

## OUR VIEWS

## In 47th court, Brady's experience is an asset

In debates and in public, both candidates for 47th District Court judge have presented themselves with style, class and grace.

Jim Brady and Annette Raczkowski have both outlined their opinions, talked about their values and speculated as to how they would each streamline and improve court proceedings. Both have great ideas that sound strikingly similar.

Not surprising, given there's not a whole lot a District Court judicial candidate can talk about at election time. Still, it leaves voters with the feeling that maybe their decision could be made with the toss of a coin.

We don't believe that's the case. While Raczkowski has plenty of experience as an attorney, her energy and drive don't equal the weight of Brady's experience, not only as a magistrate but also in the community.

She stresses her ethnic family background, the fact that she is bilingual and understands the challenges of diversity characteristic of Farmington and Farmington Hills. He has served that population and come face to face with the difficulty of dealing sensitively with cultural diversity.

Raczkowski has appeared in front of many judges on the civil and criminal sides of the law. Brady has worked directly with veteran district court judges and has the benefit of having seen the view from the opposite side of the bench.

At a time when the system is facing the kind of organizational shake-up that occurs whenever a new facility is opened, Brady's experience should allow him to help make that transition a seamless one. He won't need any time at all to get up to speed.

It's always interesting to listen to a new perspective, always refreshing to have a new set of eyes looking at any given situation. In this case, however, we believe experience, a sense of public trust and a history of community involvement are of greater value.

That's why we endorse Magistrate Jim Brady in the race for 47th District Court judge.

## Arts tax Proposal K deserves support

This may not be the best time for arts advocates to come back to Wayne and Oakland County voters with a half-mill art tax. The economy is shaky and voters already have been asked to approve several other worthy tax proposals in recent elections.

But if not now, when? The very economic problems that are plaguing the business community are also having an impact on arts and cultural institutions, from the Detroit Institute of Arts to the local symphonies. We believe that without this support, many arts groups, regional and local, will suffer severe erosion and some will not survive the current economic situation.

Proposal K would levy a half mill property tax on Oakland and Wayne County taxpayers for 10 years. Two-thirds of the money raised would be allotted to 17 designated cultural institutions including such large regional organizations as the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, the Detroit Zoo and Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village. One-third of the money raised in each community would go to the local communities which will allocate money for arts and recreation programs in a manner they decide.

When the arts tax came before voters in August 2000, it was approved in Wayne County and narrowly rejected in Oakland County, where it failed by only 517 votes. The proposal must have a majority of votes in both counties to pass.

The 2000 vote showed that voters understand the importance of arts and cultural institutions to the vitality of the community.

Whether or not we directly patronize these institutions we benefit from the economic and intellectual stimulus they provide.

We urge local arts groups to make a strong case with their local governments to get their fair share of the local allocation. We also urge those groups to take their case to the community with more outreach programs. But we believe this proposal is a great opportunity for local organizations to grow and involve more people in the creative process.

No, this is not the best time to ask for a millage increase. But it is for the survival of our cultural institutions and the quality of life they represent.

We recommend a yes vote on Proposal K.



BILL BRISLER / OBSERVER

Asli Yashin, Figen Ozsoylu, Yesim Kayaali, Mine Tesli and Selma Fidan of the Turkish American Cultural Association of Michigan danced at the recent Heritage Festival in Farmington Hills. Kudos to the Multicultural/Multiracial Community Council for organizing another well-attended event that showcased a wide variety of cultures.

## LETTERS

## Exciting changes

We are entering an exciting time here in Farmington. In less than four months, we will welcome both a new city manager as well as a new Downtown Development Authority director.

Our elected and appointed officials...need our input on who to hire to fill these positions and we need to feel a sense of ownership of our government if we are to take pride in our town.

Respectably, the DDA board recently revamped its director search, opening much of it to the public. To the board I say thank you. You did the right thing. To the overwhelming - and inspiring - number of people who have commented on my public criticism, and that by my husband Jeff Pavlik, of the initially closed nature of the DDA search, I say, please, join me in showing the board that we applaud its openness. And let's show the city council that this is how we want the new city manager to be chosen.

Come to the interviews. Write letters to the editor. Tell your city officials where you shop so they can work to come up with a mix of businesses that will thrive in our downtown. Talk to your neighbors.

A vibrant downtown is not only good for the businesses operating within its boundaries - it's good for surrounding property values. It's good for quality of life.

Becky Burns  
Farmington Bakery

## Knol reflects values

Aldo Vagnozzi has now come out in opposition to Proposal A.

So if I understand correctly, voting Aldo in would mean raising my property taxes at an exponential rate. I guess he doesn't have much sympathy for people like me who will be having to pay college tuition for our children within the next few years. He must not have much compassion for his fellow senior citizens, many of whom would be taxed out of their homes.

