

Farmington Observer OPINION

33411 GRAND RIVER, FARMINGTON, MICHIGAN 48335

THURSDAY, JANUARY 9, 1997

(A10)F

Call to work Challenges face town employers

B rather can you spare... a decent worker? No one has recoined the Depression-era refrain yet, but a no more telling sign of prosperous times is one that says "help wanted."

Downtown Farmington has more than a few hardware-store bought or handmade signs gracing business window fronts as chronicled on the front page of the Farmington Observer Dec. 30. A new bagel proprietor in the Downtown Center had his cart with warm salt, onion, raisin and sesame seed varieties somewhat upended when the store was set to accept applications and only four people bothered to apply in a five-hour span. With newspaper ads and help wanted signs, Big Apple Bagel had received 15 applications.

That was puzzling to the store's owners Tom and Catherine Henninger. A similar plea for bagel bakers netted nearly 100 applicants at their Brighton store. (Since our story, they've gotten enough applicants.)

Some reasons given for the shortage of good help range from the affluent and older nature of the community to the overabundance of higher paying manufacturer jobs.

The problem of a meager work force is not limited to Farmington. Retail and fast food establishments all over are feeling the pinch.

However downtown Farmington — showing signs of coming out of its economic slumber — needs a worker shortage about as much as a church social needs skunks line-dancing through it. With obstacles comes challenges.

Here's a chance for the Farmington Downtown Development Authority, or the more retailer-driven Downtown Farmington Business Association, to put a different spin on

their sales pitch.

All efforts have been focused on luring people downtown Farmington to shop. The accompanying message might include: It's a not bad place to work, either.

The DDA conducts an array of promotions, notably the Holiday Happenings and Halloween Fest. The DFBA puts on its Moonlight Madness promotions regularly. Of course, let's not forget, there is the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce's Founders Festival in July.

All these gatherings would provide ample opportunity to have a booth or table set aside with a listing of job openings and applications. The kiosk in the Downtown Center area is another ideal place to post openings, too.

Meanwhile business owners, themselves, might need to get a little creative in their employee search. Perhaps instead of looking solely for the traditional teenager or school-bound early 20-something, they could tap the abundance of seniors who live nearby.

The school district could be a resource as well, especially its community education program, whose student base includes single parents and recent immigrants.

During the SMART millage issue, we interviewed people who would get up at 5 a.m. and catch three buses to work here.

So, obviously, downtown Farmington is as fine a place to earn a dime as it is to spend one.



Patterson must remain focused

He reinforced his stature as Oakland County's top ambassador by tallying the most votes of any countywide candidate in the November general election.

L. Brooks Patterson parlayed his charisma, political savvy, administrative successes and campaign promises into a second four-year term as county executive. Oakland's top elected position. The Waterford Republican easily beat his hard-charging challenger, Troy Democrat Ed Hamilton, whose "high tech" campaign theme envisioned a corporate style of management in what he called bloated county government with 4,100 taxpayer-funded jobs.

Patterson rode to victory on the jet streams carrying Oakland's building industry and retail sector. But he can rightly claim credit for helping the county become a global marketplace.

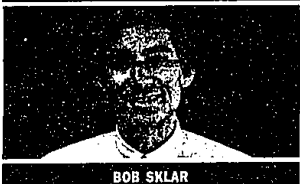
His achievements since first winning election in 1992 helped stir winds of change in Oakland, home to 1.1-million people. The top accomplishment: a balanced budget thanks to aggressive spending controls like retirement incentives, privatized services, a department merger, and a hiring and wage freeze.

Patterson answered South Oakland's call for help by naming a special liaison, Jean Chamberlain. The Woodward Dream Cruise, a new Michigan State Police post in Oak Park and the Woodward Avenue Corridor Study are among the byproducts of her appointment. He also invigorated Oakland's trade relations with Mexico. He brought full-time U.S. Customs service to Oakland County International Airport. And his Business Roundtable, with representation from the education community, prompted economic support services like the One Stop Shop and Export Assistance Center.

