

Lawn spray

People should know dangers

This is suburbia. Suburbanites like their lawns growing green and weed-free. Of course, many lack the time or inclination to make them so. Enter the lawn care business, a growth industry if ever there was one in places like Farmington Hills. Their tank trucks, often with green and white paint schemes, are as familiar a sight in our subdivisions as the mini-van or the 10-speed. For a fee, they'll spray and spray and spray some more from those tankers so that suburban homeowners never have to know the heartbreak (or backache) of crabgrass or other botanic agonies.

But just what is it these people are pumping onto our lawns and into our lives, and how will it affect people and animals?

Troubling questions . . . especially after a Farmington Hills resident complained about routine chemical spraying at a recent city council meeting. Masha Silver said she still suffers from being drenched with misapplied lawn chemicals.

Also at the meeting, resident Joe Derek, a member of the city's beautification committee, called the use of lawn chemicals "ignorant and unnecessary."

The story appeared on page 4 of last Monday's Farmington Observer.

A Hills citizens committee recommended that the city follow state guidelines on lawn chemical applications and regulation. Silver and others countered that state doesn't go far enough in protecting citizens.

■ If the people who ran lawn care were smart, they'd regulate themselves to the point where the government might not have to step in. At the very least, they'd recognize that a problem does exist and cooperate with authorities. That means they'd clean up their own industry by keeping accurate records of what is sprayed and where.

We're not saying that the city should have its own spraying ordinance. But we do feel it's time something is done about keeping closer tabs on the lawn care industry. If that means regulation by the state or county, so be it.

Actually, if the people who ran lawn care were smart, they'd regulate themselves to the point where the government might not have to step in. At the very least, they'd recognize that a problem does exist and cooperate with authorities. That means they'd clean up their own industry by keeping accurate records of what is sprayed and where. Both government and industry need to educate the public to the dangers of these chemicals.

And, knowing the dangers, perhaps the public shouldn't demand such perfect lawns . . . not through chemistry, anyway.

Make park assets a priority

Michigan's state parks system, once second to none, is slipping. Unless steps are taken soon, some of the state's most beautiful areas — and perhaps its most precious resource — could be unalterably damaged.

The system includes developed parks and rustic recreation areas. In 1980 the state paid 70 percent of their operating cost. Since then, the state has shifted the burden to user fees, now a hefty 80 percent of the budget. The state puts up only \$5.6 million of the parks' \$28 million budget.

Daily vehicle entrance fees have gone from \$2 in 1980 to \$3.50; annual permit fees, from \$7 to \$18; and camping fees, from \$2-\$6 to \$6-\$14. Both Republicans and Democrats in the Legislature and the executive office are to blame.

As fees soar, however, visitors get less for their money. The parks division has lost nearly a third of its staff, 25 rustic campsites face closure as they are neglected into oblivion, and many park roads are blocked to winter use because there is no staff to plow them.

There are no statistics, but any visitor can see damage by erosion, off-road vehicles, poachers and vandals.

There is talk of "privatizing" some state parks. Private campgrounds and theme parks are part of the state's recreation picture, but businesses must turn a dollar at every opportunity. Business can't replace government as protector of a natural resource.

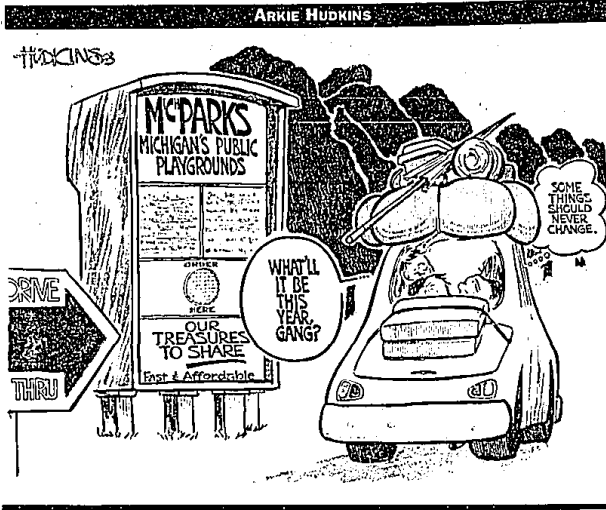
Although parks aren't primarily an economic resource, they do generate \$100 million to nearby grocers, gas stations, restaurants and tourist attractions.

■ In 1980 the state paid 70 percent of their operating cost. Since then, the state has shifted the burden to user fees, now a hefty 80 percent of the budget. The state puts up only \$5.6 million of the parks' \$28 million budget.

A Citizens Committee on Parks, spearheaded by Michigan United Conservation Clubs, is offering a ballot proposal: a one-cent increase in the sales tax for one year. The \$700 million revenue would be invested to produce \$15 million income annually for the parks. That would be a steep, long-term increase in the parks budget and could restore them to their former glory. But let us be politically realistic. Other important state obligations — schools come to mind — also are looking at ballot proposals. It's poor policy to earmark special taxes for special funds. It would be far better if our legislators and the governor faced their obligation to protect the natural resources that our state parks embody from the general fund budget.

In 1872 the National Parks Service was created and opened Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming. But land-hungry developers didn't go away. And in 1916 the parks service served notice that its policy would be "to conserve scenery and the national and historic objects and wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for future generations."

