

Short takes

Cable for 2; a pair we admire; etc.

Commentary on several recent stories in the Observer:

Word that Ameritech is interested in the Farmington and Farmington Hills area is probably welcome news for local cable subscribers — especially those who believe that Time Warner isn't providing the service it should for the price it charges. It's too simplistic to assume that competition is a panacea that will improve the offerings and lower the cost for cable TV here. It shouldn't hurt. But adding a competitor hasn't always lowered the price tag, according to cable experts. Other towns with a competing cable system haven't necessarily seen rates fall. In the dual-cable system township of Canton, cable television subscribers pay about \$6 less for expanded basic than subscribers getting about the same offerings here in the Farmingtons. Other towns pay more.

Fairness is a key issue. The Southwest Oakland Cable Commission — which negotiates the cable franchise agreement for Farmington, Farmington Hills and Novi — will be faced with bargaining with Ameritech to ensure it faces the same local access provisions, i.e. costs, that Time Warner faces. Time Warner's upgrade to fiber optic cable and channel expansion is cited as one example of that firm making improvements without a competitor being present, though certainly the scent of Ameritech was already in the air around Southeast Michigan to spur a more competitive nature by Time Warner.

Perhaps the most we can hope for, as cable subscribers, is that competition will keep a lid on the rate hikes (last year it was 8 percent for Time Warner) and encourage better selections for the price we do pay.

Our pages have been filled, recently, with some less-than-wholesome tales of family life. We had the Farmington Hills man charged with setting up a fake kidnapping of his son by handcuffing him to a hotel sink for 17 hours. And, we had the Farmington man charged with armed robbery after he was shot coming out of a South Lyon store — the same man who was convicted of providing alcohol to minors last fall after he and his wife hosted a beer bash for her son and his Farmington High School friends.

On the more positive side, we joined in congratulating "Uncle Jack" Curd for his "Citizen of the Year" award by the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce and the Farmington Area Jaycees. Curd merits special recognition for his years of community service, especially in serving the school community with his efforts toward fund-raising and flag consciousness-raising.

We also congratulate and admire the efforts of a one local foster mother, Donna Faulkner, featured on our Community Life front on April 23, for her dedication to parenting nearly 70 of those most difficult of children — youngsters from broken homes, youngsters with addictions, mental and physical handicaps. She even adopted six of those children. What an example, especially as we approach the national holiday dedicated to motherhood.

We wish Jeff Stewart and other organizers for Farmington Hills' 25th anniversary celebration a great deal of success and luck — how about sunny skies and pleasant temperatures? — when they host a weekend of events to mark the city's birthday June 26-28. The first fireworks show in the city in many years should be real highlight for kids of all ages.

This team's stars show class

You read about kids in trouble and children at risk. Editorial writers decry the decline of learning in our schools and what they see as the general failure of the educational system.



School shooting incidents like the ones in Edinboro, Pa., and Jonesboro, Ark., lead the network news on television and make headlines in newspapers across the country.

It might make you wonder: Is all the news bad? Is anything good coming out of our schools?

Inside today's Observer, you can read some good school news in a special section dedicated to the 1998 Observer Academic All-Star Team, 16 of the best and the brightest high school seniors in the metro area. Spend some time with it. You'll learn a lot about these young people and their accomplishments.

They come from a variety of backgrounds and are headed for some of the most prestigious universities in the country, where they will prepare for careers ranging from medicine to computer science to engineering and business. They credit their parents and their teachers for their academic success. And it's nice to hear young people saying positive things about parents and teachers.

But these 16 All-Stars deserve plenty of credit themselves. The mother of one of the All-Stars said of her daughter: "She was always a self-motivated child." So, we suspect, were they all. Self-motivated and hard-working. They deserve the recognition they have received. After all, it was their own accom-

plishments that were evaluated by the selection committee.

The winners were selected by a group of area high school principals, who tabulated test scores and grade point averages.

The 1998 Observer Academic All-Stars, chosen from nominees from local public and private high schools, include: Nicole Martin of North Farmington High School, Katherine E. King of Livonia Stevenson High School, Afia Ofori-Menas of Plymouth Canton High School, Matthew Bright of Plymouth Salem High School, Robert D. Shoreda of Livonia Churchill High School, Joseph N. Novell of Clarenceville High School, Eric M. Allen of Harrison High School, Elena Spencer of North Farmington High School, Anjali Shah of Plymouth Canton High School, David Weidendorf of Farmington Harrison High School, Joseph Yung-Kuang Ho of Livonia Churchill High School, Sarah Townsend of Ladywood High School, Sarah Niemiec of Garden City High School, Garrett Heraty of Redford Union High School, Emily Curtin of Farmington High School, and Christopher O'Brien of Lutheran High School Westland.

We offer each of them our sincere congratulations.

The special tab section inside today's paper, which was co-sponsored by the Observer and Madonna University, is also available on our Web site at <http://observer-eccentric.com>. And while you're there, you'll find a pointer to the Madonna Web site.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:
What has principal Mike Duff contributed to Gill Elementary School?



"He has been an exemplary leader in bringing parents, teachers, students and community together. We wish we had a clone."
Judy Zlotke
teacher



"Greater cohesiveness among the staff ... he organized the Kids' Kingdom."
Judy Saterfiel
teacher



"He's been nice to people. He helped one of my friends get better when he had the flu."
Andrew Schumacher
first-grader



"He made the playground real nice."
Tianna Lucif
first-grader

We asked this question at Gill School.

