

Arts funding

Lobbying, politics grab spotlight

On balance, Lansing has been less than kind to community arts groups in the last couple of years.

In the new budget, the Legislature appropriated \$22 million, nearly 27 percent less than the \$30 million recommended by Gov. John Engler, a golfer who is no big fan of symphonic music, art museums, theater and the rest.

To his credit, Engler merged the Michigan Equity Program, a series of line-item sums for politically favored groups, under the Michigan Arts and Cultural Affairs program. There was no point to two separate programs.

As expected, the Detroit Institute of Arts got its \$9.7 million and Detroit Symphony Orchestra Hall its \$1.8 million. But the money now is parcelled out by the Arts and Cultural Affairs Commission. Lawmakers had made a game of writing in line items, first for Detroit, then for Grand Rapids, then even for Saginaw. Game time is over. Every group will have to apply to the Arts Council.

It means that the Arts and Cultural Affairs group will be able to slip money to favored causes, but that appointive body is less prone to political hanky-panky than the Legislature. So the change is likely to be good.

It could have been worse. The Senate passed a plan to award arts grants on a population basis, a move that would have equated klempen dancing with ballet. Wisely, the House saved the money for deserving arts organizations.

What is sad, however, is that this governor, unfortunately, doesn't see art as art but as business. Said Engler: "I'm impressed with the important role these organizations play in enhancing the quality of life, in stimulating the economy, in creating jobs, in revitalizing our communities and in provide outreach ser-

vices and educational opportunities. . . These organizations bring acclaim to the state; increase the state's competitive position; provide a focal point for economic and community development. . ." (italics added).

Note his undue emphasis on economic growth. That isn't what the arts are about. The arts affect the human spirit. They don't need economic alibis.

Last week the Legislature began considering a plan to allow counties to ask voters for property taxes to fund the arts. The plan has a sharp downside:

- Too many other needs have got in line ahead of the arts. Wayne County voters have approved millages for jails, general county government and public transportation. Oakland voters have approved millages for county parks, public transportation and the community college.
- County government historically has had little to do with the arts. Counties handle courts, jails, legal records, airports, economic development, sometimes water and sewers. Cities, since medieval times, have been the homes of artists and art patrons. An arts millage will be an extremely tough sell in the outlying areas of White Lake and Van Buren townships.
- The legislative plan is vague, but once again there are special rules for Detroit. The governmental fact of life, however, is that the Detroit Institute of Arts is a department of city government, subject to Detroit's civil service rules and mayoral appointment. Such a plan of governance may be unacceptable to Oakland and out-Wayne County voters.
- Arts funding is in for a bad time in the foreseeable future. Arts supporters, who increasingly have had to learn to write grant applications, now will have to learn lobbying and grass-roots politics.

Reach out to aid needy families

Adopt a family — and brighten the holiday season for a family in need. For thousands of kids, Christmas comes without the joy of stuffed stockings, colorfully wrapped gifts or even a turkey dinner.

Volunteers of America Southeast Michigan Inc., an Oakland County-based nonprofit human services agency, is trying to change that in metro Detroit. A proven ministry of service, VOA desperately needs your help — the people of Oakland County, the third wealthiest county in the nation.

Now in its fourth year, VOA's Adopt A Family Program matches needy tri-county families with sponsors who provide food, clothing and toys for Christmas. Sponsors agree to buy at least one new toy and one significant article of clothing (like a coat, boots, pajamas or an outfit) per-child. They also agree to furnish a grocery-store gift certificate, based on family size, for Christmas dinner.

Other gifts are given at the sponsors' discretion. Many families welcome second-hand clothing and used household goods. Corporate sponsors are encouraged to help out with large wish-list donations like appliances.

When you become a sponsor, you have three options: 1) deliver gifts directly to your adopted family or arrange for the VOA to deliver them, 2) provide gift certificates so your adopted family can make the agreed-upon purchases, or 3) make a cash donation that'll be combined with others to adopt families and fund program costs.

If you choose to adopt, you can identify the



BOB SKLAR

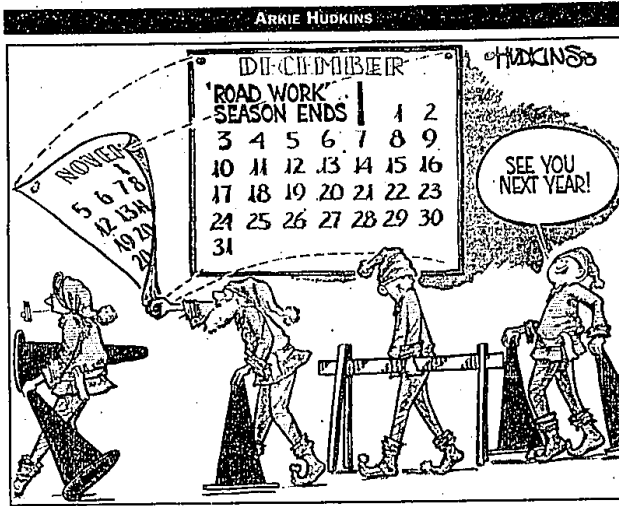
kind of family you'd especially like to help — a single parent with kids, a couple with kids, an elderly couple, multiple-family households, even a senior citizen who lives alone. You'll receive a detailed profile and a wish list of your adopted family.

