

POINTS OF VIEW

# Success marks graduates of county boot camp

It was graduation for the first class of the new Oakland County boot camp.

A few chairs had been assembled for dignitaries. Sheriff John Nichols, under whose auspices the boot camp had come about, was scheduled to speak.

A few relatives of the graduates began to show up. They had evidently found their way to the camp, tucked into the back roads of Auburn Hills.

Then more came. A call went out for more chairs. And more chairs.

Nichols admits he was caught unaware that families would assemble for their kids' graduation — from jail.

But that first ceremony was no anomaly. For each graduation in the boot camp's two years of existence, relatives and near-relatives of the camp graduates have come in droves — their grandparents and their girlfriends, their siblings and their small children.

lawbreakers come from uncaring families.)

For many of these graduates, all carefully chosen non-violent offenders, it is their first success. They have survived six weeks of a military-style life, full of routine, discipline and the resulting camaraderie.

They have marched to meals, split wood, run obstacle courses, learned CPR and helped out in emergency situations, such as the explosion last May in downtown Rochester.

As the camp has developed, they have also been exposed to further education and psychological and job counseling.

They put in a 17-hour day, beginning at 6 a.m. They get an hour or so of leisure, for personal needs including writing letters home.

One mother, who had opposed her son going to the camp, said it was through his letters that she realized the



JUDITH DONER BERNE

profound change it was having on him. "Thank you, thank you," she told each of her son's commanding officers, when she could take her proud eyes off her newly graduated son.

Class valedictorians reflect the message — whether delivered in rap or more traditional prose — that their future is up to them.

Up to now, the camp has been limited to the warmer weather months,

since the prisoners live in tents. But the need it fulfills for those who may profit from it more than from a more traditional and longer jail term isn't limited to warm weather.

For instance, of 269 inmates to go through the county boot camp, just 21 have been accused of additional crimes, according to figures released last week.

So a winter session began the week of Jan. 10.

The expansion comes in sharp contrast to the state's boot camp program, which a recent state Senate report claims is running in the red with no indication it helps deter criminal activity.

A further irony is the expansion as other areas of the Sheriff's Department are coming under fire — particularly abuses in the work-release program and the earlier demotion and continuing investigation of former captain,

now sergeant, Gerard Carlin, who had headed the department's main substation in Rochester Hills.

But these shouldn't taint this program, which so far has the praise of many, including Oakland Circuit Judge Edward Sosnick and county Commissioner Marilyn Gosling, R-Bloomfield Hills.

In fact, there's talk of a boot camp for women offenders. It should be developed. They deserve a similar opportunity to learn discipline and gain strengths. And their grandparents and boyfriends, siblings and small children also deserve to witness their success.

Judith Doner Berne is assistant managing editor for the Oakland County editions of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. You can reach her at 644-1100, Ext. 242.

# Self-accountability is solution to better society

This society does have some problems. Almost everyone can agree on that. However, there is one problem that all the others seem to revolve around; the root problem, so to say.

That root problem, if solved, could bring an end to most other problems. This problem is the fact that people are not held responsible for their own actions; there is always someone else to blame.

The best example of this is a drunk driver who has been caught. Often, the place where he had his last drink can be sued for allowing this drunk driver to become intoxicated.

"This doesn't make any sense. People are out for a profit, that is what capitalism is all about. A bartender wants to make as much money as he can. One way for him to make money is to serve as many drinks as he can. I don't see why he should have to be concerned with anything but himself and his business.

It is nice for the bartender to call a cab for someone who is drunk, but it should not be his responsibility. When

a person is drunk he knows it and he knows better than to drive, so he shouldn't.

It is not fair for the bartender, who is just doing his job, to be sued for someone else's actions. The bartender cannot do the thinking for each and every person that comes into his bar. He cannot know the limit for every person in the world. That is why people have to think for themselves.

It is illegal to drive drunk and everyone knows this. There comes a time when people have to stop living off of excuses and start owning up to reality, and that means accepting full responsibility for their actions.

An exception to the rule may be in case where a minor is involved. When someone is under the age of 18 his parents can and should be responsible for his actions to a certain degree. For example, if a 12-year-old was with some of his friends and a neighbor's window was broken, then the parents should pay for the window and all other damages caused by their child. However, the parent should then turn around



CHERI LOWE

and make junior pay them back every penny of it along with another form of punishment such as a grounding.

