment of the township board.

Troy booming

With all the new construction in town — Troy High School, the new Somerset Collection, Troy Aquatic center and the addition onto the Troy Beaumont Hospital — Troy residents are thankful they can find their way home without a new map.

Westland officials believe that property taxpayers should be thankful because their assessments will be going up an average of 3 percent rather than the 12.9 percent projected without the Headlee rollback provision. Right.

One angry property owner has filed a complaint with the Michigan Tax Commission, saying that assessment increases should vary among neighborhoods, depending on whether home sales are hot or cold. But according to Mayor Robert Thomas, in order to implement that type of tax administration, additional personnel would be needed — which of course would take more revenue, which of course comes from property taxes, which of course comes from . . .

Utility lists

Edison customers throughout southeast Michigan can be thankful with the announcement from the utility that a friendly voice will always be available to receive an emergency call. In the past customers have complained that when calling to report a power outage they often got a busy signal. But because of a new voice response system, all calls will be acknowledged.

Advocates of a free press and open government can be thankful for Oakland University Post newspaper editor Margaret O'Brien who went to Prosecutor Richard Thompson to investigate whether the university's board of trustees is violating the Open Meetings Act.

We all can be thankful for Focus:HOPE executive director Father William Cunningham for continually reminding us that ending racism is everyone's obligation. Recently appearing at the Birmingham Community House, Cunningham told the audience: "Your job is to show the world the richness of diversity."

Bibliophile's owe a debt of gratitude to all those hard-working American Association of University Women who gather the used volumes sold at their book sales throughout the year.

We all should be thankful for communities like Garden City whose residents recently gathered for a fund-raiser to raise \$205,000 to help out 14-year-old Nicholas Celmar who is in need of a bone marrow transplant.

Briefcase brigade



In step: The 22-member drill team from Plymouth is among the featured attractions in Thursday's Michigan Thanksgiving Day Parade in downtown Detroit. The offbeat team is the brainchild of Fred Hill who choreographs the drills and composes the chants for the group. It's the suburban group's third year in the parade. Observers report the nattily attired drill team's a favorite of parade-goers who line the streets of Woodward and Jefferson.

LETTERS

Opinion on YRE

This is a response to an Oct. 19 letter from Lynn Mallen regarding the Year-Round Education (YRE) program at Gill Elementary:

Although the YRE program requires the district to pay slightly more in operational costs, YRE can be a considerable cost saver to districts when fully implemented.

YRE is utilized in some cases to provide space for growing student populations in districts where there is no money to build new schools. YRE can allow districts to use school facilities with greater efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

The YRE program is a pilot program, an experiment if you will, to determine the viability of YRE as another "choice" option for Farmington parents.

Supporters of YRE believe that restructuring the school calendar can enhance the learning process, not impede it.

A yearly schedule of shorter, more frequent breaks creates a more continuous flow of instruction. Greater achievement gains can be made from this flow, which can aid in the retention of knowledge.

The average class size in the Gill YRE program is 21, while the average in the traditional program is 25. The smaller numbers are not by design, however, and the ratios tend to fluctuate for both programs due to movement in the community during the year.

YRE may not be the answer for all students, but then not all students are the same nor have the same needs. We are very pleased at the apparent success of Gill's YRE program, thus far.

The attitude of students, parents and teachers has been extremely positive. It's an individual decision in Farmington to enroll a student in the YRE.

Because kids are different and have different needs, Farmington will continue, I trust, in their efforts to offer a variety of programs to meet those needs.

Carol Hansen, administrative intern, Gill Elementary

Opinions are to be shared: We welcome your ideas, as do your neighbors. That's why we offer this space on a weekly basis for opinions in your own words. We will help by editing for clarity. To assure authenticity, we ask that you sign your letter and provide a contact telephone number.

Letters should be mailed to: Editor, The Farmington Observer, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48336.

Pause to give thanks this holiday

"Dear Lord, thank You for our food, our friends and our family . . ."

This is the beginning of the grace my 10-year-old son Nathan says when it's his turn to give thanks at the beginning of a meal.

Nathan's grace keeps coming to mind this week as we celebrate that uniquely American holiday, Thanksgiving.

Lurking behind the surface artifacts — the turkey cutouts brought home from school or the countless recipes for the undigestible prepared from the inedible — Thanksgiving is an American secular ceremony driven by a profoundly religious instinct.

It is a secular holiday because it requires no particular doctrine or liturgy. It can be shared equally by every member of the patchwork quilt of race and religion that make up America. Celebrating Thanksgiving is not exclusively for Christians or followers of Islam, not just for whites or blacks.

I think this is so because pausing to give thanks is a profound instinct at the core of every religion I know of.

All of us who live in Michigan have much to be thankful for.

For our food — The cherries of Traverse City. The sweet corn from around Lansing. The melons from Howell. The fresh strawberries and raspberries from the U-pick farms on the flat land of Wayne County. The trout from the streams of the Upper Peninsula.

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PHILIP POWER

And the deer, urban and rural, whose hunt is a special holiday of its own in Michigan, nearly as widespread as Thanksgiving.

For our friends — Michigan is a friendly place, spread out enough to provide the spice of diversity. We're not as uppity and class conscious as the East Coast, yet not as nutty and fashion-driven as the West.

In Washington, they used to joke about "Michigan chic" when Jerry Ford was president. But I'll bet most of the country wishes deep down it was the kind of Midwestern, down home, friendly place Michigan is.

For our family — the heaviest travel period of the year is Thanksgiving. More than any other time, Thanksgiving is when spread-out families gather together to share the bounty of our land and give thanks. For most people, family is the most deeply felt value, going far, far beyond the tarnished phrase "family values."

My own mother died exactly one year ago, and her fresh memory still brings a lump to my throat. I will say a special prayer of Thanksgiving this Thursday. I suspect I will not be alone.

Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow. Praise Him, all creatures here below. . .

Phil Power is chairman of the company that owns this newspaper.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:
 At this Thanksgiving, what are you most thankful for?



"Everybody in the family is healthy, and business is good."
 Jeff Meuburg
 West Bloomfield



"My family, two kids, a boy and girl, 2 and 5."
 Carol Lincoln
 Millard



"I'm thankful my family's here."
 Peg Taylor
 Farmington Hills



"I have a nice family and I'm looking forward to spending the holidays with them."
 Barbara Roth
 Farmington Hills

The Farmington Observer

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