

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.

City has big shoes to fill

Two recent resignations came as something of a surprise to us, and they'll leave the Farmington City Council and Downtown Development Authority with some big shoes to fill.

Downtown Development Director Judy Downey has announced she'll retire in January 2003. Downey has ably overseen downtown activities for the past decade, and the job she'll leave is not getting any smaller.

New more than ever, downtown businesses need the support of an umbrella organization to draw them together. In tough economic times, resources can be shared in ways that benefit everyone. Already, the DDA has taken an important step by polling business owners about what has and hasn't worked well in the past.

We urge city officials to carefully consider not only who will fill Downey's job, but how that position can best work in concert with business owners, the Chamber of Commerce and citizens to keep the downtown thriving.

City councilman Bill Hartsock will end 28 years of service to the residents of Farmington March 31, after he and his lovely bride-to-be settle into their new

home, just outside city limits. Although we're disappointed to see him leave, we wish the couple every happiness.

Hartsock has seen the community through a generation of growth and prosperity, contributed an untold wealth of knowledge and common sense to everything from bond elections to cable company negotiations. He has a great deal of which to be proud.

Farmington is a well-run city with few serious problems, but the future will include tough redevelopment issues and rehabilitation of aging infrastructure, with less and less help from state and federal sources.

It has been six years since a new face appeared in Farmington city government, and the appointment officials make now is critically important. They'll be looking for someone with vision, someone who can help bring a new energy to this historic and vital city.

Daniel Moynihan once said the single most exciting thing you discover in government is competence, because it's so rare. Let's hope the council's appointment is someone who generates as much excitement as the man whose departure requires them to do so.

Red Cross needs help for local disaster relief

There's more to March than the NCAA basketball championship, the first day of spring and St. Patrick's Day. It's also Red Cross Month.

For almost 60 years, the month has been set aside by the President of the United States who is the honorary chairman of the American Red Cross. The tradition started in 1943, when then President Franklin Roosevelt declared March Red Cross Month to get Americans to donate money to the War Fund.

In 2002, we again are at war. Our nemesis is Osama bin-Laden and his al-Qaeda terrorist network which perpetrated the horror and tragedy of Sept. 11. What transpired that day and the nation's response to the tragedy as it unfolded before our eyes in bright living color is a testament to what it means to be an American.

On that day, area residents flocked to the Southeastern Michigan Chapter of the American Red Cross' blood donor centers. By the end of the day, they had given 1,408 units of blood and within the next two weeks a total of 25,836 units, or 150 percent of what the Red Cross normally collects.

Within days of the attacks, residents, young and old alike, were contacting the chapter to offer financial support for Red Cross' Liberty Fund. From a young girl who made flag pins to sell for donations to the Red Cross to more formal rallies and fund-raisers, this area contributed some \$16 million to the fund which is dedicated to the victims and survivors of 9-11.

The chapter also saw an increased interest in volunteerism as a result of the attacks. In the two months after 9-11, more than 1,000 people called to volunteer and twice that number of businesses called to hold blood drives. Another 800-plus people went through orientation to volunteers in such areas as blood collection and disaster response.

Volunteers are the heart of the Red Cross. According to the Southeastern Michigan Chapter, there are 160 volunteers to every one paid staff member, like the widow in Farmington and the retired school teacher in Westland who help out at blood drives.

"Most people don't realize that most Red Cross work is done by local volunteers, in local communities, and is funded

by voluntary donations from local citizens," said Rose Hirsch, director of the chapter's volunteer services. "We certainly would like to encourage those interested in community service to use Red Cross Month as a time to consider volunteering for the Red Cross."

But the chapter is also asking residents to think about something else ... making a financial donation to the Local Disaster Relief Fund. Since 9-11, donations to the fund have been down dramatically, and the chapter now faces a \$750,000 shortfall.

Donations to the Local Disaster Relief Fund stay in the tri-county area. They are specifically designated for direct assistance to disaster victims in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties. The chapter estimates that it responds to an average of four house and apartment fires and other disasters daily.

