

Recreation proposal on ballot deserves support

Memorial Day weekend is coming up. It's the first spring holiday of the year, and for many families it's the first time to get out in our magnificent parks and recreation areas. If you're looking for good places to get out into nature over the weekend, I suggest three:

• Bald Mountain Recreation Area, near Lake Orion in Oakland County. The 4,637-acre area was originally acquired for public use with money from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund. Development is controlled, so folks can swim, hunt, fish and go boating. Hiking in the hills covered with early wildflowers is especially nice at this time of year.

• Deerfield Hills Natural Area, a spectacular 400-acre park in Deerfield Township, located in the central Livingston County. Visitors can enjoy nature trails abundant with wildlife in the rolling hills and fishing in the lake. The land was acquired for preservation and public use with \$2.8 million from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund.

• Near Lansing, the Lake Lansing Park North contains more than 400 acres of natural recreation area, including five miles of nature trails through mature oak and maple woodlands. The park was created largely with funds from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund.

Attentive readers will have noticed one thing in common for each of these great places: The land was acquired for public use with money from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, one of Michigan's most vital devices for preserving our wild woods and waters. What's most remarkable about the Fund is that it doesn't cost taxpayers a single cent!

Since its start back in 1976, the Fund has become Michigan's principal source of state funding for conservation and outdoor recreation projects. Revenue for the Fund comes from the sale of oil, gas and mineral leases and from royalties from oil, gas and minerals taken from state-owned land. According to the state Constitution, the interest and earnings from the Trust Fund are to be used for "the acquisition of land or rights in land for recreational uses or protection of the land because of its environmental importance or

its scenic beauty, (or) for the development of public recreation facilities."

The Fund is perhaps Michigan's most important conservation tool. Since its start, it has distributed more than \$537 million for 1,200 conservation and recreation projects touching every county in Michigan. Earlier this year, for example, \$12 million from the Fund helped the Michigan chapter of the Nature Conservancy buy and preserve for public use and enjoyment some 6,000 acres of unspoiled land at the tip of the Keweenaw Peninsula in the UP.

The Fund, however, urgently needs protection and improvement. So while you're driving north this Memorial Day weekend, I urge you to think kindly about the best way to do this. It's Proposal 2, an amendment to the state Constitution, which will appear on the ballot in the August 6 primary election. If passed, the Proposal would allow Trust Fund money to be invested at a higher rate of return than possible now and raise the cap on funds from \$400 million to \$500 million.

Taken together, the value of Proposal 2 to conservation and outdoor recreation in Michigan would be more than \$500 million over the next 20 years — all without costing the taxpayer a single cent. This is a sensationally good deal, one that will strengthen the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund and assure that Michigan wild woods and waters are preserved and our state parks and recreation areas are strengthened and improved.

Because it's such a good deal, Proposal 2 is receiving support from an unprecedented range of constituencies and organizations, from the Michigan Chamber of Commerce on the right (good state parks and conserved wild lands make for good tourism) to the Michigan Environmental Council on the left (conservation is a holy grail of the environmental movement). Hunters and fishers are represented by support from the Michigan United Conservation Clubs, while even the Michigan Oil and Gas Association is greasing (ahem) the skids in support.

Proposal 2 and the vote in August won't make big news between now and the August primary election. Everybody's for it; it's non-controversial; it makes incontrovertible sense; it costs the taxpayers nothing. But it is a vital tool in the effort to preserve forever Michigan's great places for public use and enjoyment... before it's too late. It deserves your support.

Phil Power is the Chairman of the Board of the company that owns this newspaper. An avid fly fisherman, hiker and conservationist, Power is also the Vice Chair of the Michigan Chapter of the Nature Conservancy. He would be pleased to get your reactions to this column either at 743.953.2206 or at ppower@homecomm.net.



Joni Hubred

Fame, fortune are fleeting unless you work hard at them

This started out to be a very different story.

When my friend Tristan invited me to the Motor City Comic Book Convention this past weekend, I was excited on a number of different levels. First, Tristan and I have been pen pals for 17 years and had never met in person. Second, Larry Storch was going to be there.

Don't laugh. F-Troop was a cool show. I thought I'd just have a great time and meet a few semi-famous people. Instead, I was introduced to a whole new world at the Motor City Expo Center, which on Saturday was just a very weird place to be.

It started with the guy in the Borg costume. For those few of you unfamiliar with Star Trek, the Borg is a collective race of beings whose evil goal is to absorb everything and everyone into their collective.

That's the short version. Mark Stemply of Zeeland made his Borg costume out of football pads, pieces of tubing, a wedge of Darth Vader's tie fighter, running lights from the Enterprise A and a great deal of black and silver paint. At a previous con (that's the way regulars refer to conventions), he dressed in character and got so many compliments, he decided to expand.

"It's a lot of fun," he said. "People stop you and get your picture and want to pose with you."

"I hit my first con in '91," Stemply added. "I had my first Klingon costume by '97."