Patterson broke from the ultra-conservative ranks of his party to endorse countywide tax boosts for Oakland Community College and the SMART bus system, rap prosecutor Richard Thompson's common-law prosecution of assisted-suicide crusader Jack Kevorkian, and rally for the Michigan Jobs Commission/School-to-Work program. His actions proved to be in keeping with popular opinion in the county.

Over the next year, we as an Oakland County newspaper network will keep close

OAKLAND WATCH



BOB SKLAR

watch not only on how well Patterson responds to new challenges but also meets his campaign pledges. Those pledges included: spearheading a countywide equity task force to bring more state tax dollars back to Oakland County, especially for road construction, bridge repair and mental health care; refining international video teleconferencing to help match local businesses with potential foreign partners; protecting Oakland's entertainment industry in the wake of casino gambling in Detroit; maintaining economic spurs to keep the county tax rate and unemployment rate in control. He also pledged to continue computer innovations beyond what he's already introduced — warrant teleconferencing, computerized base maps, and remote electronic access of county information.

We're also keenly interested in his vision for a four-year plan touching on everything from technology to education.

Opposed to a regional cultural tax, Patterson at least should support putting the issue to a public vote since a healthy percentage of visitors to the Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit Historical Museum and the city's other cultural jewels are Oakland residents.

Times change, and so do the conditions under which pledges are made. Still, political campaigns are built around themes with fixed philosophical objectives. It's within this backdrop that we will periodically re-visit how well Executive Patterson is fulfilling public expectations following his landslide re-election.

Bob Sklar is managing editor of our Oakland County editions.

TURNING BACK THE PAGES

This week in history as reported in past editions of the Farmington Observer and the Farmington Enterprise.

40 Years ago — Jan. 10, 1957 (Enterprise)
Farmington Township residents took the first step to form a League of Subdivision Associations, as they met to choose a governing board. Representatives from 21 out of 24 subdivisions were part of the meeting.

25 Years ago — Jan. 8, 1972
"Mr. Oakland County" Delos Hamlin of Farmington announced he was retiring from

service after 30 years on the Oakland County Board of Commissioners. The former meat market owner had also served Farmington as a councilman and mayor for a dozen years before that.

Two years ago — Jan. 12, 1995
Time had run out on a recall effort aimed against six Farmington Hills City Council members. "We couldn't get enough signatures," said Betty Lurie of Voters' Voice, a group of residents opposed to the controversial Timbercrest development at 12 Mile and Middlebelt. Their door-to-door effort didn't gather the 6,000 signatures needed.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

'Can you recommend a good film?'



We asked this question at Unique Film and Video in Farmington Hills.

'I really liked "Fargo." It was really off beat and quirky.'

Julie Schloner
—Farmington



'Slaves of New York.' It's a classic tale of starving artists trying to make it in NYC.'

Beth Gardiner
—St. Clair Shores.



'Mother Night.' It's an adaptation of Kurt Vonnegut novel.'

Paul Paint
—Hamtramck



'I really don't watch a lot of movies. The last one I saw was "Forest Gump."'

Jeff Kraus
—Canton

LETTERS

Return TVO to cable lineup

Enclosed is a copy of my Dec. 16, 1996 letter to Time Warner cable concerning the elimination of TVO from the cable lineup. TVO has become a cherished and vital part of our household's entertainment and educational world. We were dismayed, to say the least, when we turned on our TV set after Dec. 1 only to see a blank screen.

I am at a loss to understand why TVO is no longer offered when we can receive more than three home shopping services. I can not understand why TVO is not offered when I, as a resident of the city of Farmington, am able to receive the municipal channels for two cities (Farmington Hills and Novi) other than my own. I can not understand why TVO was dropped when the previous channel (21) on which it was delivered has been a blank screen.

