

Sunny Saturday

Area needs an 'active' park

It's a former sod farm on Eight Mile Road, and that's what some people still call it - the Sod Farm.

But it has a new name, Founders Sports Park, now that it has been transformed into a place where young baseball, softball and soccer players show their skills.

It'll be a happy day for Farmington Hills officials and all Farmington-area residents, really, when the facility is dedicated officially with due pomp and ceremony at 11 a.m. Saturday.

Founders Park is more than just a ball yard or soccer pitch. It has a special meaning in a community that cares deeply about its parks. Its presence as a so-called "active" park could bode well for a couple of other more-passive parks in Farmington Hills.

With the coming of Founders Park, the jocks and bird-watchers both win. For once, we hope.

With the new facility finally up and running, perhaps the pressure to overdevelop Heritage and Woodland Hills (see the Peltz-MDOT property) parks will diminish or disappear.

And let's be honest about it: When it comes to Heritage Park, it's been the jocks vs. the bird-watchers for a long, long time now.

Remember, in over-paved and populated Farmington Hills, residents do care about their park lands will be used and what will happen to the last remaining open spaces in

this community.

We've said it before in this space, but we guess it bears repeating: The 212-acre Heritage Park is a special place. It's as *au naturel* as it gets in this burg, and the last thing it needs is basketball courts.

Woodland Hills is a wild and woody stretch of land south of I-696 and west of Farmington Road about a mile due north of Heritage. It has the potential of a place worthy of a long look through a nature-lover's field glasses.

Anyway - and here's another idea that needs repeating - with the parks rift hopefully abated, maybe it's time to consider splitting the parks and recreation power structure: One group would run the parks; the other would deal with recreation. Each entity would work with what it knows best - without bickering with each other.

So, Founders Park is here, or it will be after the speeches have been made and the ribbons cut on Saturday. Let's credit city officials with some good work. They saw a nasty situation developing over parks a few years ago, and they took steps to correct it.

A full slate of softball and baseball games is set for Saturday after ceremonies at Founders Park, and the Legacy Tour '94 soccer skills competition takes place there that day, too.

Let's hope for a sunny Saturday - and a bright future for Farmington area parks.

Prosecutor off base on tragic case

Oakland County Prosecutor Richard Thompson made a mistake when he personally arraigned 17-year-old Desmond Venn last week, pressing for an ultra-high bond and using verbiage that did not jibe with the circumstances of the case.

District Judge Thomas Brookover saw fit to significantly reduce that bond earlier this week from \$250,000 to \$5,000 - allowing the Venn family to take their son home from jail.

Venn stands accused of hitting Zuhair "Steve" Pattah, 16, and sending him into a coma. Thompson charged Venn with assault and battery with intent to do great bodily harm, and said he will up the charge to murder if Pattah dies.

Thompson said he personally appeared at the 48th District Court arraignment to call attention to the fact that Oakland County will not tolerate violence at its high schools.

But those in court, and watching television last week, saw an angry man lose control and seemingly launch a personal attack against the teenager.

This isn't lessening the terrible circumstances that have overcome Pattah, his family, and the family of Desmond Venn. But last week, Thompson looked more like a man with a vendetta than a level-headed prosecutor representing the people of Oakland County.

If Venn did hit Pattah, and evidence proves that punch caused him to hit his head on the ground and lapse into a coma, then Venn will have to shoulder the responsibility for his action.

That doesn't mean, though, that Venn set out to kill or severely injure Pattah. If we're honest, then many of us can look back to a



fight we were involved in during high school. That doesn't mean fighting was right or acceptable; but it doesn't mean we were out to kill our opponent, either.

By his actions, Thompson turned this into more of a media spectacle than it needed to be. And he set himself up as a target for the NAACP, which says Thompson himself is pressing the case only because Venn happens to be black.

Lost in all this is the fact that, apparently, a student threw a punch and hit another student, who, through a one-in-a-trillion sad chance, has landed in the hospital with a life-threatening injury.

Further lost is the fact that it wasn't even Venn's fight - and that it was fueled by a 21-year-old non-student who illegally entered a high school to retaliate for an insult hurled days earlier.

With two families devastated, this is hardly the time for histrionics by our county prosecutor.



ARKIE HUDKINS

LETTERS

Whose fault is it?

Whose fault is it that the taxpayers were misled, misinformed and manipulated into voting "yes" on Proposition A?

Is it the school district's fault? The teachers' fault? No. The taxpayers should have been paying more attention to what Gov. John Engler was up to.

If the taxpayers were more informed, they would have been able to see that ultimately we were going to be paying the same amount of taxes, even with a small reduction in property taxes.

The money is just coming from different areas of our pocketbook. The governor counted on the ignorance of the taxpayers to pass his proposal, and he got it.

That was quite evident when Southfield residents voted down the last millage. Where the communities once had a say when it came to schools, the governor and his Republican majority legislature will now have the final say.

It seems that no one governor should have that kind of power. After the MEA, who is he going to attack next?

If Southfield residents are angry, they shouldn't be angry at the hard-working school district, but at a governor who is out for one thing and one thing only and that is his own re-election.

Who he has to take down in the process doesn't matter.

Julie Johnson, Farmington Hills

more than deserving of endless praise and thanks. However, many of the organizations for which Farmington Hills residents volunteer have their own volunteer recognition program.

One would not expect Botsford Hospital, for example, to include individual church volunteers in their programs. In the same manner, how can it be said that the Senior Adult Division was amiss by not including every volunteer or every organization in the city?

Quite contrarily, the brunch, which was organized primarily by volunteers, was more than thorough in including many officials, employees, and every single person who had been so generous as to volunteer their time to the seniors in our area through the division.

It seems fair to say that the Senior Adult Division could not exist were it not for the help of volunteers. The money saved is almost irrelevant compared to the contagious warmth and kindness that these veritable angels provide.

Their smiles and hugs mean far more than so many dollars. This statement holds true not only for the volunteers who were honored at Monday's brunch, but for every volunteer across the world.

Hopefully, other organizations equally commend their volunteers with food and pins and speakers and films. I offer unending thanks to all and know that any true volunteer does not care much about those material things.

Those who are truly giving do not give for any reward other than to know that some person in need is benefiting from their generosity. Thank you for your time.

Lori Brennan, Farmington Hills

Let's get tough

John Engler's re-election slogan is "Tough Enough to Bring Michigan Back." Well, when it comes to the MESC, he and his hand-picked director have certainly been tough. The commissioners are routinely ignored, even though the courts have ruled otherwise.

Now, Engler and Co. want to sell off most of the data processing operation to a company in Boulder, Colo., which already has some state business, without competitive bids and with no objective criteria for determining if money is thereby to be saved.

So let's see. A piece of the MESC, which is funded by employers and the feds, is to be sent to Colorado, thereby losing jobs for Michigan, without any apparent savings in money, or improvement in service, I might add. And to what end? So that Engler can say he has cut down the size of state government.

Engler doesn't need a slogan. He needs a political epitaph. How about "John Engler, too tough for Michigan to bring back."

Gregory Bachella, West Bloomfield

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

What was your favorite subject in school?



"I liked U.S. history. I enjoyed learning about the past."
Nancy Becker, kindergarten teacher



"Art. I was good in it and I loved the teacher."
Shirley Michelotti, second-grade teacher



"Math. I enjoyed problem-solving."
Dierdre Bobby, gym teacher



"Spanish. It was easy. I liked the teacher. I still talk to her."
Loretta Hayes, bilingual education teacher

We asked this question in the staff lounge at Flanders Elementary School in Farmington.

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