

## Farmington Observer™

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Our fundamental purposes are to enhance the lives of our readers, nurture the hometowns we serve and contribute to the business success of our customers.

## Abuser wasn't punished

At a time when our nation is reeling from terrorist actions and the threat of diseases that sound positively medieval, when people across the country are facing the consequences of an economic downturn, when families sit around their Thanksgiving table wondering whether they'll have enough money to buy Christmas gifts - comes someone with a real reason to be thankful this holiday season.

Evelyn Djoumessi, who was convicted of abusing 19-year-old Pridine Fru over a period of several years, won't go to prison for keeping Fru a virtual slave in the basement of her Farmington Hills home. In fairness, Evelyn has spent some time in jail, but nothing anywhere close to the four years she and her husband, Joseph, spent abusing the West African teenager.

Joseph, who was also convicted of raping the teen, will serve up to nine years in prison.

In light of those circumstances, the sentence Oakland County Circuit Court Judge Alice Gilbert handed Evelyn seems absolutely baffling. She will serve just three years' probation, the last nine months of which may or may not be spent in jail, with credit for time served.

And - horror of horrors - Mrs. Djoumessi can't hire anyone to clean her house in all that time.

Oakland County Prosecutor Cheryl Matthews was stunned. Hills Police Chief Bill Dwyer, who saw first-hand the conditions under which Fru lived for four years, termed it a "total disappointment."

"That was not a sentence," Dwyer said. "That's what you're punishing her with, having to do her own housework."

Defense attorneys may have tried to paint Fru as a recalcitrant child who was trying to get back at the Djoumessis for what she perceived as unfair treatment, but a jury convicted them both. For Judge Gilbert to virtually dismiss Evelyn Djoumessi with not even a slight tap on

the wrist is simply unconscionable. We'll concede that cleaning toilets and running the vacuum cleaner can be difficult and unpleasant tasks. Scrubbing floors isn't our idea of an afternoon's delight, and we all know doing the laun-

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dry can be a tremendous challenge.

But as a punishment, household chores seem to us a bit inadequate. Maybe Judge Gilbert thought the punishment fit the crime. After all, Evelyn Djoumessi had forced her victim to do housework for four years.

But Mrs. Djoumessi is a grown-up. She's a mother who used and abused a 14-year-old child who knew nothing of this country, nothing of the English language, nothing about a world outside Cameroon, nothing other than what the Djoumessis told her, until she started watching television.

If Judge Gilbert felt she needed an appropriate sentence, perhaps she should have sentenced this offender to ensure the young woman she abused has a college education, to pay for the therapy she's going to need to deal with the punishment and isolation.

Better yet, she should have sentenced Evelyn Djoumessi to do Pridine Fru's housework for the next four years.

Mathews and Dwyer, both of whom got to know this young woman who is now making strides toward an education and a better life, will be among those who register their outrage with Judge Gilbert.

Add us to the list of those who feel there was virtually no punishment for this tragic crime.

## Time to dig even deeper

We know we're beginning to sound like a broken record, but such messages are too important to be delivered just once or even twice.

A scant 10 weeks ago, people across the nation emptied their pockets and piggy banks, charged their credit cards and even opened their veins to help people affected by the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks put their lives back together. But today, right here in Farmington and Farmington Hills, our neighbors still need our help.

The Goodfellows are looking for holiday basket donations, an effort you can read about on our front page. We're helping them out by serving as a collection point for donations.

The Salvation Army needs bell ringers. Might be a good idea to volunteer now, while the weather's still bearable.

The Farmington Hills/Farmington Community Foundation is launching a fund drive that will provide consistent support for local causes, like the after-school youth program, Farmington Families in Action and the Multicultural/Multicultural commission.

And that's just for starters. In the com-

## 9-11 didn't change it all

Events of the past few months have certainly shocked and saddened us. For some, they have also created an anxiety that previously seemed reserved only for our worst nightmares.

