

OUR VIEWS

Don't take holiday drinks on the road

We say the same thing every year about this time, and we always hope someone's paying attention:

If you celebrate this holiday season with a drink in your hand, don't take it on the road.

We join with voices from organizations like AAA of Michigan, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, the University of Michigan's physicians, Mothers Against Drunk Driving and local groups like the Call to Action Coalition — but is anyone listening?

According to SEMCOG, in Southeast Michigan, alcohol was involved in 37 percent of all traffic deaths in 2001, more than in 2000. Alcohol was a factor in 184 deaths, up from 156 in 2000, and 679 severe injuries.

Traffic crashes involving alcohol are highest in December. Last year, 21 alcohol-related crashes happened each day of the month in this part of the state. That's nearly one every hour.

You think it can't happen to you, of course. You know it can't, because you're not a drunk driver. But consider this:

Four drinks will elevate blood-alcohol level of a 160-lb. man to .09, which is legally drunk in some states and close to it in Michigan. That's four 12-ounce beers. Four glasses of wine. Four shots of hard liquor. A 140-lb. woman hits the same level with just three drinks.

We're not saying adults shouldn't drink. What we're saying is that those who choose to drink should drink responsibly, and they shouldn't drive after they've been drinking.

And we'll keep saying it until we're sure everybody's listening.

Have a merry little Christmas now

Once again as in olden days
Happy golden days of yore
Faithful friends who are dear to us
Will be near to us once more

Through the years, we all will be together
If the fates allow
Until then, we'll have to muddle through somehow
So have yourself a merry little Christmas now
— Hugh Martin-Ralph Blane

As we prepare to celebrate another Christmas, wars and rumors of wars continue to make Peace on Earth still a wishful and distant hope.

The very site of Christ's birth is once again a place of contention and violence.

Even here in the world's most prosperous country, many are in need as the economy continues to struggle. Local charities report a decline in contributions and an increase in requests for help.

Each year we rouse ourselves during this holiday season to listen to the better angels of our nature. We reach out to others during this special time and promise to carry our concern forward into the new year. Sometimes we do and sometimes we get caught up again in our own, too busy lives.

Perhaps we expect too much of Christmas for the world and for ourselves. It is probably better to remember the holiday's small gifts through all the rush, commercialism and outpourings of charity.

For Christians, the year and time has been appropriated to celebrate the birth of Jesus, a savior who came to the world not as a great king but as a baby born to humble parents in a stable. The circumstances of Jesus' birth give profound weight to his later message of love and human kindness.

Pilgrims in early America thought the meaning of Jesus' birth so immense that they banned the frivolity of feasting and gift giving on Dec. 25 as somehow not in keeping with the day's importance.

For most of us, once we get past the colored lights and glittery packages, Christmas is about family, friends, home and love. As in the song that Judy Garland first sang so plaintively in *Meet Me in St. Louis*, we all long to be together "if the fates allow." We know that separations will come, troubles will come, but until we can have that perfect Christmas together "we'll have to muddle through somehow."

Sometimes merry little Christmases are the best kind. We hope yours fulfills your every expectation.



The mentorship program at East Middle School has kicked off what promises to be another successful year. Mentor Dale Countegan spent part of his Thursday morning going to classes with Raja Sulaiman last week.

LETTERS

Christmas cheer

The time has come again this year, for all to enjoy the Yule time cheer, and give gifts of love with hearts sincere remembering God's love is the reason we're here.

What a thrill to see the downtown lights, the store window display so articulately right. The size of the crowd out shopping tonight, fills the store manager's heart with sheer delight.

Absorbed in the crowd thoughts lost for a while, I suddenly remembered that little child playing around that dirty rubbish pile, that waved at me but had no smile.

I wonder how many children there were whose situation in life is a constant blur, and how many people would stop and concur, to aid the unfortunate without a murmur.

Why get involved in thought at this time. The child I saw certainly wasn't mine. How does life cast such a sad design on anyone today in our society so refined?

The scene of nativity sharply caught my eye in His mother's arms the infant Christ did lie, no room, no help as people passed him by. Yet for our sins on the cross He died, die.

I slowly picked up a piece of straw, as my heart started to thaw. I stood awed in the revelation I saw. That unselfish giving is a blessing not a flaw.

This Christmas I know that under my tree, there'll be one less gift for me to see the spirit of Christmas includes those in need. On this fact I hope we all sincerely agree.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from the Cromer family.

