



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRUBAKER

Saturday: The Founders Parade is a big draw for the annual festival, renamed the Farmington Area Family Fest.

## Have fun Festival needs our support

The Miss Farmington/Oakland County pageant at the Civic Theatre Wednesday night kicked off the annual Farmington Area Family Fest now under way.

Families and fare for mom, dad and the kids are the target for a host of events and activities, culminating with a fireworks display in Founders Sports Park Sunday evening.

This year's festival is significant for many reasons. Formerly known as the Farmington Founders Festival, the event now sports a new name, new dates and a more concerted effort to include the city of Farmington Hills into the fun.

A board of directors hired Mike and Sandra Watts of Watts Up Inc. to manage the festival, no easy task, particularly as participants struggle with the host of changes.

Some have questioned why the festival, which was pure hometown, has been changed. The answer is simple: to keep it going.

Some changes, however, such as fees charged merchants for the use of sidewalk space, fees for parade entries, as well as portions of proceeds returned to the festival from profits made by organizations and vendors, have prompted negative reactions from certain quarters.

That's unfortunate. Change is tough, especially when it involves money. But the time has long passed when the festival — to keep it healthy and long lived — must be run as a business. The changes have been made in no way to offend or hurt anyone.

We hope all participants, from parade entrants and vendors to non-profit organizations, will join together and make this festival a whopping success. The Farmington area deserves it and an awful lot of planning and hard work have gone into the events.

This festival is for the community. We urge cooperation so the festival continues and continues with fun and success.



### 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) 469-2700 or emailed to jmaliszewski@oc.homecomm.net

### Speak up

We read with disbelief in the May 11 edition of the Detroit Free Press the article titled, "Shriners receive flak for their act — parade skit accused of pushing stereotypes."

Karen Bolsen, co-chair of the Farmington/Farmington Hills Multicultural/Multiracial Community Council, "objects to what it says are unfair portrayals of Arabs as saber-wielding fanatics" and "objects to their mock cowboys and Indians shootout."

The Shriners do an outstanding job of performing in the parade. They are one of the reasons our family does not miss the parade. The motorcycle precision team is amazing and the miniature cars are hysterical. The man dressed as an Arabian knight, or Aladdin as our children call him (not a "saber-wielding fanatic" as Karen Bolsen describes him), gives laughs to all. We all hope the cowboy and Indian show stops in front of us so we can see everything.

Karen Bolsen says people have asked, "Why is this still going on? Aren't we passed that?" Past what, humor? Bigotry and racism should not be tolerated, but overall as a society we are losing the ability to laugh at ourselves. We are not thin-skinned, and we can judge for ourselves what is offensive. We do not need a watchdog group making our decisions on what is appropriate. We, and I believe the majority of citizens, take the Shriners' show for what it is — entertainment.

If the city loses the Shriners, they will be losing a big draw for the festival. The parade brings residents downtown, and in turn they stay a while longer to enjoy the rest of the festival.

I ask that the residents of Farmington/Farmington Hills call Mayor Bill Hartsock at city hall at 474-5500 and tell him we are in favor of the Shriners staying in the parade with all their units just the way they are.

If we do not voice our opinion, the Shriners will be quietly pushed out by a minority of people with a loud voice, without the majority of us speaking out.

Scott and Kathleen Thomas  
Farmington Hills

### Reaffirm commitment

Memorial Day is a time for public display of pride in our country and our nation's defenders. Many throughout Farmington make a special effort to honor the legacy of our veterans by participating in parades, ceremonies and celebrating in our country's beliefs.

This year our annual Memorial Day parade down Grand River Avenue will take place at 10 a.m. Monday, May 29. As we come together as a community to honor the heroic deeds of our veterans, it is important to recognize that the freedoms we enjoy today could not be possible without the amazing sacrifices made by these men and women.