I'm going to take a chance and vote for Valerie Knol. Her fiscal conservatism more accurately reflects the values of Farmington Hills. I know that I want to keep my property taxes under control.

As for Aldo, I can only wonder how he, as a senior citizen, would enjoy such a tax increase.

Susan Bruns  
Farmington Hills

## Parents betrayed

Our Lady of Sorrows is now offering to the parents of students grade-level meetings to hear the administration's views on the shared-time issue.

It is NOT up for debate. The decision has been made. In order to satisfy the Farmington Public School Board's wish to have an "open" discussion, these meetings will continue for the month of October. At these meetings are the new principal, Mr. James Watson and various members of the parish and school councils. These members are hand chosen by Msgr. Hurley, who, months before this

came to light were told not to discuss the issue with anyone.

Parents: ARE YOU ASLEEP? Msgr. Hurley told you a few years ago that you needed to fork over a few MILLION dollars to make the much-needed expansion to the school and have a Parish center to accommodate all of the activities. You never guessed that he would then turn around and sell it off piece by piece to the public school did you? He is willing to remove God from classes such as art and music, classes that can and should have as much religious content as possible because they can.

This is a wealthy parish or are you all forgetting how much money you have put in the collection basket over the years? It is your child's Catholic education that you made a choice to pay for. He has betrayed all of you. So has the Archdiocese.

Just because a priest says it is okay to take God out of a Catholic school doesn't mean he is right. Don't be surprised if Sorrows becomes a school of choice where Religion is only an elective.

Elizabeth O'Brien  
Farmington Hills

## No more charters

The state legislature is again preparing to take up House Bill 4800, which would raise the limit on the number of charter schools in Michigan by 230, costing millions of dollars.

This initiative occurs at a time when nearly all of the data we have should make us alarmed about the charter schools that we already have in this state. The Brookings Institution recently released a study of charter schools in Michigan and nine other states. The first truly independent study of the charter school movement, which clearly shows that students in charter schools are significantly under-performing students in traditional public schools.

Why then would we want to create more charters when they have failed on both major objectives: fostering innovation and improved student achievement?

When these factors are coupled with the facts that most of Michigan charters are run by for-profit corporations and the charters' governance structures do not

answer to the taxpayers who support them, it should raise the level of concern on the part of every citizen in the state.

Charters may have a place in some settings, but so far they have failed the basic tests of performance and accountability.

We must urge our current and future state representatives to vote no on this costly and questionable legislation.

Frank L. Reid  
Farmington School Board member  
Farmington Hills

## Don't reward experience

Mark Twain often said, "Education is the substitute for the mistakes in life we call experience."

During an Exchange Club sponsored debate held Sept. 4 at the Brass Pointe Restaurant located in Farmington Hills, 37th District House of Representative candidate Aldo Vagnozzi when asked proudly stated, "I bring to this campaign

three qualifications: experience, experience, and experience."

The future of our cities rest with Valerie Knol. Valerie has a firm grasp of the issues, reality, and has not asked our informed electorate to reward her for past works.

Aldo Vagnozzi has been a good shepherd and during his time did an admirable job in his various posts. However, as we embark on uncharted waters our cities require new perspectives, fresh ideas, diversity, and a person with vigor.

Aldo appears to be unclear on several issues. When questioned on being either Pro-Choice/Pro-Life he is quick to temper. When asked to debate and discuss his position on new business plans and taxes his voice raises. On occasion he acts as if he didn't hear the question. Don't know if this is a new campaign strategy but it is something for the voters to think about.

Fred Bromm  
Farmington Hills

## Lauds Footloose

Just had to comment on the outstanding Footloose production at North Farmington High School. Once again, the Cobbs have managed to cast a congregation of talent in our community and create amazing entertainment and lasting memories for their audiences, and performers as well.

The personal time and effort that Dean and Sue Cobb expend to each production is overwhelming and just a portion of their contributions to our schools and community. I don't think the Cobbs have any idea of the impact that they have on the students in our district. Every time a child is able to see themselves on TV10...they enable these kids to build self esteem, encourage them to go farther, inspire them to attempt a new sport or activity, challenge them to reach a goal, help them to correct mistakes, highlight their achievements and just make them feel special. What a responsibility, but what a wonderful gift you give.

Thank you for all that you do and for all that you give of yourselves. It is very much recognized and appreciated.

Bill Stockton  
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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## QUOTABLE

According to The Allergy and Asthma Network/Mothers of Asthmatics., the average American eats up to eight pounds of peanuts or peanut products like peanut butter a year.

Beechview Principal Norma Jean Sass, whose school has several children with peanut allergies

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