

LETTERS

Joy in community's progress

In the Book of Ecclesiastes, the preacher has said: "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven."

For this preacher, the season in my life has come to accept a call to another church, in Kirkwood, Mo., a suburb of St. Louis. But before I officially leave my position as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Farmington, I want to express the profound joy I have experienced living and serving within the Farmington/Farmington Hills community.

Both within the religious community and through broader community involvement, in the decade I have been here I have found rare commitment and a real dynamism among the many who serve the community so well. The city of Farmington Hills' motto - "A City of Tradition and Progress" bespeaks of a rootedness worth lifting up as it provides a springboard for future opportunities for all who choose to live and work in the Farmington/Farmington Hills community. Especially heartening to me personally and promoting for the future enrichment of the community is its increasing multicultural and multiracial make-up. A community is strengthened

in direct proportion to how it mirrors the world in which it exists.

To those with whom I have been privileged to serve, my thanks for your efforts for the ways your service has enriched my life and the life of the community.

Rev. Dr. Brewster H. (Budge) Gere
First Presbyterian Church of Farmington

Commending the rep

I read Tim Richard's column in the Observer that Bill 6499 passed the House. I commend Rep. Kaczukowski twice.

1. Farmington Florists is a small business with a reputation for quality. Customers seeking their phone number should not be pirated to another firm that provides no address. Misleading consumers is not "competition" - it is fraud. If old laws do not stop phone number counterfeiting, write a law that does.

2. This is his first bill. Passing bills for publicity value is common in politics. Only when it is a good bill did he step up to the plate. The

House vote of 102-6 is an encouraging sign in our leaders.

Hank Borgman
Farmington

Why not a kid taxi?

In Farmington, there is no way for children to get from place to place unless they walk there themselves. I feel there should be a safe, efficient way to travel without needing parents to drive us there.

I have heard of a kind of taxi service made especially for children. It is called a taxi-mom service. It would be run by responsible adults, who would be able to drive you anywhere in the area, anytime of the day. It would require a fee, but not too much because you would only be traveling to places in the area.

This is a perfect way to get to practices, classes or appointments without the hassle of finding someone to drive when a parent is not available. So the next time you find it necessary to leave work early to pick up one of your children, think

of this and what it could do for the greater good.
Lindsay Chaffin
Farmington Hills

Choose GM, not casinos

Casinos or General Motors? Which does Detroit want? With GM's world headquarters scheduled for the Renaissance Center and a casino site moved to the riverfront, GM may be hedging its bets on locating there. Casinos bring more problems than they solve. Bankruptcies have gone up in Detroit since casinos came to Windsor.

If you feel that voting for casinos was a mistake, you can sign a petition to repeal Proposal E, put the issue back on the ballot and give us a chance to choose businesses like General Motors instead of casinos.

Call/write the Coalition to Repeal Proposal E, P.O. Box 10212, Lansing, Mich. 48901; 1-800-745-3334.

Margaret Schaeffer
Farmington Hills

Ameritech, fairness tough to put in same sentence

Every time I open the mail, Ameritech has a new opponent. Not just a competitor, but someone who thinks the telephone-tag company is evil.

Attorney General Frank J. Kelley has joined the fray. And if you think this columnist has been tough on Ameritech's badly-written and unreadable legal notices, you should read Kelley's attacks on the monopoly.

Next week is a big one in Judge Randall Bono's courtroom in Madison County, Ill. The judge is scheduled to approve or reject Ameritech's offer to settle a lawsuit for \$78 million. It's a class action case brought by Line Backer customers who said they were cheated.

Plainly, this settlement is a complete ripoff for Ameritech customers," said Kelley as he objected to approval of the settlement. He cited these grounds:

■ The amount is inadequate. The original suit sought \$228 million. Ameritech is trying to settle for one-third of that amount plus the customers' attorneys' fees.

■ Ameritech isn't offering to pay cash but more of its dubious services. "Class members who are current IWMP (Inside Wire Maintenance Plans, or Line Backer) subscribers will receive a limited number of pay-per-use services (three-way calling, automatic dial back and repeat dialing), prepaid cards for Ameritech pay phones and expanded IWMP coverage," Kelley said.

"Since customers paid cash, they should get cash back, not additional services," said the attorney general.

■ Class members would be forced to release Ameritech from liability for all deceptive practices which the company might have used since 1987. As I pointed out in an earlier column, Ameritech, even when caught and



TIM RICHARD

brought to court, refuses to admit it did anything wrong.

The attorneys general of Wisconsin and Ohio joined Kelley in objecting to the settlement. The Illinois attorney general filed a separate objection.

FYI, besides denouncing Ameritech in this column, I filed my own objection to the settlement. I asked Judge Bono to require Ameritech to re-send out notices of the settlement in the same-size headline and body type that

it used on its mailed advertising.

I also asked that the notice be written with sentences of 30 words maximum. The Ameritech notice had a sentence with 170 words and was virtually incomprehensible. I suspect Ameritech's lawyers deliberately made it unattractive and unreadable.

The knaves want you to buy more and more devices so that you have to play telephone tag rather than complete calls, but they don't want you to know about your legal rights in a lawsuit.

A second piece of mail comes from the Michigan Competitive Telecommunications Providers Association - that is, Ameritech's competitors.

MCTPA said Ameritech just jacked up some of our rates nearly 6 percent. As of March 1, when we make local toll calls (within our own area codes), the charge went up nearly 6 percent to 18 cents a minute.

"Last August it raised rates on

local toll calls - such as calls from Detroit to Mount Clemens - from 15 cent to 17 cents a minute. Interestingly, in Chicago, where Ameritech faces real competition for these calls, Ameritech charge only 4 cents a minute!" said MCTPA's president Richard McLellan.

McLellan, by the way, is a close political pal of a Republican named Engler.

McLellan goes onto detail three more places where Ameritech is jacking up rates. It is hard to explain them because Ameritech deliberately makes them difficult to understand; why else would it use such an obscure term as "intraLATA"?

One gets bruised knuckles beating up on Bob Cooper and his company's knavery, but it looks as if Ameritech doesn't want to do anything fairly.

Tim Richard's voice mail number is (734) 953-2047, Ext. 1881. He reports on regional issues.

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