Since 9-11, locally, the Red Cross has helped more than 2,300 people recover from residential fires, most recently Sunday, when a child was killed and 13 people were left homeless following a fire in Detroit. The Red Cross provided the victims with vouchers for temporary housing, food and clothing. The fund also is used to supply vouchers to replace household furnishings, prescription for medicine and supplies for work.

We stepped up to the challenge of helping in whatever way we could on 9-11. But we also need to step up to the challenge in our own backyard. Thanks to the donations of Americans young and old, the survivors of 9-11 will be cared for in the future, but we also need to look after those close to home.

Charity begins at home isn't an adage, it's a fact. Whether it's the Red Cross, the homeless shelters or soup kitchens, we need to remember the people in the metropolitan area who fall victim to disasters. Their plight may not play out on television across the country, but their needs are just as great.

March is Red Cross Month, and we encourage residents to roll up their sleeves, open up their checkbooks and give to the Southeastern Michigan Chapter's Local Disaster Relief Fund. Because, as they say, there but for the grace of God goes me.

Kenneth Kemp
Farmington



LETTERS

Airport response

In a March 7th letter entitled "Airport services gone", the writer complains that the midfield terminal concessions will lose considerable revenue as a result of restricting people without an airline ticket from the terminal area.

Allowing visitors into the terminal area would significantly increase the already swollen lines at airport security check points, creating an untenable scenario for both passengers and visitors alike. This policy also compromises airport security effectiveness. The cost of adding additional security check points to accommodate visitors would be borne by taxpayers and/or passengers.

The long-term effect would be a further reduction in non-essential air travel and additional inconveniences to passengers. Airport concessions are intended to promote passenger convenience, not create additional hassles or added costs.

Daniel G. Dubin
Farmington Hills

Vetoed proposal

As a parent representative on the FFS Graduation Requirements Committee, I vetoed the Draft Proposal (a veto the committee "accepted"). The proposal presented to the Board was upgraded from the Draft, but more in form than in any meaningful substance to the student.

Attached is a document I prepared as a follow-up to the Administration to a lengthy letter following the "acceptance" of my veto. I also presented this to parents at one of the parent forums, the Farmington High School Parent Advisory Group meeting.

The bottom line is that many secondary school students see little in substance of the student-centered instruction embodied in the Secondary Reform adopted in 1990.

Revised graduation requirements should be set with full effective implementation of Secondary Reform initiative that are based on the belief "that all students can learn."

It would then include an implementation to achieve it.

The actual proposal is based on maintaining the status quo. A belief that setting high standards for all students to achieve is "cookie cutter" education, that all students can't learn, and required courses should be kept to a minimum so that students can choose electives to avoid classes in subjects that they don't understand and still get a high school diploma.

The Committee report should be accepted with thanks and an alternative approach taken.

Another viewpoint to consider in your reporting.

Dave York
Farmington Hills

Praise for Beerbower

What a refreshing change to read about the tenacity of Officer Wayne Beerbower and his success in capturing the persistent laptop thieves here in Farmington Hills.

While insurance coverage may pay for stolen hardware, it rarely covers the thousands of hours involved (to say nothing of the misery) in re-configuring these machines after they are replaced. On behalf of all business owners that have had computers stolen or computers that would have been stolen if not for the efforts of Officer Beerbower, thank you for sparing us this nightmare.

On a number of unrelated occasions,

we have consistently heard nothing but the highest praise for Officer Beerbower. It is gratifying to see a Farmington Hills police officer that genuinely cares about the community, its citizens and business owners.

What a contrast with those at the FHPD that prey on citizens and business owners that have, at worst, shown poor personal judgment or committed minor infractions of the law. Perhaps the day will come when high quality individuals such as Wayne Beerbower will lead our police department away from the current policy of contempt for its citizens and move toward a mission of dedication and service to the citizens and business owners of Farmington Hills.

We feel very strongly that it is just a matter of time, along with personnel changes, before this department provides the highest level of police service currently enjoyed by communities such as Birmingham and Bloomfield Hills. Our family will continue to patiently await that day.

