

OUR VIEWS

Follow Main Street's leaders

A core group of people concerned about downtown Farmington took two days out of their busy weeks last week to attend a kind of "boot camp" in Pontiac.

They included business people, officials and citizens who have been participating in the Main Street process, which gives our community three years of assistance in redeveloping the downtown area. Participants learned about the challenges ahead, but they also gained an enthusiasm and energy for meeting those challenges head-on.

Consultants have identified downtown Farmington's biggest problem, which should come as a surprise to no one. We have two "downtowns" — the historic corridor on Grand River and the Downtown Farmington Business Center, which local residents have complained is becoming Discount City with the addition of Bargain Books, a Dollar Store and other deep discount chains.

It would be easy to give up, using the argument that the Center's corporate owners can't be forced to revamp their tenant list. Their bottom line is — and should be — keeping their stores occupied and turning a profit.

Instead, Main Street has opened up the floodgates of creative thought. Consider what might happen if Farmington marketed the entire downtown business district to create a waiting list of prospects, available whenever a space opens up. Consider the possibilities for vast wealth of city-owned parking lots, which could be developed in a configuration that would invite pedestrian traffic.

It seems to us the image developing in the mists of a new beginning is one of cooperation, not confrontation, of promoting possibilities rather than fearing what we have never before done.

The possibilities seem limited only by the collective imagination of those who get involved in this process. The folks who sacrificed valuable time and energy last week deserve a word of thanks for stepping up to the plate.

They've set an example we encourage everyone in the community to follow.

Donations needed by charities year-round

Needy families don't get hungry or cold just on Thanksgiving and Christmas.

That's why it's important to donate to charities throughout the year.

"People are in need all year long," says Rosellen Loye-Bucy, executive director of Lighthouse Emergency Services for more than three years.

Most of us get into the Christmas spirit during the holiday season, contributing gifts to Toys for Tots, dropping coins in Salvation Army kettles, adopting a family through Lighthouse Emergency Services.

It makes us feel good to help our fellow man — and we get a year-end tax deduction to boot.

Yet most charitable organizations — Lighthouse, the Salvation Army, United Way, etc. — depend on contributions year-round to help needy families the other 11 months of the year.

Lighthouse, for example, conducts a peanut butter and jelly drive in the spring so struggling families have something to serve their children for lunch during the summer when they can't eat subsidized school lunches.

Lighthouse gets about 5 to 10 percent of its donations during the holiday season, and much of that goes toward food baskets for holiday meals, says Loye-Bucy. Yet the agency needs contributions to assist needy families and seniors with prescriptions, utility bills, groceries and other ongoing expenses.

The Salvation Army gets about 60 percent of its funding at Christmastime, says Tanya Naumenko, director of public relations for the Salvation Army's southeastern Michigan division. "We still need to raise the other 40 percent. The less funding we get, the less programming we can do."

This year, it's even more important to extend charitable giving past the holidays.

Since most people give to United Way through their workplace, any business that hasn't been contacted by United Way can write to 50 Wayne Street, Pontiac, MI, 48342.

Those wanting to contribute to Lighthouse can send checks to the Clarkston office, 6330 Sashabaw, Clarkston, MI, 48346, or the Pontiac office, 46156 Woodward Ave., Pontiac, MI, 48342.

Send Salvation Army donations to 16130 Northland Drive, Southfield, MI, 48075.



Former Farmington city councilman and candidate for city manager Bill Hartsock displayed good humor at the ribbing he took during Thursday night's roast of retired city manager Frank Lauhoff. As serious as local government can be, it's nice to see everyone still has a sense of humor.

LETTERS

Bias complaint

I've become so tired of your paper. The only things you ever seem to write about pertain to multiracial, multicultural, diversity and other liberal topics.

But your bias went over the top when you showed only Jennifer Granholm and other Democrats on the front of your paper on election eve.

Newspapers are entitled to their own opinion, but professional journalists know that those opinions are reserved for the editorial page.

Therefore, I have canceled my subscription to your paper. However, I am submitting something (below) that is worthwhile and pertains to the only race and gender that your paper never lauds.

Notify me of the edition that this is printed in and I will renew my subscription.

Christine I. Koski
Farmington Hills

We dedicate the first Monday in August to honor the Euro-Judae (white) male and entitle it "White Male Appreciation Day."

This day is set aside to show our deep appreciation to him for providing the creative genius, through God, responsible for everything we have that's mechanical or electrical; for initiating the vast majority of the medical research allowing us to be the healthiest humans on earth; and in America, for developing our Constitutional, capitalistic form of government creating the world's freest and highest standard of living.

We appreciate him giving us the autos we drive, the clothes we wear, the food we eat and the houses we live in. Thanks, too, for the tremendous electronic speech and video conveyances without which entertainers and media people could hardly survive. Thanks for the computers, household appliances and innumerable other conveniences he's provided also.

Our deepest gratitude is extended to the 300,000 white males in the Union Army who gave their lives during the Civil War. That's more Americans than died during Vietnam, Korea, World War I and the Revolutionary War combined. These men made the ultimate sacrifice to rid this country of slavery.