He belongs to the Klingons of Praxis, a group of folks all across the state who host events in costume for charitable causes. They've held fundraisers to benefit kids with cancer and Toys for Tots.

A Star Wars storm trooper from Ann Arbor told me he also belonged to a club of costumed characters. It's fun, he said, as he stopped to accommodate three or four amateur photographers.

Likewise, a blue, furry monster, Spiderman, Batman, Robin and a scary looking Goblin wandered through the crowd, striking super-hero poses. But the big draw when it came to taking pictures were the celebrities, or those who had been once.

Cost members from 1960s shows like "Car 54, Where Are You?" and "Lost in Space" sat at long tables behind stacks of 8 x 10 glossies. They signed autographs, posed with fans and talked about The Good Old Days.

For some, it was more successful than others. One celebrity, who shall remain nameless said,

"If I sold blood and cashed in my life insurance, I might break even."

On the other hand, Billy Dee Williams, who was in the original Star Wars, had such long lines for his autograph that they put up gate guides. Nichelle Nichols (who played Uhura in the original Star Trek cast) appeared to have spent all day Saturday and Sunday signing copies of her books.

Tristan and his fellow voice actor, Keith Burgess, fell somewhere in the middle of the continuum. Neither has gained a great deal of fame, but they were more than famous to the fans who love Evangelion, an anime series in which they are the voices of Gendo and Hyuga, respectively.

"They love Gendo or they hate Gendo," Tristan explained of his character, who appears to be the very essence of evil.

Soft-spoken, shy kids from all over the state stopped by to talk about what Evangelion meant to them. Jonathan Stockton, 18, who drove in from Detroit, said the writing draws him in. For a kid named Jake, who lives on the eastern shore of Lake Michigan, the series about young people who get caught up in a futuristic battle of good versus evil means even more.

"Evangelion is one of the best things in my life. It inspires me. It helps me do what I want to do," he said. Jake wants to be an artist, and anime is quite definitely an art form filled with unique and distinctive style.

We all find something like that, something outside ourselves that helps us find the courage to follow our dreams. But ultimately, our ability to succeed in life has much more to do with what's on the inside.

The people from "F-Troop," "Lost in Space" and "Dark Shadows" put a great deal of time and effort into maintaining their celebrity, and that effort showed clearly as I watched them meet their fans. Angela Cartwright has a Web site; she and Sheila MacRae had books for sale. Maybe fame came to them accidentally, but there's nothing accidental about the way they've worked to keep it.

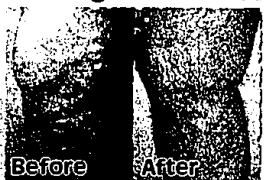
When we are young, inspiration comes easily. We latch onto unique movies or television shows, onto fictional characters or real-life role models.

As we grow old, we learn the truth about dreams, as explained years ago by Richard Bach: "You are never given a wish without the power to make it come true. You may have to work for it, however."

• Joni Hubred is editor of the Farmington Observer. She welcomes your comments at 33411 Grand River, Farmington MI 48335; by fax to (248) 477-9722; or via email, jhubred@oe.homecomm.net

VARICOSE VEINS?

A Thing of the Past



Michigan Laser Vein Center

announces a revolution in...
Varicose Vein Therapy

EndoVenous Laser Treatment (EVLT)

is the first viable alternative to traditional vein stripping for large and unsightly varicose veins. EVLT is done in an outpatient office setting. It is fast and longer lasting, with minimal discomfort. Come in for an evaluation, and see if you're a candidate for EVLT.

Michigan Laser Vein Center is the first in Metro Detroit to offer this treatment.

So, why wait, call now!

Michigan Laser Vein Center
248.354.3623
26400 West 12 Mile Road | Suite 114
Southfield, MI 48034

AUTO LOANS / FINANCIAL ADVISORS / INSURED MONEY MARKET ACCOUNT / INVESTMENT OPTIONS / MORTGAGE LOANS / ONLINE SERVICES



Our new Home Equity Line of Credit will have you jumping out of your seat.

Introducing the new Home Equity Line of Credit from Dearborn Federal Credit Union, where it doesn't take a lot of equity to get the best possible rate and a lower payment.

As Low As
4.75%

Whether you're consolidating debt, improving your home or financing a college education, let DFCU help you use the equity in your house to pay for the things you want to do. Let us help you do more with your home...so you can do more with your money.

For more information or to apply call 1-800-739-2770.

*Variable Annual Percentage Rate (APR) may vary and is set at the time of funding. Example APR is 4.75%. Example: \$10,000 loan with a 4.75% APR would result in a monthly payment of \$207.90 over 60 months. The actual APR may vary based on the creditworthiness of the borrower. The actual APR may vary based on the creditworthiness of the borrower. The actual APR may vary based on the creditworthiness of the borrower.

DEARBORN
Federal Credit Union

www.dfcu.org

NCUA: Your savings are federally insured up to \$100,000 by the National Credit Union Administration, a U.S. government agency. Dearborn Federal Credit Union is a Federal Depositary Institution.