I contacted TVO and the only solution they were able to suggest was to install an antenna and receive their signal over the air. If I am forced to take this measure then I might as well cancel my cable service and subscribe to a DSS system since I will have an antenna in place to accommodate the local channels that a DSS system does not broadcast.

If Time Warner has reconsidered its indefensible decision to drop TVO programming, then I will be happy to reconsider my decision to seek an alternative to Time Warner as my programming provider.

Please advise.

Robert W. Kirkland
Farmington

Let the light shine

Re: Rena Fulka's article, "Christians celebrate the birth of a Savior," on Dec. 19.

Today, there is so much emphasis on values systems. Well, here it is, all summed up in a beautiful article, that I plan to keep and share.

Values come from the hearts of people, no matter what race or religion. Christmas time happens to be a chance for over 1.8 billion people to "pass it on" and to touch the hearts of others.

The article beautifully summarizes the meaning of Christmas:

- Love for humanity.
- Miracles of children.
- Caring for others.
- Finding fulfillment and joy.
- Celebrating family and friends.
- Expressions of care.

The only chance for world peace is through these ideals. God is Love. Love comes from the

hearts of people. I wish such an easy concept wasn't so hard for our society to grasp.

Jesus was a role model of peace, patience, kindness, humility and self-control.

My Christmas wish is that the 1.8 billion people who have the spirit of Christmas, stand up and be counted. It's not easy.

We need to let our Christmas Lights shine in our hearts all year long, in our schools, businesses, and throughout the country.

Sharon Drewes, Rochester Hills

Many teachers overpaid too

The subjective opinions and conclusions reached by teachers suggesting that the classroom instructors today are generally subjected to scorn and ridicule is surprising. The claim by teachers in recent weeks that identification as instructors brings them expressions of abhorrence and loathing is unbelievable.

The same people believe that teachers are underpaid. Some are, but tens of thousands across the land are not. Many are overpaid and I write that because many teachers do not achieve at the level for which they are paid.

Just as thousands of minimum wage workers are overpaid because they don't produce the income sufficient to cover what they are paid, and this determination can be measured, some teachers do not produce at the level which ensures that students will be ready for the sequential classes in which they will enroll.

Some of the best people I have known in my lifetime have been teachers. Not only were they very able in the classroom, but they were great people, very moral individuals, instructors that students could consider themselves very lucky to have known. Too many teachers, however, really don't belong in the classroom. Many are often tardy to school and many miss 10, 15, and more school days each school year, ostensibly out of school sick, but many times to shop, to keep a doctor's appointment, to take the family car to the shop for repairs.

There are measurements of teacher accomplishments we can use to determine their effectiveness. The scores of children in reading comprehension, science, and math have declined in recent years despite better schools, better equipment, and better materials. There can be a plethora of evaluation instruments that measure the student's progress in the several areas of school endeavor, and the teacher's performance, too, can be evaluated in several ways if those responsible for teacher credibility would take the responsibility for doing so.

That teachers are not held to account doesn't mean that they can not be. Even an unscientific determination like asking the students walking in the halls who the able teachers in the school are suggests that the very able teachers ought to be paid considerably more than those who can't or won't get the job done. Yes, there are teachers who could do a good job in the classroom but don't, and there are instructors who are just not capable, lacking knowledge and understanding of the subject's content and/or exhibiting an inability to get students to learn.

Neil Goodbred
Livonia

Farmington Observer

DAVE VARGA, COMMUNITY EDITOR, 810-477-5450

TOM BYRD, PUBLISHER, 810-901-2537

ROBERT SKLAR, MANAGING EDITOR, ECCENTRIC NEWSPAPERS, 810-901-2563

MARY SCOTT, MANAGER OF CIRCULATION, ECCENTRIC NEWSPAPERS, 810-901-2548

STEVEN M. POPE, GENERAL MANAGER, 810-901-2595

SUBURBAN COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION

PHILIP POWER, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD JOHN REDDY, VICE PRESIDENT/EDITORIAL RICHARD AGINIAN, 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