Charles H. Cromer
Farmington

Aldo says thanks

I want to thank all those who made it possible for me to be elected State Representative on Nov. 5. I also want to thank all those who did not vote for me but exercised their precious right to vote.

I am humbled by the support I received and the opportunity to serve the two communities of Farmington and Farmington Hills in Lansing.

I will follow my practice as an elected official to keep in touch with residents of the two cities through television, mailings, the newspapers, community meetings, coffees and the establishment of a legislative neighborhood watch. This watch will include residents throughout the neighborhoods who will be my eyes and ears.

Residents with questions, suggestions and comments on my performance will be able to contact someone in their own neighborhoods who will then pass the information on to me for action.

I will try to get back to everyone who contacts my office within a few working days. If the request takes time to respond to, I will so indicate and get back to that person as soon as all the information is available.

We face difficult times in our state with the budget deficit estimated at \$1 billion and the rainy day emergency fund all but

drained out. However, working together we can overcome these problems and look forward to the day when the economy turns around and we will be able to move forward.

In the meantime, until my office is established in Lansing in January, you can contact me at (248) 474-3655 or vagnozzi@aol.com (e-mail). My home address is 26193 Kiltartan, Farmington Hills, MI 48334. My Web site is: www.aldivagnozzi.com.

Aldo Vagnozzi
Farmington Hills

Falcon Society thanks

The Falcon Society of Farmington High School recently held their 2nd annual dinner dance and silent auction fundraiser at Vladimir's.

It was a great success, raising over \$30,000 to go towards Phase Two of our on-going facilities improvement project at FHS. We wish to thank Vladimir's for their outstanding service as well as the many local businesses who made this event such a big success!

Co-Chairs, Sue Boskey, Barbara Kahnoff, Karen Matthews

Ashcroft relatives?

My name is John Alcock and I live in Canberra, Australia. I am writing to ask if it would be possible to include in your newspaper an item which might help me get in touch with relatives that my family has lost contact with.

My father's brother, known as James Ashcroft, lived in Farmington and died there in 1971. I understand that he had two sons who would be my cousins. I would like to find and contact the sons or their families.

John Alcock
j.alcock@austarmetro.com.au

Education questions

Can someone answer a couple of questions for me please? I am somewhat confused over the apparent total confusion existing in our present school systems.

The latest discussion seems to revolve around how to "measure" what has been taught (not necessarily learned but taught).

I can understand the need for financing, and I can understand the need for some way to gauge the success of failure of certain methods. But let me ask you this: What has happened to teaching the basics? Yes, I am sorry all you PCers, I mean reading, writing, and arithmetic. Reading seems to be on a comeback; the average graduate can read traffic signs. Comprehension? That's another story (pun intended). Is vocabulary stressed? Is the use of the dictionary taught? Do the students know that the library has books in it as well as computers? Are stories discussed as well as read? Do the students understand that the words they are reading actually mean something?

Teachers say they don't have enough time or help to complete all their duties. Why? Are they being asked to do too

much? Well, let me ask these questions and then I will be done:

1. Why is a foreign language taught in K-8? Shouldn't we be focusing on English vocabulary, grammar and syntax?

2. Why is there a subheading in the elementary school report card such that the children are graded on their ability to "demonstrate an understanding of cultural diversity"? Why are we using valuable teacher time for this? How about just teaching the laws and right of the people as citizens of the U.S.?

3. Last (and I am sorry I have to ask, I mean I must) why is there a class in high school that teaches kayaking and backpacking? I keep telling myself this must be really important! Why would a school district that is \$6M in debt have a class like that?

Sue Waters
Farmington Hills

Leaner government

Governor Granholm's budget decisions will either revitalize Michigan or turn out the lights.

Bureaucracy is an infection, feeding on all parts of government until it is bankrupt or cured.

Safety & Health departments sometimes justify their existence with outlandish actions, and then demand more funding to keep up their work. Schools can pursue bilingual education and feel-good classes because they have too much money.

Students do not become smarter because class size is smaller and desks are larger. Cut school appropriations and sports, music and popular classes will be cancelled — but not junk expenditures.

Educators supported Jennifer Granholm in this election and hope she will support them now. Roads, police, courts and other state divisions also face the prospect of going on diets. Leaner people and industries are healthier, and so is leaner government.

"I do not want to raise taxes" may be as memorable as "Read my lips" if our new governor succumbs to the pressure of her many friends.

Hank Borgman
Farmington

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

"My personal goal is just to keep the district moving forward."

— Clarenceville's new school Superintendent Cheryl Leach

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