But it is unfortunately all too real. We've learned that there are people whose only goal is to destroy our way of life. It doesn't matter to them how they do it.

We're still learning how to cope with this new, unsettling reality. The president has called upon us to be vigilant but to go on with our normal lives.

Against this backdrop, there's uncertainty about the way the economy and the future in general. Certainly, a lot has changed since Sept. 11, but many things have not.

Your brother still calls you every week to tell you how extraordinarily bright his kids are. Mom still tries to get you to eat just one more piece of pie. ("What's the matter, don't you like it?") Your dad still tells you what's wrong with your house and why he wouldn't have fixed the porch that way.

Your buddies still show up unexpectedly to clean out your refrigerator while you rake up the last bits of fall.

Maybe all of that seemed annoying a

short time ago, but perhaps no more. These are your family and friends, and the people upon whose love and caring you've built your life.

The people you take strength from to carry on in good times and bad. The kind of people who, in their own quirky ways, maybe even inspire you to be a better person.

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## LETTERS

### ■ Anthrax

Anthrax is scarier than asbestos, PBB, DDT and Alar combined, but the manufacturer will not be sued. A legal development, however, should be more frightening than the disease.

Bayer spent millions to develop an antibiotic for profit. The frenzied they do not represent all of the people. Without property guarantees there will be no investment and no jobs.

Drugs have side effects and these hysterical users will sue as they discover unbearable suffering. Bayer may need "unseemly" profits to pay for class action suits. When success in business leads to bankruptcy, we are all victims.

Hank Borgman  
Farmington

### ■ One God?

In response to the "One God" letter by Carol Lucas, published 11/8: Ms. Lucas, don't lie awake at night worrying about "to who or what" others are praying. Your time would be better spent reading up on Christianity.

You say the Bible is supreme because of its historic reliability because no archaeological find has "ever run contrary to biblical teachings." What in the world does that mean? That a city mentioned in the Bible can be physically located on a map? Of course. The Bible in large part is a history of the Hebrew Nation and contains geographically accurate information.

Don't confuse the artifacts uncovered by archeology with ideologies. At any rate, as you present it, it is negative evidence and therefore meaningless. And where in the world did you come up with "Christianity is unique in not following 'the teachings of a dead prophet, but of God Himself'?"

Where do you think the word "Christianity" comes from? A Christian worships God in the manner taught by Christ. Just as a Muslim worships God in the manner taught by Mohammed. Both Islam and Christianity have roots in Judaism.

This isn't God vs. Zeus, you know. All three great monotheistic faiths worship the same God. The manner of worship differs, but so does it differ between sects within the Christian community.

If that thought upsets you rather smug complacency, I suggest you go back to your Bible and really read it. Then read the Koran. Then the Torah. Ignorance like yours worries me in a great deal more than terrorists do. In fact, it is the very type of ignorance that breeds the religious intolerance at the base of so many of today's troubles.

It's not to whom you pray, but how you live that will determine your ultimate fate. Look it up.

Angela Lynn  
Farmington

### ■ Changing elections

It is not surprising that Superintendent Maxfield and the present school board should be opposed to changing the school board elections to coincide

with the November general elections.

Under the present system, the school board and the superintendent's office are a closed society, each continually patting the other on the back.

Typically in May, Superintendent Maxfield and the present board members decide who they want elected to the school board. The MEA, Maxfield's employees, then tells the school district employees (about 1,200 voters) who they should vote for in the election. Total turnout for these elections is usually between 2,000 and 3,500 voters, dependent on whether or not there is a millage proposal. Thus school employees often represent 50 percent or more of the vote.

In our recent general election the turnout was more than 10,000 voters. If we had been voting for school board, Dr. Maxfield would have only controlled about 12 percent of the vote. The result would have been a much better representation of the wishes of the people.

As I noted in the last school board election, the Farmington school district is slowly sliding into mediocrity under our present administration. Perhaps it is time to stop Dr. Maxfield's private party and bring the school board new ideas and members willing to say no to the superintendent.

