

Martin Luther King Hills offices should be closed

Let's face it. Some holidays just aren't taken seriously. Others have become days on which a host of retailers schedule annual sales. And still others have become so far removed from everyday life that the average person has no idea of the day's special meaning.

The celebration of slain civil rights activist Martin Luther King's birthday isn't — or at least shouldn't be — one of those events.

Admittedly, as holidays go, Jan. 17 has in some quarters of our society been slow to be recognized as a time to honor the American who stood for freedom and who believed in non-violence as a means to change our way of life.

Most typically, we look to area schools to conduct a host of activities to educate the younger generation on Martin Luther King, his life and his message.

Yet others see Jan. 17 as simply another day off for the select few who have chosen to work for government in one form or another.

In our area, the city of Farmington offices were closed in honor of King's birthday, as were the 47th District Court and the U.S. Post Office. These institutions are to be lauded whether individual employees acknowledge the meaning of Jan. 17 or not. At least the offices were closed in recognition of the slain leader.

The city offices in Farmington Hills, however, remained open. While the Hills City Council canceled its regularly scheduled meeting for that evening, it nonetheless conducted an

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awards ceremony for city employees.

City employees certainly deserved to be honored for their years of service, but there are plenty of other days of the week — other than Martin Luther King's birthday — to do so.

It is ironic that Farmington Hills — with the city leadership's blessing — takes such pride in calling itself a diverse community. Yet city offices remained open. Again, it is not a matter of giving employees another day off. The point is to recognize the importance of an American leader.

Undoubtedly, both cities and other governmental units should do more to recognize Martin Luther King's birthday than simply closing offices. But at least it's a start.

Jan. 17 is a day on which to recognize our country's divided racial history and our continuing need to consider our own feelings and attitudes and what we are all going to do to ensure that all men, women and children in this country are treated fairly, equally and without contempt.

Closing local governmental offices is a minimum recognition of Martin Luther King's legacy. Sure would be nice if the city of Farmington Hills would follow suit. Believe it or not, some employees might just want to attend an activity or memorial in honor of Martin Luther King.

Time to rethink transportation

This is the week that the world comes to Detroit.

The North American International Auto Show at Cobo Center is the showcase for all the shiny, new automobiles offered for the coming year and a dazzling display of concept cars that may never be marketed but stimulate thinking about transportation design.

We are still the auto capital of the world, and this is our week to boast.

The automobile changed history and the way we live our lives for good and bad. It tempted us from our small towns and from our congested cities. Ribbons of highway were built to allow the automobile and trucks to move across country and, more significantly, across ever expanding urban areas.

The suburbs grew with the automobile and the roads built to accommodate it.

We had suburbs before the automobile, connected by electric streetcars that ran from the center of Detroit, west to Ann Arbor and north to Pontiac. But the subs didn't really grow until the freeways allowed people to drive their own cars from home into the city.

Inevitably, the suburbs, themselves, became places where industry and commerce followed the people.

The center city lost its prominence as retail shopping, entertainment venues and office and factory jobs moved out to the suburbs.

We love our cars and the independence they give us. But that independence has come at a price. The racial divide has been exacerbated by the outward movement and the lack of transportation for the poor who remain in the center city. We've destroyed viable neighborhoods to put in freeways. We've devoured thousands of acres of farm, forest and park land to build housing along the freeways.

We spend large amounts of our state bud-

get on continuous road repair and build new roads that will also require repair. We consume fuel at unacceptable levels. Our major roads and freeways are frequently clogged to a standstill during rush hour.

In affluent Oakland County, 91 percent of commuters drive alone to work.

By design and practice, Detroit has one of the worst mass transit systems in the United States. The Michigan Constitution mandates that not less than 90 percent of fuel taxes go toward building and maintaining roads, leaving a paltry 10 percent for alternatives like rail and bus systems, and even this is not currently allocated.

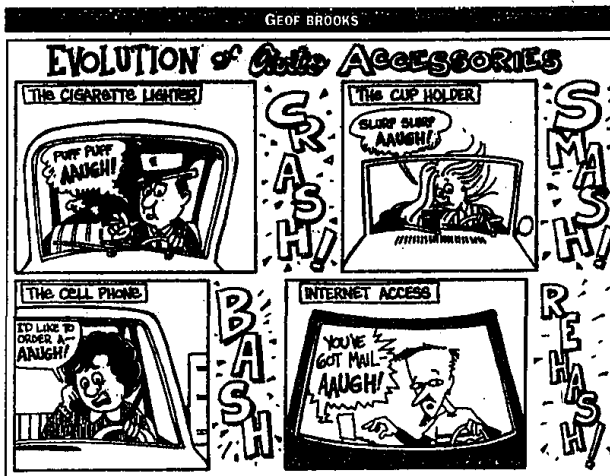
We understand how important the automobile is to the economic life of metropolitan Detroit, but we also know that time has come to rethink our transportation needs locally, regionally and nationally.