Last year, VOA arranged for 125 families to be adopted. The number of applications for adoption grows each year. For an adoption application, call VOA's Ferndale office: (810) 548-0090. VOA operates a branch car lot in Pontiac.

Previous Adopt A Family sponsors called the program fun and rewarding. And it helped them experience the true meaning of Christmas, says VOA president David Sewick, a Waterford resident.

So adopt a family — and make Christmas something special for a family in need.

Bob Sklar is managing editor of our Oakland County editions.



LETTERS

'Honor that trust'

I wish to thank the residents of Farmington Hills for their vote of support on Nov. 7 which elected me to city council.

The campaign was long but very rewarding, and I particularly enjoyed meeting so many caring residents on their front porches. Many friends, both old and new, helped stuff envelopes, pass out literature and otherwise assisted in the campaign. I am truly grateful for their efforts.

I'd also like to congratulate Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi on his becoming the city's first directly elected mayor and councilmembers Nancy Bates and Terry Sever on their successful re-election bids. It is indeed a pleasure to be in such honorable company.

I look forward to serving as a voice of the residents on city council. One priority is to make council more citizen-friendly, accessible and responsive.

Second, we must aggressively address the issues of traffic and congestion. Any traffic study we undertake must be regional — because traffic is largely a regional problem and its solution must be regional.

Third, I will continue to evaluate proposed development in light of the interests of residents and the preservation of their neighborhoods in our community (that) makes Farmington Hills a great place to live and raise a family.

Finally, I intend to be a strong advocate for residents — not just in the city, but at the county and state government levels as well. I will lobby for our city as necessary; to keep our portion of gas tax revenues stable; to fight for our share of grant monies; and generally to speak out against the tax-and-spend mentality that sends our hard earned tax dollars everywhere in the state but here.

In short, the voters have placed their trust in me to be their voice. I intend to fully honor that trust.

Councilwoman Vicki Barnett, Farmington Hills

3. Hold brief public hearings on a very complex bill.

4. Move it through the Legislature.

Tim Richard quotes a welfare advocate "Time is needed to study . . . complex issue." (Points of View, Nov. 30). Is it wrong to get something done, putting together a complicated program with people who are experts in the field? Must everything be slowed by some one yelling "unfair"?

Richard gives the same studied analysis to the school code. Because it passed the committee in just a couple of sessions it must have been unfair. Since it made no provision for transportation it was designed only for the rich. Transportation means cross district busing, Tim.

That is a game that caused me and many others to migrate to the suburbs 30 years ago, and it has destroyed every school district it has touched.

I remember now why I usually don't read Richard's column. It only gets me mad.

Hank Borgman, Farmington

Here's to honesty

After shopping at Farmer Jack's at the Crossroads Center, Farmington Road and Nino Mile, I inadvertently left my purse in a shopping cart at a cart return stall.

Rushing back to the store in panic I discovered that a bagger had turned in my purse, all contents intact.

Honest people are still out there, as she proved. Many thanks again.

Irene Barth, Farmington Hills

State of farming

I would like to comment on the state of farming in Farmington Hills. It seems to me that the city should be proud of and encourage local livestock owners to continue the farming tradition of our unique city.

Instead, we see zoning giving out tickets to farmers for petty violations.

There should be tolerance of farmers because of all the good they do. Fresh eggs, organic compost, petting zoos and Easter bunnies are all products of the working farm.

Living near a farm has been an invaluable experience for my family. It was one of the reasons I chose to live in this city. I hope we don't lose the few farmers left for the sake of our future and children.

Mary S. Burck, Farmington Hills

Tim makes him mad

RamJam Richard: His verse is perverse. Democrats: Put off making decisions until the "marathon session of the last working day."

Republicans:
1. Listen to "generalized public input."
2. Craft a specific, ideology-laden bill without interference.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

How do you feel about the possibility that speed limits will be increased on interstate highways?

We asked this question at the Downtown Branch of the Farmington Community Library.



"It's OK. Anyway, I'm driving 65-70 now."
Red Reddy
Troy



"Bad move. My car doesn't go over 55."
Christine Stocker
Farmington Hills



"Seventy (mph) seems way too high."
Robert Yates
Farmington Hills



"It's suicide. Too many people are going to get killed."
Peggy Buckner
Farmington

The Farmington Observer

TOM BAKER, COMMUNITY EDITOR, 810-477-5450
ROBERT SKLAR, MANAGING EDITOR, FARMINGTON OBSERVER, 810-901-2563
ROBERT KAMPF, RETAIL ADVERTISING MANAGER, FARMINGTON OBSERVER, 810-901-2501
MARY SCOTT, MANAGER OF CIRCULATION, FARMINGTON OBSERVER, 810-901-2549
JOHN REDDY, VICE-PRESIDENT, PUBLISHER, FARMINGTON OBSERVER, 810-901-2561
JOHN SILVERSTEIN, ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER, 810-901-2595
STEVEN K. POPE, GENERAL MANAGER, OBSERVER & ECCENTRIC NEWSPAPERS, 810-953-2252

SUBURBAN COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION
PHILIP POWER, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
RICHARD ANTHONY, PRESIDENT

OUR MISSION: "Because we publish community newspapers, we think about community journalism in a fundamentally different way than our bigger competition. They consider themselves to be independent from the stories and communities they cover, swooping in to write the unusual or sensational and then dashing off to cover something else. We regard ourselves as both accurate journalists and as caring citizens of the communities where we work."
— Philip Power