

Rip the rag!

Band adds to football show

They're ripping the rag over our coverage of high school band activities. Well, that's just fine with us. We're here to rip and be ripped, and we hope we'll be around Farmington and environs for just such purposes for a long, long time.

Eyes right, please, to Tina Marinucci's guest column at the top of today's "Points of View" page. "Let's recognize and support all school achievers," the headline reads.

Marinucci, whose son plays in Harrison High School's state championship band, is bemoaning the fact that society in general — and this newspaper in particular — pays more attention to football than band music.

When Harrison's football team won Class A state title Nov. 26, the paper published a color photo on the front page and provided scads of coverage on the sports pages, she notes.

But, she adds, after the Harrison band captured a state championship of its own back on Nov. 6, the paper ran only two black-and-white photos with a story, and it wasn't even on the front page.

Marinucci's column is well-written and well-reasoned, and we're happy to publish it. We've received a couple of letters from folks who are shocked at what they see as the injustice of it all, and we expect we'll get a few more before things calm down. We're getting our bell rung, so to speak, on the subject of bands.

So, are we going to mend our ways and do better by the band the next time one wins a title? Well, we'll try. A school band title is important news to us. It will be covered in a timely fashion.

But people have to remember . . . football is

football and band is band. The one attracts lots of paying customers; the other exists to help that happen. It's always been that way and we'd be surprised if that changed — despite guest columns, letters, phone calls to the local newspaper.

Newspapers have sports writers who work late into the night covering the exploits of the high school athletes. Unfortunately, papers don't have activities writers to do the same for bands.

A band is composed of a lot of talented, hard-working people who are there for a purpose: to add more color and sound to the spectacle that is football. A band plays to fire up the fans and players.

In making that point, we have to note that on Nov. 6, when Harrison's band was tooting its way to a state title before acres of empty seats in the Pontiac Silverdome, the school's football team was winning a playoff game before a large audience at a high school field.

Before anyone gets too upset over what was and wasn't printed in the local newspaper, let's remember one very important thing: High school activities (football, band, debate, Future Homemakers of America, etc.) are supposed to be fun.

That's F-U-N, guys and gals . . . fun for the footballers, fun for the band-tooters, fun for the parents and fun even for the reporters who get to cover the scene.

And the readers are welcome to take issue with us for writing the things we do. After all, if you're a fan (football or band), isn't that part of the fun — ripping the local rag over how it treats your favorite team or activity or cause? Of course it is.

Academies chart better course

The governor proposes; the Legislature disposes. So it was with John Engler's pet "charter school" reform bill.

As it emerged from his Oct. 5 special address on education, the charter school bill was a warmed-over version of parochialism — tax money for private schools. Any governmental agency or person could issue a charter for any purpose. There would be no union rules. Charter school boards would be free of such "restrictive bureaucratic regulations" as the Open Meetings Act.

The idea was an ill-disguised attack on public schools and a political vendetta against the Michigan Education Association.

Cooler heads prevailed in the House of Representatives. House lawmakers recognized that market forces, good or bad, can't educate kids; the MEA, good or bad, doesn't educate kids. Teachers educate kids. The result was a concept called "academies."

Only public educational bodies may charter academies — school districts, intermediate service districts, universities and community colleges — and only inside their service areas. The academies will be nonprofit corporations with no financial powers.

Charter boards must have a majority of certified teachers as directors. Lawmakers recognized there really are acquired skills in teaching young minds; that not just any worldly-wise adult can understand how to present an idea to 7-year-olds or even 16-year-olds.

The House rejected amendments that would let charter academies use noncertified teachers and administrators. To their credit, however, lawmakers are working on plans to speed up

teacher certification, so that a skilled adult can become certified without giving up two years to achieve that status.

Charter academies must use "outcome-based" methods, despite the shrill attacks of the 19th century minds. Instead of looking at so many hours in class learning by rote, we will judge graduates' skills for real world problem-solving.

As we said, academies will be tolerable. But some questions remain.

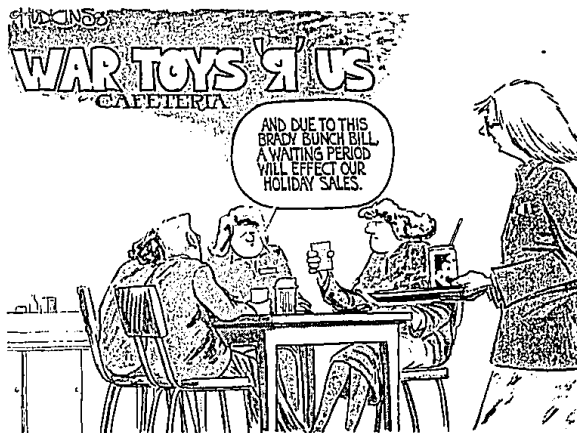
Reviewing the expensively reprinted articles by charter advocates, we see much rhetoric about competition but no concrete proposals for what academies are supposed to do. At best they seem to be experimental schools for highly-motivated kids and givers of special attention to kids with learning problems.