The Michigan Environmental Council, a coalition of environmental and public health organizations, is offering some alternative thinking about an system for "moving people not cars."

They are asking that we limit construction of new roads, allocate the maximum allowable 10 percent fuel tax to mass transit and programs to mitigate congestion, require the Michigan Department of Transportation to plan road projects that complement local master plans and allow communities to disapprove construction plans if a consensus can't be reached in three years.

Other cities such as Washington, D.C., Chicago, Boston and Toronto have efficient, well-used mass transit systems and programs that discourage wasteful driving practices.

We can still have our personal automobiles, but it is past time to also have a good mass transit system in Detroit.



LETTERS

Opinions are to be shared. We welcome your ideas, that's why we offer this space for your opinions. We will help by editing for clarity. To assure authenticity we ask that you provide a contact telephone number and if mailing or faxing a letter, please sign it. Letters can be mailed to Joanne Maliszewski, 33411 Grand River, Farmington, MI 48335, faxed to Joanne at (734) 459-2700 or emailed to jmaliszewski@oe.homecomm.net

Missing out

I wanted to thank the O&E and, specifically, Tim Smith, for the wonderful tributes to Dr. Bartlett Hess. Dr. Hess was a great leader who loved the Lord, how very blessed we are at Ward Evangelical Presbyterian Church to have had such a man of God leading us.

I was also impressed with the article of Dec. 23 by Kathie O'Donohue and the subsequent response from Mr. Grysh. It saddens me to see that some experience Christmas as unrelenting demands on time and pocketbook. I've heard people say they were glad the "holidays" were over, as if this great season was some type of burden. If this is the case, then these poor people have not yet had their Christmas. There are no words to describe the sense of peace and love I feel because my Savior has come into the world. The best part is that anyone who is willing can have this great gift of love!

I agree wholeheartedly with Mr. Grysh that the schools and communities miss out by eliminating God from the curriculum. Often I hear or read that so many of our youth are without conscience or compassion. We see it in the acts of violence some perform and in the disregard for the emotional pain they inflict on one another. I hear the video games and media being blamed for much of it, and I believe that is true. When a society allows an immoral world to raise our children, we can expect little else. My 13-year-old son attends the youth ministry at Ward Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Northville. He has an absolute blast. The teachers there find the most unique ways to reach these kids, and the kids have a home there. All are welcome. What a great alternative to what television and movies have to offer.

I recently ran across this poem on the Web and thought I would share it with you. It think it sums things up pretty well:

The New School Prayer

Now I sit me down in school
Where praying is against the rule.
For this great nation under God
Finds mention of Him very odd.
If Scripture now the class recites,
It violates the Bill of Rights.
And anytime my head I bow

Becomes a federal matter now.

Our hair can be purple or orange or green.
That's no offense, it's the freedom scene.
The law is specific, the law is precise,
Prayers spoken aloud are a serious vice.
For praying in a public hall
Might offend someone with no faith at all.
In silence alone we must meditate,
God's name is prohibited by the State.
We're allowed to cuss and dress like freaks,
And pierce our noses, tongues and cheeks.
They've outlawed guns; but first the Bible.
To quote the Good Book makes me liable.
We can elect a pregnant Senior Queen,
And the unwed daddy, our Senior King.
It's "inappropriate" to teach right from wrong.

We're taught that such "judgments" do not belong.

We can get our condoms, and birth controls,
Study witchcraft, vampires and totem poles.

But the Ten Commandments are not allowed,
No Word of God must reach this crowd.
It's scary here I must confess,
When chaos reigns the school's a mess.
So, Lord, this silent plea I make:
Should I be shot,
My soul please take.

—Author unknown

Carol J. Lucas

Teaching geese

I see that the council has outlawed geese feeding. It's good to know that we have taken care of that problem.

But, hey, suppose the geese don't read the paper and they go right on eating grass just like they always did.

Oh, well, the council can always appoint an ad hoc commission to teach the geese to use a litter box.

Harry Guest
Farmington Hills

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION: Why do you like Cub Scouts?

We asked this question of Den No. 1 members as they toured the Farmington Observer office.



"It's fun, and Pinewood Derby is fun."

Graham Morrison



"Cause I like to shoot BB guns and race Pinewood Derby."

Ben Schoener



"Because I get to do BB guns, archery and Pinewood Derby."

Michael Ferris



"You camp and I like Pinewood Derby."

Matt Mosakowski

Farmington Observer

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— Philip Power