

## OUR VIEWS

## We suggest a few resolutions for '03

While we're generally known as "armchair quarterbacks" - calling the plays after the game - we'd like to suggest a few New Year's resolutions for our civic leaders. This way, we'll stand the chance of being able to say "We told you so" once or twice in 2003. OK, once or twice more often.

For the City of Farmington Hills:

■ **Resolve to exercise a more even hand in the area of public input.** When you say you're going to limit people to three minutes, remember that somebody somewhere will be holding a stopwatch to make sure you do.

■ **Remember that in these difficult economic times, businesses watch their bottom line even more closely than ever.** Resolve to take a kinder, gentler attitude toward the people who run those businesses. Don't put so much stock in the value of our community that you lose sight of the need to attract and retain a strong commercial base. We're good - but so are other cities, some not that far away.

For the Farmington Hills/Farmington Community Foundation:

■ **Please - and we mean this sincerely - PLEASE bring new life to the annual Cornucopia Ball.** We believe the generosity of our community should be rewarded with a little more entertainment. You don't have to go as far as hiring belly dancers, but maybe you could consider a new theme?

For the Farmington/Farmington Hills Diversity Council:

■ **After a wonderful kick-off planning session, please don't let your work dissolve into too much discussion and not enough action.**

For the City of Farmington:

■ **Main Street is a three-year gift, one that will require constant, progressive effort and energy.** Most importantly, it will require everyone to put the baggage from the past into the deepest, darkest closet they can find. Only if we all work together will we succeed in building a better downtown.

And finally, for Hills council members Vicki Barnett and Jon Grant:

■ **We applaud you both for your willingness to serve the citizens of Farmington Hills, and we have the highest regard for what you've already done for the city and its residents.** Please resolve that not a single campaign activity will begin until six weeks before the election. (Hey, we had to try.)

## Veto shouldn't stop DARTA's progress

Incomprehensible.

That's the only word we can come up with to describe former Gov. John Engler's petulant 11th hour veto of regional mass transit legislation. In a matter of minutes, he toppled two years' worth of difficult negotiations by killing a bill that would have established the Detroit Area Regional Transportation Authority.

Never mind that it took years to get all the metro area parties involved to come together behind this idea. Never mind that the Detroit Regional Chamber and every thinking business person in the southeast metropolitan area knows mass transit is an integral part of continued economic development and growth.

No, John Engler couldn't be bothered with logic. He was ticked off because lawmakers shut down one of his pet projects: charter schools.

Engler's plan of attack, of course, was to expand charter schools in Detroit - a plan that never came to fruition. Instead of half a loaf, he chose to leave the state with none, revealing a pettiness even his most ardent supporters couldn't possibly ignore.

DARTA wasn't a solution to southeast Michigan's problems, but it clearly took a step in the right direction. Establishing a board with representation from Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties and the City of Detroit, DARTA would have at least brought all the players to the table and engaged them in discussions to develop a viable transportation plan for our region.

Without a reliable, clean, accessible transportation system, Detroit and its surrounding suburbs will stay on increasingly divergent paths, watching the hope for a stronger and more united future fade with each passing year.

We urge officials not to give up the fight for this badly needed reform. More than creating just another layer of government, another opportunity for millage requests, DARTA will eventually establish an infrastructure around which southeast Michigan's economic future could be built. It's too bad John Engler didn't understand that. Maybe Gov. Jennifer Granholm will.

### 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.



Farmington area residents and officials traveled to Pontiac this week to attend a boot camp for the Main Street program, which provides three years of technical assistance for developing downtown Farmington.

## LETTERS

## SMART moves

There are several positive things I've noticed and believe should be recognized. It is wonderful SMART is providing express shuttle service to Platon's games. That is good for the region, the Platon's, Detroit citizens and all other riders. It's also good informative publicity for the conveniences of SMART and transit in general.

The SMART newsletter that's been on several buses is very informative and is a good service/communication piece. It also promotes transit by informing riders/potential riders of unknown services, new plans and the benefits of how their tax money is being spent. It's great to see SMART building its new location on Fort St. in place of the nasty warehouse that's been removed.

Farmington Hills residents finally got some signs informing motorists of the terminal/park & ride lot at OCC. Since then I've noticed some new faces on the #51. There are other lots like Schoolcraft college that need signage as well on the surface streets as well as I-275. Ridership on the 810/820 would probably increase as well with signs.

It would be helpful to have every driver fill their bus display pockets (daily) with a supply of appropriate route schedules for the route(s) they are running that day as well as those great newsletters (many buses are empty).

It is also encouraging to see SMART supporting DARTA, as well as serving the public with a regional pass and providing DDOT contact information on the schedules.

As an FYI: most of the times I ride the Park and Ride, the bus is full or almost full. Several times a few people had to stand. The express routes are getting used.