LETTERS

Don't shy away from tests

MEAP high school tests may be considered meaningless, but refusing them guarantees a failing grade. Inexperience in taking tests is often responsible for low scores — high marks can be obtained even without expertise in the subject. Test taking is a skill that requires allocating time to the best advantage and analyzing how answers will be interpreted.

Video games and football tryouts are tests. So are driving permit applications and college entrance exams. Job seekers must answer an employer's requirements — the best future belongs to those who make the grade. Parents that demand a good education should not shield children from tests — any tests!

Hank Borgman
Farmington

Invest, then return cash

Re: Article titled "Durant cash in; now what?" April 19, 1998.

You close this article by listing several items presented at the February public hearing except the one item discussed by the majority of the speakers that night: that the funds be returned to the taxpayers in some manner, such as lowering the millage, paying off a bond issue sooner, or reducing the next purchase of bonds. In my opinion, this alternative should not be overlooked.

In the article it states "... it might be 2000 before any of it (the funds) is put to use." Even invested conservatively at say 4 percent, in 1 1/2 years, \$9.5 million would earn about \$670,000. By waiting that long, the Farmington Public Schools would still earn some money on the Durant funds before passing them back to the taxpayers in some fashion. This would appear to me to be a win-win situation.

Patricia L. Shelton
Farmington

Stairway adds charm

I would like to respond to Jenny Nolan's letter in the April 23 edition of the Farmington Observer. First of all, I have to make a correction to her article. The stairway that was recently uncovered at the intersection of Farmington and Grand River does not lead to a store's storage area. The stairway leads to the satellite office of FlexTech, Inc. FlexTech, headquartered in Holland, Michigan, is a technical consulting company with employees nationwide. We provide programming and technical consulting services to clients in the managed care industry. As soon as all repairs have been made to the stairway, FlexTech employees will be utilizing this entrance. A new sign will also be installed indicating that we are located in the lower level of the build-

ing. I think that restoring some of the charm to the downtown area is vital in keeping Farmington's historical character. It is one of the reasons that FlexTech located here. We love the ambience of the small town and the convenience of the local businesses, much like Ms. Nolan. Frankly, I think that Jenny Nolan is missing the point. Jenny should be proud of the fact that her town is willing to save some of its history rather than destroying it or keeping it buried. There is enough room for two people to pass by the fenced stairway with ease. There are other sections of sidewalk within Farmington that are just as narrow, such as that by the Masonic Temple on the opposite corner. No one seems to complain about that.

Also, I'm not sure what Jenny meant by "re-designing" the stairs. How do you redesign history?

Carl A. Herman
director of marketing, FlexTech Inc.

Child support: Beyond cash

Children are more likely to get mostly A's and less likely to repeat a grade or be expelled if fathers are highly involved in their schools, according to a recent study by the U.S. Department of Education, "Fathers Involved in Their Children's School."

The findings hold whether the fathers live with their children or whether mothers also are active.

Involvement is defined as participation in school meetings, a teacher conference, a class meeting or volunteering. High involvement is participation in three or four activities.

The study, based on interviews with parents and guardians of almost 17,000 students in early 1996, found that in two-parent households where both were highly involved:

- 51 percent of the children got mostly A's.
- 48 percent did so when only the father was highly involved.
- 44 percent did so when just the mother was highly involved.
- 27 percent got mostly A's if neither parent was very involved.

■ 31 percent of children with highly involved fathers got mostly A's even when the father was a non-custodial parent.

Family law should facilitate the ongoing, active involvement of both parents in the lives of their children. It is in the best interest of children to have this relationship. This relationship is much more important than how much money in the form of child support is paid in the name of the child to some impersonal state agency. The current system systematically excludes one of the parents whenever there is a child support order established. This is wrong, and must be changed.

Ronald Oliverio
Farmington Hills

TURNING BACK THE PAGES

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

40 YEARS AGO — MAY 8, 1958 (ENTERPRISE)

A University of Michigan professor told a group of 150 people that townships, like Farmington, could not expect to survive off being annexed or incorporated into a city by voting to become a village. Deciding to become a village, he said, is an intermediary step to becoming a city, not a safeguard against it. The talk was hosted by the Greater Farmington Chamber of Commerce.

Farmington officials were asking residents to help name an old cutoff road just north of the (now M-5) expressway by sending in their suggestions.

6 YEARS AGO — MAY 7, 1992

The operator of a "health spa" pleaded no contest to two misdemeanor charges of keeping and maintaining a house of prostitution on 10 Mile Road.

Only 384 cars showed up at the annual hazardous waste disposal day, compared to 938 the previous year. (This year's hazardous waste day is 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, May 9, at the 47th District Court on 10 Mile.)

2 YEARS AGO — MAY 6, 1996

A public forum was scheduled to help voters choose the Republican nominee for the state Senate seat being vacated by David Honigman. Set to appear were state Reps. Willis Bullard and Barbara Dobb, and Farmington Hills City Councilman Terry Sever.

Farmington Observer

DAVE VARGA, COMMUNITY EDITOR, 248-477-5450
SUSAN ROSSER, MANAGING EDITOR, 734-953-2149
HUGH CALLAGHAN, ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR, 734-953-2118
KATHY HIRSCHFIELD, ADVERTISING MANAGER, 248-501-2501
LARRY GEDER, CIRCULATION MANAGER, 734-953-2234
BANKS M. DEBMON, JR., PUBLISHER, 734-953-2100
STEVEN K. POPE, VICE-PRESIDENT/GENERAL MANAGER, 734-953-2252
ROCK FIORELLI, MARKETING DIRECTOR, 734-953-2150

HOMETOWN COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK, INC.

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