Next up ... the move to the OAA, Swinehart's Folly.

Terry Elsey  
Farmington Hills  
Editor's Note: Mr. Elsey was a candidate in the last Farmington School Board election.

### ■ Congrats, boys

I just wanted to congratulate the Farmington High School Boy's Varsity Soccer Team for a season well played. They made it to the last round of the state finals in division two. What a great feat. We're all very proud of you. It just shows the great commitment and soccer skills this team has exhibited.

The boys on the team are: Andrew Martin, Adam Lidgoy, Ryan Loverty, Aaron Helleck, Mike Gandolfi, Nick Ramirez, Kasey Lopata, Nate Meyer, Matt Konopinski, Matt Okopny, Michael Baskie, Adrian Adams, Matt Cave, Jeff Durov, Chris McDoniel, Derrick Golla, Yohei Shibayama, Joe Russo, Eric Gaughan, Matt O'Brian, Jeff Turk, David Ujkie, Andrew Amis, and John Amis.

Les Charbarneau  
Former President  
Farmington Soccer Club

### ■ Heart of the letter

In the Nov. 9 issue of the Observer, a letter appeared written by me. Unfortunately, what I felt was the very heart of the letter was omitted. I would like to rectify that with this writing.

In the letter, I had stated the Christian God and Muslim god were not the same. I felt this necessary because in recent letters to the Observer, the claim that we all worship the same God was made. I understand the goal of this to be one of creating unity; however, since the statement is completely false and terrifyingly dangerous, I felt the need to respond.

One may wonder as to the importance of the above stated claim, why not simply blend beliefs in the name of unity and tolerance. Some may even

think it bigotry to say other religions are wrong in their beliefs. Why stir controversy, why not simply go about my life with my own set of beliefs and leave others to their own. Perhaps some feel that I am even guilty of hate of my non-Christian neighbors.

It is not hate that compels me to proclaim Jesus Christ as the only way to salvation. It is love of my fellow man which leads me from simply keeping quiet and following the mainstream. As a matter of fact, I care so much that I would risk offending many in order that, perhaps, just one might choose an eternity in paradise.

Most importantly, my entire purpose in this life is to honor and praise God. There is no other reason for any of us to be on this earth. Rather than choosing to please people, then, I choose to honor God. Keeping quiet while a lie regarding Him is perpetuated does not serve that purpose.

This life is so temporal and the highest priority should be placed on where we will spend eternity. That is the reason I wrote the original letter, that is the reason I write this. It is my hope that the reader, rather than dismissing these claims or attacking me personally, would seek to find the truth.

Contact a church which teaches Christ, and Christ alone, as the means to salvation. Any other teaching is a lie straight out of Hell. The choice is yours.

Carol J. Lucas  
Farmington Hills

### ■ Pronunciation key

I am amused that Kenneth Kemp takes such umbrage in the west Texas argot of President Bush that makes him pronounce nuclear as NU-Q-LER. He must be too young to have heard Lyndon Johnson use the same regional argot.

Hmm! How does he feel about the Kennedy pronunciation Boston as BAA-STUN? Or the southern speech inflections of Presidents Clinton and Carter?

Mo-thinks his umbrage revolves more around the pole of political affiliation than it does around correct pronunciation of words.

I say to him, "lighten-up!" This is a country of diverse speech patterns, it's a part of what we are as Americans. It's, ahem, diversity. (de-vur'-sa-te). New World Dictionary.

P.S. Next time write the White House.

Tom Murphy  
Farmington Hills

### Share your opinions

We welcome letters to the editor. Please include your full name, address and phone number for verification. We may edit for clarity, space and content.

Mail:  
Letters to the Editor  
Farmington Observer  
33411 Grand River  
Farmington, MI 48335  
E-Mail: jhubrod@coe.homecomm.net  
Fax: 248-477-9722