It may seem incredible to us today, but 14 million Americans were sworn into national service during World War II. Every family had a relative in uniform and everyone knew someone who was overseas. Behind each family name is a hero's story. A story that tells of incredible odds, impossible rescues, forged friendships and unwavering dedication.

The charge of Memorial Day is to remember the tremendous sacrifices paid by those in service to our country. The challenge of Memorial Day is to appreciate the families who sacrificed just as much. Both the challenge and the charge require us to pause in our busy lives and remember that true freedom is not free.

Sadly, in the dawn of a new millennium, too many young Americans cannot link the yearning for freedom that gave birth to our nation over 200 years ago to the sacrifices of our men and women in uniform.

On this, the first Memorial Day of the 21st century, and at future celebrations, let us reaffirm our commitment to those who have stood ready to defend our freedom and the freedom of all that seek our assistance. By participating, viewing or just cheering on the participants in the Farmington area Memorial Day celebration, the members in our community can express our gratitude to those survivors and their families who did what they had to do to preserve our hard-won freedoms.

Andrew Raczkowski  
House Majority Floor Leader  
State Representative, 37th District

## Jaske's candidacy was too late

A brilliant political move is what Melody Jaske knowingly or unknowingly performed when she joined the Farmington Board of Education race at the last minute as a write-in candidate.

Two before — in 1998 and 1999 — Jaske ran for the board but was unsuccessful. She said she was going to sit out this election, but disagreement with how the board of education addressed certain issues, such as the fifth-grade sexual harassment curriculum, prompted her 11th-hour effort.

In a race without challengers, incumbents Priscilla Brouillette and Gary Sharp were shoo-ins. And as it turned out, as expected in an uncontested race, voter turnout was low.

If Jaske was trying to make a statement with her late candidacy, it didn't work, at least according to the election results. Becom-

ing a candidate the weekend before an election simply didn't give Jaske time to spread her message. And that is key in an election.

As a candidate in former years, Jaske offered strong opinions and wasn't afraid to stand — sometimes — alone in those views. Her candidacy throughout the election period would have been a boon to the race because she offers other points of view, many not shared by Brouillette and Sharp. Voters need a variety of opinions and thoughts to draw them to the polls.

We urge Jaske to think ahead to next year and to offer herself as a full-fledged candidate in the 2001 school board race. Her viewpoints are a welcome addition to any political race. Opposing thoughts will generate debate and from debate comes even more new ideas and opinions.

## Make safe driving a priority

They're still yacking away ... motorists on their cellular telephones, and lawmakers who want to lessen the dangers of that practice.

Last year, The Observer said in this editorial space that people were becoming concerned about the ubiquitous cell phone, especially when it was used by motorists who needed to keep their minds on the task at hand: driving.

We pointed out that research showed that cell phone usage while on the road increased drivers' accident rates by four times — roughly the same rate of increase experienced by drunken drivers.

We suggested that the use of cell phones in cars should be neither restricted nor banned, and that a little common sense on the part of the phone-packing public (and perhaps some thought and innovation by the industry itself) would make such legislation unnecessary.

Now, about nine months (and countless crashes) later, State Rep. Bruce Patterson, R-Canton Township, has proposed a bill that would add penalties for an infraction if a

police officer concluded that the use of a cell phone contributed to an accident or traffic violation. The additional penalty would be \$25 tacked on to the fine, and one more point on the driver's record.

Patterson's proposal deserves serious consideration. We still can't condone banning cell phone use while driving. To do so would be an illogical response to a technology that has become an integral part of the communications and business worlds.

And we realize there can be other distractions for drivers. Some women apply makeup; some men shave. Cassette tapes, CDs, lighting a cigarette can distract a driver and lead to trouble.

Yet, Patterson's bill is specific to cell phones. One purpose, he said, is to look into the common belief that wireless communication in particular is distracting to drivers.

While this issue is being explored, we ask motorists with cell phones to just use common sense and making safe driving — not the phone call — a priority.

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— Philip Power