But what if, say, the University of Michigan wants to charter an academy in Communityville, whose money will it use? Its own or the Communityville School District's?

With 562 school districts, many of them tiny, Michiganders also should worry that a crank group will gain control of a board and use its charter powers unwisely. It's possible when so many districts see voter turnout of 5 percent. The State Board of Education's staff should examine charters carefully, if Engler doesn't succeed in junking the State Board of Education.

Academies have the potential of giving public schools some variety. But we remind everyone — especially Engler, who thinks even the watered-down bill is great — that academies are mere delivery systems. Teachers still educate kids.

ARKIE HUDKINS



LETTERS

'Attention show'

Jack Kevorkian with his dying chamber is going a little too far. People that wanted to go and felt that they had no other choice but death dial Jack's phone number and were then booked for an appointment for . . . DEATH.

What kind of person would want to make a living out of killing people? All Jack wanted was the attention, and that is certainly what he got.

I myself want to congratulate the judge for finally sentencing Jack Kevorkian to jail.

Once that happened, I thought Jack's little attention show was over. I was wrong. Not only did he fall on the ground, having to be dragged out of the courtroom, he then turned and claimed to everyone that he was not going to eat anything while he was in jail except for water.

That right there showed me that Jack's show, was not even close to ending.

Please spare me, Jack Kevorkian isn't coming close to dying of starvation. Obviously he's not very good when it comes to going through with all the threats he makes.

Maybe he's right, his attention show isn't over. He's just beginning the second one.

Katherine Lukasinski, Harrison High 10th-grader

Stop following!

I think that the administration at Farmington High School should do something about all of the students using drugs.

According to the latest Blue and White, 45 percent of the students polled said they use drugs and 48 percent said their friends use drugs. I think this is way too many students at our school using drugs.

There were probably more kids who didn't admit to it. If the administration has to, they should have people come in and check students when they come into school. They should also check lockers more often.

If someone is caught, his/her parents should come in and have a conference with the principal. The students should also be suspended for their actions.

I think if there was more education about drugs there would be fewer students in our school doing them. Most of the students on drugs cause trouble in the classes and make it hard for the teacher to teach and the other students to learn.

If the administration would enforce their rules there wouldn't be such a big problem. There are many students at Farmington that are selling drugs to other students between and during classes.

If people who might have had a bad experience with drugs were to come in and talk about their own problems maybe some students would get the message that drugs are bad for you.

It would also help if drugs weren't as easy to get in school. At Farmington it seems that some people are just trying to fit in so they use drugs to fit in with the people that they think are cool. Maybe if some people just stopped being followers there wouldn't be such a problem in our school.

Matt Hickey, Farmington

About that letter

I am sorry that Khaya Davidson took offense (Dec. 2) at my column (Nov. 18) on the cemeteries. This was an abridged printed copy of a speech I gave to the Exchange Club at one of its recent meetings.

Misplaced and missing quotation marks created the situation. There should not have been a closed-quotation mark after "Resting places of our departed dead," but there should have been another beginning-of-a-paragraph quotation mark at the start of the next paragraph to show continuation of the quotation — then end it after "or rear a stone to mark the grave."

I think that most people understood that I was quoting from the East Farmington Cemetery's secretary's book, and that old-fashioned, out-of-date, flowery language was not mine, but of an unnamed secretary, written on Sept. 29, 1906.

So, my apologies, if you feel they are in order. There was no intentional offense planned, but merely an effort to bring some of Farmington's rich history to present day listeners and readers.

To learn more about Farmington's history, all interested are invited to attend our Historical Society meetings at 8 p.m. on the fourth Wednesday of the month at the Farmington Community Library, State and Liberty streets, Farmington, and/or browse in the lower level history room at that same library.

The next meeting will be on Jan. 26, 1994, "Show and Tell," always an interesting personal program. Welcome. Visit the Historical Museum on Grand River.

Kay Briggs, Farmington Hills

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.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

How would you advise people to beat the holiday blues?

We asked this question at the Farmington Area YMCA.



'They should get out and try to enjoy themselves. I don't get the blues . . . my kids keep me too busy.'

Donna Miller
Commerce Township



'Call a special friend or relation and go out for cheesecake and a cup of hot chocolate.'

Margaret Brozovich
Farmington



'Concentrate on the meaning of Christmas.'

Zbigniew Jakubowski
Farmington Hills



'Get in with the spirit of the holidays. Be around people who have it.'

Henrietta Ross
Highland

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