Thanks for providing today's slave descendants an environment far superior for their African kin and, more justly, far superior to the descendants of the black tribes that captured and sold their ancestors into slavery.

Sincerely,
All factually honest American people

More scandal

Phil Power expresses his outrage at the seemingly inadequate and non-existent punishment meted out to the corporate executives responsible for the recent accounting scandals ("Wall Street insiders always end up OK").

Unfortunately, he failed to shine a light on the largest accounting scandal in the history of the United States and the culprits behind it.

As of Jan. 2, the Bureau of the Public Debt reports \$3.6 trillion as publicly-held

debt in the form of treasury bills, notes, and bonds. In addition, the bureau reports \$2.7 trillion of intragovernmental debt. For the mathematically-challenged in Washington, this totals \$6.3 trillion.

In addition to underreporting the debt, politicians lied about a budget "surplus". For the past few years, Americans were told government income exceeded expenditures for the first time in decades and the government paid off some of its obligations. The government did pay off some of the publicly-held debt, but at the same time increased the intragovernmental debt.

From fiscal year 1997 to 2002, the national debt rose each year from \$5.4 trillion to \$6.2 trillion. I wonder how much debt we would have accumulated without the "surplus".

Now if \$6.3 trillion seems rather large, brace yourself. Liabilities include all financial obligations, not just the amount of debt. For corporations, examples of additional liabilities include retirement and insurance benefits to be paid in the future.

The Social Security Administration reports their fraudulent trust fund has a long-term unfunded liability of \$25 trillion while Medicare's unfunded liability stands at \$17 trillion. While future reforms such as personal social security accounts and medical savings accounts could reduce these liabilities, the lack of honest dialogue between Republicans and Democrats offers little hope for the near term.

To put this into perspective, Worldcom over-reported earnings by \$7 billion while Washington underreports its liabilities by over \$40 TRILLION. But Washington's accounting malfeasance doesn't stop there. The General Accounting Office discovered \$17.3 billion in unrecorded transactions last fiscal year. This means the federal government could not account for more money than Worldcom and Enron misstated as earnings.

In addition, Congress plays with the books to avoid spending caps. When trying to avoid the cap, Congress will declare expenditures as "off-budget" or classify them as "emergencies" or "move" expenditures into the previous year to free up more money for the current year.

So while Congress attacks corporate America and demands accountability, they turn a blind eye to their own abuses. Does this somehow forgive the deceit and fraud committed by a few corporations? Absolutely not. Executives should be prosecuted and, if found guilty, thrown into prison.

But at the same time, let's send them some cellmates from Washington. Let's restore confidence in the economy by applying the same standards to government officials as corporate executives.

Steve Sattton
Farmington Hills

Favors stimulus package

Our nation and our state are still facing an economic climate that could be described as uncertain. I think it's a good thing that the President of our country is proposing an economic stimulus package

that includes eliminating the taxation of dividends. The ending of this tax has been a long time coming.

Corporations already pay a tax on their profits prior to deducting their dividend expenses. Therefore, the income that allows dividends to occur has already been taxed once. That dividends received get taxed a second time is not appropriate. It is indeed double taxation.

Furthermore, at this time we need every incentive possible to make the stock market look like an attractive investment option again. If our markets continue to perform at a sluggish pace we risk delaying our economic recovery, and reduce our chances to maximize economic growth. And economic growth means job growth — something all of us can agree on.

Christopher M. Cummins
Farmington Hills

Join pro-life

Jan. 22, 2003, marks the 30th anniversary of the Supreme Court decision on Roe vs. Wade. For 30 years, this country has lived with the reality that a woman at any time can kill her unborn baby.

Michigan newspapers cannot be read lately without some pretty little picture of Jennifer Granholm; the Observer even had one recently with her and Aldo Vagnozzi, our own local "pro-choice" representative. She is quoted a lot as being so concerned about children. She is pictured at interfaith prayer services.

Does anyone really believe this woman? Does she care about the forty million plus lives since the abortion was legalized? Does she really believe her God creates life just so some woman can suck it into a sink?

I know these are not nice words. I am not trying to be dramatic. It's just that there are no nice words to describe this horror that takes place in our great country every day — over 4,000 times a day.

I pray that you all consider this Jan. 22, 2003, whether or not you really believe that abortion is great for women and great for this country. If you agree with me, get involved in the pro-life movement.

Christa Toffi
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.

Mail:
Letters to the editor
Farmington Observer
3340 Grand River
Farmington, MI 48335

Fax:
(248) 477-9722

E-mail:
jhured@oe.homecomm.net

QUOTABLE

"We didn't enforce it as strictly as we've done in the past. But now that the road is open, it's back to normal."

— Farmington Councilwoman JoAnn McShane, on the downtown sidewalk sign ban

FARMINGTON Observer

Part of HomeTown Communications Network™

Joni Hubred Community Editor	Todd Williams Director of Advertising
Hugh Gallagher Managing Editor	Peter Neill General Manager
Susan Rosiek Executive Editor	Dick Agnalin President
Jeanne Towar V.P. Editorial	Phil Power Chairman of the Board

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.