

OUR VIEWS

Need more reasons to be thankful?

In today's world, it's not easy to find reasons to be thankful.

Front page headlines scream bad news on a daily basis; cable news networks keep us apprised of our world's precarious political climate with updates every half-hour. Our state faces an enormous budget deficit, and locally, a 48-year-old Farmington Hills man is recovering from injuries he suffered in a "road rage" incident.

But we've managed to find a number of reasons for Farmington and Farmington Hills residents to be thankful this holiday season — in addition to everyone's own personal blessing count. Consider this:

■ Inkster Road between 11 Mile and 12 Mile roads was set to open this week. After two and a half months of construction traffic and being forced onto already crowded alternate routes, residents along the Farmington Hills/Southfield border ought to be dancing in the streets.

■ The hiring of Farmington Downtown Development Authority Director Brent Morgan has brought a new optimism and energy to local business people. He's young, energetic and seems to make friends wherever he goes.

■ The Farmington Hills Commission on Children, Youth and Families has high hopes for their "Family Night" project, an idea we wholeheartedly support. The problem will be to get everyone on board, because this effort involves having no church, school or other community activities for one night, which would allow families precious time to catch up with each other's lives. Interested in helping? A meeting's scheduled at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 17, at the Costick Activities Center in Farmington Hills.

Finally, a reminder: Because of difficult economic times, local charitable organizations are gearing up to face an even bigger challenge this holiday season.

So while you're counting blessings, remember those who have a much shorter list.

Make giving a rallying cry for a better future

The phrase "United We Stand" has been a rallying cry for the past year as we continue to cope with the aftermath of our Sept. 11, 2001, national tragedy. But there is a more active way for all of us to stand united that goes beyond uttering a catch phrase.

That opportunity is by contributing to the United Way, an organization with far-reaching impact through service to the entire southeastern Michigan area.

A fund campaign for the United Way just concluded, but there is plenty of room left for your support. United Way didn't meet its fund goal of \$75 million this year, having raised just over \$68 million. Still, the organization must find a way to support the 130 nonprofit agencies that last year served 1.4 million people.

According to Patricia A. Ellis, senior manager for media relations at United Way Community Services, job reductions have had an impact on fund-raising, since the majority of United Way campaign funds come from payroll deduction through workplace campaigns.

The Big Three Auto companies, great supporters of United Way, report they are down 8,000 staffers due to layoffs. Another 15,000 people from other workplace campaigns no longer have jobs, she said.

But "the need for services only increases as more and more people are out of work," Ellis said.

Think of it this way: One out of every three people in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties receives services from United Way. If you don't, your neighbors probably do.

There is something else to consider. Whether it's \$1 or \$100, your dollars directly provide those services, since more than 90 percent of the money the organization receives goes back into the community.

For \$1 a week — the equivalent of a soft drink or candy bar — an individual with sickle cell anemia can receive his or her prescription medication.

For \$6 a week — the equivalent to two movie rentals — 12 children in need can receive clothing.

United Way services range from basic needs such as food and shelter to crisis counseling for families and children, health-related needs, disaster services, unemployment and community problem solving.

Such far-reaching programs translate into an opportunity for all of us to stand tall in meeting the challenges of life here in southeastern Michigan.

To contribute to the United Way, call (313) 226-9200. To volunteer, (313) 226-9450. For information and referral services, call United Way's Tel-Help at (313) 226-9888.



Local Republicans Linda Joliceur (left), David Moffitt, Valerie Knol and Paul Weidaj were part of the conflict-laden Oakland County Republican convention last week. Moffitt (center) raised his hand to inquire about local representation on the executive committee as a sergeant at arms asked him to sit down.

LETTERS

Harris says thanks

For almost 14 years I have had the privilege of serving our citizens as one of the judges of the 47th Judicial District Court. It has been an exhilarating period of time and culminates on Jan. 1, 2003 when our new District Judge, James Brady will be privileged to serve our citizens along with Judge Maria Parker.

As my term draws to a close, I want to take this moment to thank each and every citizen of our cities for affording me the extremely rare opportunity to have served you. It has been a period of growth in our communities as well as the Court. It has been challenging and rewarding. It has been filled with countless successes as well as some failures. In the end analysis, it has been a GREAT RIDE!

Now, however, let us look forward. Forward to our new judge, forward to our new court building, forward to a recovering economy, forward to a future devoid of fear and terrorism. Forward to continued progress and above all hopefully a future of peace on Earth, good will toward men (and women).

In closing, I want to compliment and personally thank everyone who took the time from their personal life to brave the elements and vote on Nov. 5. As our jury system depends upon us to assure all that our judicial branch of government serves all equally, fairly, independently, and impartially, the other branches of our government also depend upon us to elect legislators and executives who will serve the interests of all of our citizens at the City, County, State or Federal level.