Michigan should do as much for its future generations.



LETTERS

About the T-shirts

I was appalled to see an article that appeared in the Observer on Feb. 8 entitled "Condom Fashions, an artist silk-screens safe sex sayings."

Sex and teenagers, an issue of great magnitude cannot be trivialized by funny sayings on a T-shirt. The message to the teens is: Condoms provided safe sex. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

Condoms reduce the risk of sexually transmitted disease (STD) when put on early and do not break or leak. Would any parent not stop their child seeing him/her play a Russian Roulette, knowing that there is only one bullet in a magazine?

Would they say the chance that when he pulls a trigger and gets shot is greatly reduced? Some 10-20 percent of condoms fail because of leakage (put on too late) or breakage.

Is the risk of getting AIDS, genital warts, gonorrhea, syphilis or herpes not serious enough to rethink one's behavior?

It is irresponsible for Mrs. Kutinsky to market material for our children that is misleading and can cost lives. Condoms are not safe sex.

It is equally irresponsible for the newspaper to devote a half page of free advertising to Mrs. Kutinsky. She is more interested in business for herself rather than getting the true message that needs to go out to our teens that the risk of being sexually active includes the risk of being infected with AIDS and STD.

The consequences can be very severe. We need to see stories in the paper about the teens that have STD or AIDS and how it changed their lives.

Was the behavior worth the risk? Messages — Assume personal control of your life. Decisions you make now, have an impact on your future, your life.

Mario Hoefflein, Farmington Hills

Let's nix tower

Let me add my two cents to the ongoing debate on the planned clock tower in front of the Masonic Temple.

It's a debate that seems to be pretty one-sided. While I've talked with a lot of people who don't care one way or the other, both residents and city officials, I have yet to meet anyone who thinks it's a great idea.

If I were going to spend \$80,000 on a project that will permanently change the look of a downtown monument, I would like to know that I have the community's support. This project doesn't have it.

I was part of the 125th Anniversary Celebration Committee. I attended the post-celebration committee meeting during which Shirley Richardson outlined plans for a \$14,000 clock mounted on an oversized lamp post.

It seemed like a useless, extravagant gift, but harmless enough. I could understand her desire

to leave behind a tangible reminder of the success of the 125th celebration, and we did have \$7,000 left over to spend on something, so I didn't object.

How and when it became a brick behemoth with a four-foot-wide clock face I do not know.

I strongly object to anything that would detract from the 1890s feel of the area surrounding the Masonic Temple. It is the only place in town that pedestrians sit under the trees and watch the world go by (certainly not on the benches placed at curbside all over town).

If they are looking for a place to erect a monument, look to the corner of Grand River and Liberty. There is an expanse of lawn in front of City Hall that isn't used. It's far enough from traffic that people might actually sit there to eat their Baskin-Robbins or read a library book.

It would help define where City Hall is. I have to give directions to passing motorists all the time, our city hall is easy to miss from Grand River.

Or don't erect a monument at all. Use the money left over from the 125th celebration to leave a more lasting monument to the history of Farmington.

Start a college scholarship for history majors. Make additional improvements to the Farmington Historical Museum. Help the Masons finish the restoration of the Masonic Temple — the windows in the tower are still boarded up for lack of funds. Purchase material for the History Room in the Farmington Library.

It may not be as visible, but these gifts would be a lot more useful than another clock displaying the wrong time.

Laura Myers, Farmington

Need better PR

I am so pleased that the Farmington Public Safety Department wants to continue to improve community relations programs (as was reported in the Feb. 15 Observer).

It's too bad that the Farmington Hills Police Officers Association isn't equally concerned about public relations.

For several years Farmington and Farmington Hills residents have been harassed and bullied by the association's phone calls asking for donations to its projects.

This year the association is asking for money to print a booklet on drugs which will be distributed in the Farmington schools.

When I called the Farmington Hills police chief to protest the abusive nature of the call, the chief's office informed me that it had no control over the union, and that the money asked for was not for a drug booklet but a donation to the union's political action committee.

The implied threat from the callers is that if one doesn't donate, he or she does not "support the police" and that the police could retaliate. Citizens want to trust the police, not fear them.

Janet Good, Farmington Hills

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:
 What should the school's role be in curbing student violence?

We asked this question at the Farmington Area YMCA.



"It starts at home. The schools are only a reflection of what children learn at home."
 Pearl Mooradian
 Southfield



"Parents could volunteer to watch kids and sort of supervise things."
 Neal Rajdev
 Farmington Hills



"The school's role should be to teach. The violence problem should be handled at home."
 Sue Ganoff
 White Lake Township



"The schools could have more assemblies and sessions with counselors. They could have speakers with different racial and ethnic backgrounds."
 Frank Acosta
 Farmington Hills

The Farmington Observer

TOM BAER EDITOR, 477-6460
 STEVE BARNABY MANAGING EDITOR
 JUDITH DONER BERNE ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR
 DICK ISHAM GENERAL MANAGER
 MARK LEWIS DIRECTOR OF ADVERTISING
 FRED WRIGHT DIRECTOR OF CIRCULATION
 Suburban Communications Corporation
 Philip Power CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
 Richard Agnlan PRESIDENT