Mark and Jean Gordanier
Farmington Hills

Attitude adjustment

It is sad that many are out of work, but government solutions increased the problem.

Jobless pay should be a safety net, not high enough to make unemployment an alternative lifestyle. Minimum Wage and "Living Wage" rates reduced the number of jobs available.

Excessive taxes on wealth and profits reduced incentives for investment.

Environmental barriers to development reduced the need for new employees. America has not run out of frontiers to conquer. We do need an attitude adjustment.

Hank Borgman
Farmington

What about academics?

In reply to the March 7 letter from Denise Albrecht: I'm not sure why Mrs. Albrecht supports the move to the OAA and her letter sheds no light on this issue.

Her belief that the OAA move is good for our athletic programs is certainly misplaced and shows an apparent lack of understanding about the setup of the OAA.

Farmington High's fine football performance of two years ago, when they won the District title, would have caused this year's 0-9 team to be moved up to a more difficult division.

Thus, if two years ago Farmington had crushed everybody in OAA Division III, this year's team would have had to play in Division II. The reason for this is that the OAA adjusts for performance every two years.

As far as students attending schools other than their "home" schools, I'm sure that Mrs. Albrecht is aware that Farmington schools are an "open" school district where students may attend any school as long as there is room. (Note that Harrison has the smallest enrollment of any of our high schools.)

Mrs. Albrecht should be commending the Harrison football program for its success. If she were to check, she would find that key members of Farmington's men's soccer team and of North Farmington's women's swim team and men's basketball team (at least two of the five starters this year) are not attending their "home" schools. The only thing dif-

ferent about the Harrison football program is the outstanding level of success.

Many parents choose to have their students attend different high schools for academic reasons. Should we stop this practice also?

If we were to not allow student to participate in the best programs, athletic or academic, we would witness an increased move to private schools.

If you want to worry about a real problem in our athletics department, why don't we talk about ACADEMIC eligibility?

Right now a student is eligible if he's passing five of his seven classes. That means a student with two "F"s and five "D"s can play in that week's game. Who thinks that's in the student's best interests?

Terry Elsey
Farmington Hills

Narrow thinking

As a parent in the Harrison Community, I find Ms. Albrecht's thinking very narrow. That Ms. Albrecht can only cite football as a reason to attend Harrison High School shows how little she truly knows about the school.

I was blessed with daughters, so football certainly didn't influence my decision to send them to Harrison. The fact that we live within the school boundaries was only partially responsible for the decision. However, what did influence us to choose Harrison was its fine reputation for music and academics. Over the years, I have seen neighborhood children pick different high schools for a variety of reasons, whether it be the Japanese program at North, soccer team at Farmington or music program at Harrison.

I think the real issue should not be with Harrison's football program, but how do we transfer that success to our other school programs.

What Coach Harrington and his staff have been able to accomplish over the years is to be congratulated and emulated. The support of the families, both past and present, is a remarkable thing, especially to an outside observer.

Rather than criticize, I think our time would be better spent developing ways to recreate that network of interest and dedication for all of our programs.

I might add, if I had sons and they wanted to play football, you can bet I would be looking for the best program available and I'm thankful that I live in a district that afforded me that opportunity.

Janet Schrock
Farmington Hills

Share your opinions

We welcome your letters to the editor. Please include your name, address and phone number for verification. We ask that your letters be 400 words or less. We may edit for clarity, space and content.

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GUEST OPINION

Spring has sprung

Spring officially began March 20 and has the beginnings of a much better year. Soon the maples, ash, beech and poplars will be green again and will exude their life-giving oxygen into the air. Lawns and flowers will bloom. Birds will sing in the tree branches. Rivers and streams will surge from spring rains.

The news media tells us the recession appears to be over. People are beginning to feel more secure in their jobs. Factories are beginning to expand production and sell more of their products.

The stock market is on the upswing. The housing and automobile industries are pumping more blood in America's veins. It looks like we are in a very good year.

Kenneth Kemp
Farmington