To all I can say nothing more than THANK YOU. God Bless the citizens of Farmington and Farmington Hills, the State of Michigan and these United States of America.

Frederick L. Harris
district judge

Let common sense rule

Yes, it is a fact, that most of our country's high school sports season have the girls' volleyball season in the fall and the basketball season in the winter.

So let's all agree that switching the high school girls' basketball and volleyball seasons make sense. The move will however disrupt the sports plans for some of those girls who participated in other sports during the proposed "new" seasons. (Example: some girls who participate on the swim team in the fall and volleyball in the winter will now have to choose between the two.)

I doubt this was taken into account by District Judge Enslin since the forced alternative for some insane reason also advocates flip flopping the boys and girls golf and tennis seasons as well.

Many kids between the ages of say 12 and 17 who are involved in any of these sports are about to be in for quite a shock.

The MHSAA is not perfect. They probably should switch the basketball and volleyball seasons for girls, although many parents I know with daughters who play both like it the way it is. I just hope the MHSAA has enough sense to keep this issue focused on the only sports that are truly out of synch with the rest of the country and not needlessly disrupt the seasons and sports dreams of thousands of other boys and girls for the next several years to come.

Yes, I have a daughter in the seventh grade, and she planned on playing tennis and softball in high school since she was in the fifth grade. She loves both equally. I hope she does not have to give one up.

C'mon, MHSAA, let common sense and tradition rule on this issue. The Appeals Court Judge in Cincinnati will just want a switch in basketball and volleyball. Don't let him gut the dreams of thousands of other kids in other sports just to make a point.

Tim Brown
Farmington Hills

Knol says thanks

I would like to thank the many residents of Farmington/Farmington Hills who supported my campaign with their words of encouragement, prayers, hours of volunteering, and votes of confidence.

Although the loss on Nov. 5 was a disappointment, I am very thankful for the great experience of this past year. We ran a strong grass roots campaign focused on meeting this community door to door and articulating key issue differentiation.

I would also like to pay a special thanks to the many new friends and the volunteers who worked so hard on this campaign and supported me throughout. I thank you for your selfless personal investment and undying support for my cause. I will never forget your heartfelt contributions.

I can assure everyone that I am not finished serving this community, whether in elected office or not. I believe perseverance is an essential quality in a strong leader. I will continue to be highly active in the many charitable and civic organi-

zations to which I belong, as well as maintain my position on the Oakland County Executive Committee and the Michigan Republican State Committee.

Valerie Knol
Farmington

Letter strikes a chord

Mark Peters' letter to the editor concerning our, so called, "downtown development" sure struck a chord with me.

Why are we held hostage by the Kimco Corp and their limited ability to attract quality renters to our downtown?? Because our previous city manager thought "the dollar store" was a great addition to the central business district. What vision?

It is as if these folks have never gotten out of town and seen the fact that both Northville and Plymouth have created new retail space because of the demand. Downtown and "uptown" Farmington, on the other hand, have more vacant store fronts than ever.

Heaven help us if the dollar store — as nice as it may be — is the height of our retail aspirations.

Vicky Feeley
Farmington

Last thing Hills needs

I have just read with displeasure that Vicki Barnett may be considering making a run for mayor of Farmington Hills. In a recent statement in the Observer she said she is "pro-business, pro-development".

I hope all Farmington Hills voters remember Ms. Barnett's pro-development pro-business statement the next time they are sitting in one of numerous traffic jams (especially the 12 Mile Orchard Lake intersection) or waiting until 6:00 p.m. for their mail delivery since the business mail delivery receives priority over residential mail as far as delivery time is concerned.

The last thing Farmington Hills needs is more business and more development.

Carol L. White
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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Racially exclusive

Just recently Dr. Masfield gave us an example of just how richly he deserves his big salary. He managed to use the creation of a racially exclusive parent's group as an example of diversity in our high schools.

Now I think that any group of parents interested in improving the education of their children are on the right track. Especially when their interests so closely echo the issues that I raised when I ran for school board. I commend Mr. Christian and his group for their willingness to take a stand for higher education.

However, it is blatantly wrong for a public school system to foot any of the bill for meetings and meetings for ANY group that excludes based on race, creed or color. How can a member of our school board, who promises to look after the interests of ALL the students in the district, be actively involved in and allow the district to pay the bills for any exclusive group?

Apparently some eagles are more interested in their own nests than the flocks ducks they were elected to represent.

Terry Elsay
Farmington Hills

QUOTABLE

"People have problems. You have to sometimes help people in spite of themselves."

— Judge Fred Harris, on his career with the 47th District Court

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