There are some parents out there though who have children that can do no wrong. Everytime this child does get into some trouble, mommy is there to bail baby out. She then disciplines him by saying that he is no longer allowed to hang around his friend because his friend is a terrible kid and is influencing her baby in a negative way. In other words, the mommy is saying that junior's friend is doing junior's thinking for him and junior, who has no idea of

the difference between right and wrong, is unable to walk away from the situation because his friend has control of his brain.

A lot of people are brought up thinking that nothing is ever their fault. They feel that there is someone else to blame, that other person can control them and make them do bad things that they wouldn't ever do if they had never met this new friend. Unfortunately, some of these people are in our government.

I was watching a talk show the other day about mothers who had turned their sons in to the police for various crimes and were going to testify against them in court. I applaud these mothers. There was also a lawyer whose son had been charged with assault on the show. He said that he would have went to jail for his son. He was calling the other women selfish and cold.

He, however, is the one who is selfish and cold. Instead of doing what is right and trying to teach his son right from wrong, he would rather go to jail him-

self, that is cold. This is probably some pathetic attempt to save his own name as apparent, that is selfish.

Kids have minds of their own. They know right from wrong from the time they are just babies. Finishing a child or making him accountable for himself does not tarnish the name of the parent.

Two wrongs do not make a right, ever. The only reasons any one person's actions should or could ever be held accountable for any of those of another person is 1) in the case of self defense and 2) in the case of a minor.

People have brains. If everyone could use his, think for himself once in a while, and be held totally accountable for everything that results from his actions, things in the society would be different. They would be better.

Cheri Lowe is the editor of Walled Lake Central's student newspaper. Comments for her can be left on our VoiceMail system, 644-1100, Ext. 264.

LETTERS

On Baer's column

About Tom Baer's Jan. 25 column on President Bill Clinton: Somewhere along the way when you lost your hair, I think most of your brains went with it.

I have seen and heard some sore losers in my time, but you win the top prize. Since you knock everyone who has been president since Kennedy (excluding Nixon), I assume he was your ideal Republican president. Your mentality indicates that to be true.

In the final paragraph you say, "Tell Hillary to keep her hands off our government. Her name wasn't on the ballot."

Neither was yours. Had it been, with your ideas and attitude you might have gotten one vote.

W.F. Smith, Livonia

The overflow funds made on last year's 125th Farmington city anniversary observance could well be better spent in making the immediate downtown area more shopper/pedestrian friendly.

Lee S. Peel

If the promoters still want a clock, why not place one against, or attached to, the north side/wall of the present City Hall? A 1960s style clock, in keeping with the decade of City Hall and its architecture, would be just as useful, less obtrusive, and far less demeaning to the character of the Masonic Hall and/or its grounds.

Lee S. Peel, Farmington

No clock, please

In addition that the Masonic Temple grounds does not need a 30-foot-or-so high phallic symbol of a clock.

The historic Temple (old Town Hall) needs no such distractions on its front lawn near Grand River. Let the trees grow; let the grass grow; but let the idea of a clock in that area go.

The overflow funds made on last year's 125th Farmington city anniversary observance could well be better spent in making the immediate downtown area more shopper/pedestrian friendly.

Those cutesy short posts with lights atop them and located just east of the Grand River/Farmington Road intersection supposedly define a crosswalk.

But one is risking life and limb, even in the broadest of daylight, crossing Grand River at this location. Oncoming traffic from east or west cannot see the crosswalk or the short posts.

Spend some bucks for signs or banners or something to tell the car and truck drivers to slow down and stop for pedestrians.

A meaningful crosswalk is also needed on Farmington Road south between Arbor Drugs and the east side business establishments. Traffic comes around the corner from Grand River, or from the north through the intersection, and hits 30-35 mph by the time the vehicles are at this point.

As a frequent walker in downtown Farmington, I see hundreds of other walkers and/or runners, at all hours, but particularly during the daylight hours. If the DDA wants to help business, downtown Farmington needs to make moving around by foot less dangerous.

More on millage

Actually, I'm reluctant to vote yes on any millage proposal.

The last time I was asked to pass a millage in Farmington Hills, I was told that if it did not pass our schools would be financially devastated. Well, it did not pass.

Yes, cuts and sacrifices were made. Yet, within months of this millage not passing, the teachers demanded and received substantial pay increases. Where did this money come from?

And why would our teachers ask for this increase? The average teacher in Farmington Hills makes approximately \$46,000. When you divide that by 180 days (actually, it's more like 175 days when you take into consideration teacher workshops, report card markings and parent teacher conferences), that comes to \$255 per day not including full medical benefits.

Is this millage passage absolutely necessary or are we merely tucking funds away for the next contract renewal?

Susan Wachsbarg, Farmington Hills

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