

POINTS OF VIEW

Extern will take what she learned back to class

Exciting, interesting, relaxed, intense, spontaneous and caring. That's how I would describe my externship experience with the Farmington Observer.

The externship is a Farmington Public Schools summer program in which teachers and counselors gain relevant work experience in the business world to relate instruction and counseling practices in the real world to the classroom.

I had the unique opportunity to shadow the Farmington Observer staff for a couple of weeks and found them open and more than willing to share how a newspaper runs. "We are like story tellers," relates Joanne Maliszewski, editor. "We have no rules on what goes into our articles, but we are considerate of the residents. If there is something residents don't like they know where to find us and we are here to listen."

The staff definitely is committed to informing their readers of what is going on in the community and making sure the facts are accurate. When Joanne came on board as editor last year, she expanded the Farmington paper to show this commitment.

In only two weeks I went out on a variety of interviews, photo shoots and processing procedures. I attended advertising meetings and watched as ads were designed. I also attended editorial staff meetings and observed graphic artist Tammie Graves creating maps for the newspapers.

Reviewing police reports, interviewing a gentleman whose hobby is collecting antique cars, and talking to people on the street, as well as checking out the temporary closing of the Farmington Community Library and Bill Knapp's restaurant, attending a Weight Watchers promotion and city council meeting were just some of the events I shadowed.

Watching how the reporters, Larry O'Connor and Tim Smith, dealt with a variety of people and situations was educational. While interviewing people for stories, Tim and Larry were considerate, caring, friendly and genuine. Some people interviewed were rude while some we found delightful. No matter who we encountered the reporters treated them with respect.

GUEST COLUMNIST



LIZ OKOPNY

Getting the right time of the day and light to take good photos for the paper is a challenge. "Having people in the pictures is important," said Bill Bresler, staff photographer.

Stating who you are and getting permission to go on personal property to take pictures is a must.

Enjoying what you are always important in a job and Mary Rodrique shows that as she plans out the Community Life section. She has a real handle on what is going on in our community. Editorial receptionist Katie McManus makes things run smoothly in the office. She does everything from answering phones to typing for the paper, to dealing with customers who come in asking questions.

I look forward to taking all this knowledge back to the classroom to create a newspaper that is as realistic as possible, including aspects of advertising, interviewing skills, design of the paper, vocabulary, photography and deadlines.

A Farmington resident, Liz Okopny is a gifted coordinator in the Farmington Public Schools.

Ban grass fertilizer and save the lakes

46 I been to Michigan before and I love yer Great Lakes," a guy named Jack Murphy told me in a slow Texan drawl.

This visitor from San Antonio, located in the heart of one of the famed "Sunbelt" states, was telling me why he liked to travel to a "Rust-belt" state like Michigan. I had to know more.

"We've got the Gulf, a course, and I like go swimmin' there. But, as soon as you jump in the water, you have to do this ..." Murphy made a comical face, scrunching it up to clamp his eyes and mouth tightly shut.

"It's the salt water, he explained. "It makes yer eyes sting. It tastes nasty." "Ya don't have to do that in the Great Lakes. They are so much nicer to swim in."

I met Murphy in Dearborn just one day before I, my wife, our three kids and two dogs were scheduled to jump in the family van and head off on our annual pilgrimage to Michigan's great northern forests. Each year we make the trek to an old log cabin on the north shore of Higgins Lake.

If Murphy likes the Great Lakes, he'd love Higgins. And I recommended it to him.

If you are not familiar with it, Higgins is one of this state's most beautiful recreational inland lakes. God must have had swimmers in mind when he put it there. It's crystal clear. The lake bottom, nearly all sand, is quite shallow, waist to chest deep, for about 100 yards off the shoreline before it drops off. The result is a huge area where young and old can wade out and do a bit of splashing around.

But I'd be lying if I told you all was well with Michigan lakes, even Higgins. In the past few years, I've noticed signs of stress even in that great northern lake.

Few people would even notice the little clumps of seaweed that are beginning to take hold on the bottom but it's a sure sign nutrients are making their way into the lake. And if it's happening way up north, imagine



MIKE MALOTT

what the problem is like in southeast Michigan.

Well, in this area, in fact, it is nothing new. Lakefront homeowners in the Detroit metro area have been battling with excessive weed and algae growth in their swimming holes for years. It has long since reached the point that many area lakes are suffering from "eutrophication," that is accelerated aging.

Much of the problem is due to runoff from development, carrying with it the nutrients that spur the weed and algae growth. There are also natural sources. Bird droppings around the lake, for instance, certainly add to the nutrients in the water.

Sen. Gary Peters, D-Bloomfield Township, told me recently that 80 percent of pollution in lakes in this area is from humans, mainly the result of sewer overflows and failing septic systems.

I know the Department of Environmental Quality thinks that's the primary problem at Higgins Lake. It has been pressuring the cabin owners there to install sewers to replace all the old septic systems crowded around the lake. I'm in favor that, but most other cabin owners there object to the costs. And I can appreciate that. The expense of sewers would be hard on some people's pocketbooks.

Still, there is one source of pollution that could be eliminated today and would not cost anyone a penny. In fact, it would save homeowners money.

It's lawn fertilizer.

I can't figure out exactly why peo-

■ When it rains, much of the fertilizer - if not most of it - ends up in the lake, fertilizing seaweed and algae rather than the lawn.

ple drive three hours to spend their time at a cabin in the northern woods manureing a tiny patch of grass. But some do. And it seems that more of them are doing it these days.

In southeast Michigan, where most of the landowners live on the lake year-round, the problem is even worse. For some reason, many feel the need to coiffure their lawns right to the edge of the lake. I don't get the point. Isn't a shoreline lot supposed to be a little sandy with relatively sparse vegetation ... like a beach?

When it rains, much of the fertilizer - if not most of it - ends up in the lake, fertilizing seaweed and algae rather than the lawn.

For some reason, the state has yet to ban the use of lawn fertilizer near lakes, although clearly it should. There should be a 100-yard, or perhaps even a 200-yard, no-fertilizer zone around all lakes, streams, rivers and watercourses in the state.

Lawmakers may argue such a ban would be hard to enforce, but I can't see why it would be any more difficult than enforcing the state's ban on burning leaves, enacted in part for the same reason: to keep rain runoff from flushing ashes and partially burned leaves into the lakes.

Some homeowners would howl over such a restriction, just as they did with the burning ban. But whose interests does it serve, really, to have a pool-table-like yard right to the water's edge?

Mike Malott reports on the local implications of state and regional events. He can be reached by phone at (248) 349-1700 or by e-mail at mmalott@homecomm.net

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