Barry Malek  
Farmington

## Dear Chief Dwyer

This morning my car broke down in the center through lane on westbound 13 Mile Road, just east of Orchard Lake Road, just prior to entering the intersection.

No engine, no emergency flashers, dead as possible. I knew that a tow truck would take some time to arrive.

I called your dispatch center and explained to the nice young lady my predicament. Being in the middle of 13 Mile Road. About two minutes later Officer Woodmore arrived, as did a second officer in another vehicle.

Officer Woodmore was most kind and concerned for my safety in the middle of traffic. He kindly pushed my car across the street into a parking lot. He not only asked what further assistance I needed, he offered me a ride to my home, about two miles away.

From my warm and comfortable home I was able to take the time to arrange for a flat bed tow truck to have my car taken to the dealership. This was certainly a better way than calling from a cellular telephone in a car with no heat and not knowing just how long a towing service might take.

Officer Woodmore exemplifies what your department has always been. Not

only "doing his job" so to speak, but, going far beyond what one might have hoped for. Not just getting my car out of the middle of traffic, a ride home. I must admit this was my first ride in the rear seat of a police car.

I hope you will commend him and once again thank him for me for his kindness, courtesy and certainly doing far more than what some might say was his job. I sincerely thank you and the fine members of your department.

Leonard M. Stein, OD, FAAA  
Farmington Hills

## Dear Goodfellows

My name is Joe Walker and I am an eighth-grader at Dunkel Middle School who is blind. I want to thank you for the laptop. With this new laptop I will be able to use it anywhere I choose and not just in school. I enjoy it very much.

Without this laptop I wouldn't have been able to use technology to my fullest advantage. I can use a DVD drive, a CD drive and Microsoft applications with the use of my special speech output software.

Thank you for all your help and all you do for others.

Joe Walker  
Farmington Hills

## Thanks for the hard work

I also want to thank the Farmington and Farmington Hills Goodfellows for all their hard work and contributions. My student is able to now access print that he never could before. The Goodfellows have given him access to the world, a gift that most of us take for granted. May the blessings of the season be with you throughout the year.

Amy Jabik  
teacher for the visually impaired  
Oakland Schools

## Top teachers

As the Observer and Eccentric Newspapers try to identify and honor the "Top Teachers" (Dec. 29, 2002), I would recommend that school personnel not participate.

They should not for many reasons:

- 1) The factors that influence "top" rating are too subjective and numerous, such as class size, including difficult students, required duties, perceived cooperation with the principal, student grades, and pupil acceptance or rejection.
- 2) Singling out a few for recognition at the expense of the many, with negative effects for teacher morale and, ultimately student learning.
- 3) Such a campaign reduces complex issues of money and family to the simple solution of naming "top teachers."

During the past 53 years in the public schools, I have seen this technique tried twice, without success. As union building representative at Detroit Cooly from 1952 to 1957, I experienced the relief felt in the ranks when "Teacher of the Year" ended with the union victory at the polls over the Michigan Education Association in 1957. Eleven years later as principal at

Durfee Junior, I saw the anger in the ranks when one teacher prompted his students to campaign for him to win the Detroit News Apple of the Day award, an unapproved contest.

Certainly, the Observer and Eccentric, by its standards, is free to promote "Top Teacher" for recognition, but I question its value and doubt its effect.

Lawrence Milette  
Farmington Hills

## Law's interesting

I'm certainly not a lawyer, just a sometimes observer of the law, which in itself can be interesting at times. I have been observing lately.

I guess most persons have been brought up to believe the laws are right and most everything else is wrong. However, although it can be said rightly, the basis for laws generally are meant to define right from wrong.

Successful lawyers do not see the law that way. They see the law as a sort of chess game, with planning, moves, strategies, measures and countermeasures. Successful lawyers are those who know how to play the game well. They study the laws and case histories to learn precedents of actual cases, why and how they were decided, because judges depend upon precedents for making their decisions, not necessarily their own knowledge of the law.

Laws as they are written can be interpreted to mean any variety of things. This can make it very difficult for a judge to decide a case, especially so with rapidly changing techniques and morals, which constantly cause our legal interpretations to be in a state of flux, change. That is not to say many laws aren't clearly defined so that cases can't be decided quickly. They are, much of the time.

Many cases are so complex it takes years of arguments and counter arguments to decide. Appeals can go on seemingly forever, which has the effect of rendering laws virtually ineffective, for both plaintiff and defendant.

But usually, attorneys get paid, not matter who wins. It can be said, and I think rightly so; those who win at the game of law are neither plaintiff nor defendant; the winners are the lawyers and the judges.

Kenneth Kemp  
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

Coffee at 8 a.m., aimless pattering at 9 a.m., donuts at 10 a.m., nap at 11 a.m., lunch at noon, nap at 2 p.m., snack at 3 p.m. and stare out the window between 4-5 p.m.

- Calendar for retiring Farmington City Manager Frank Lauhoff