



Mercy High deserved better

"We have one solid comfort amidst all this little tripping about. Our hearts can always be in the same place, centered in God, for whom alone we go forward or stay back."

Catherine McAuley, Foundress, Sisters of Mercy

Never mind what's going on in the Middle East, we've got our own holy war right here in Farmington Hills.

Of course, in the land of civility and decorum, less damage is done, at least to the physical landscape.

In recent days, we've seen a pro-life/anti-Granhholm organization target Mercy High School's students and leaders over a single item among about 500 offered at a Feb. 22 fund-raiser.

Supporters who attended "Night with the Stars" didn't get through the gates without being told they were conspiring with those who intentionally murder innocent children.

During the week, the school was papered with a list of 21 questions, designed specifically to "make a hostile environment for the Gov." The same list referred to Granhholm at one point as "Anti-Christ" and "witch."

Nice Christian attitude, huh? Questions covered the full range of extremist nonsense, like, "Would you force Catholic churches to perform same sex marriages?"

Has no one informed these folks that Catholic hospitals — as well as Catholic schools and churches — are privately funded and operated? No one, especially not the governor, can "force" them to do anything.

Now, I'm fully aware every movement for social change has its reneads. We liberals have our chain-me-to-the-tree folks who are just as "in your face" with their message of government-imposed tolerance, environmentalism and unisex bathrooms.

I'm also aware that not everyone who objected to the Lunch with Gov. Granhholm offering belongs to the politically oriented Stop Granhholm Church and Truth Project. It does speak to the circumstance, however, that the first notice we got about the auction came from them.

Note that we're not dealing with the "Stop Abortion Church and Truth Project." For six months, this group has relentlessly targeted Gov. Granhholm, who is also named on a nationwide list of political leaders who comprise the pro-life movement's "axis of evil." These are politicians who have the temerity to uphold the law of the land, established in the Supreme Court's Roe vs. Wade decision decades past.

This auction item didn't become a media event until the Stop Granhholm folks made it one. They've said that themselves; their director reported they started making calls when a member spotted the item on the auction list.

Too bad they weren't around in June of 2001, when then-Attorney General Granhholm spoke at Mercy High School's graduation in 2001 and didn't draw a single protest.

Imagine that. I've been watching events

BY JONL HUBRED
STAFF WRITER

Andrew Raczkowski looks relaxed — and maybe a little worn out — as he talks about his life after.

After a campaign for U.S. Senate that took him all across the state and garnered national attention.

After his last term as state representative ended Jan. 1. After losing three close family members in just a year's time, starting with his father, Bogdan Raczkowski, a little over a year ago.

"I lost the majority of my family during the last election," he said. "All I have left is my mom, my brother and a cousin."

His mother lives within walking distance of his home on Bonnet Hill; all of his friends are here.

For that reason, he turned down what he calls an "incredible offer" from Washington to serve as a deputy secretary with the Veteran's Affairs Department.

Raczkowski would also be leaving his business, Mainline Communications, which he says pretty much runs itself. The company does printing and specialty advertising. (www.mainlinegroup.com)

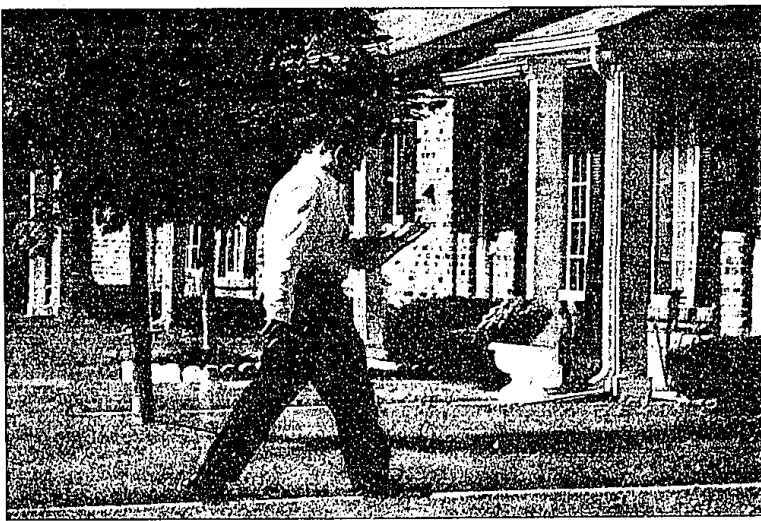
"I don't want to leave Michigan," he said. "I have always called this area my home. There are a lot more opportunities here than there."

That includes pursuing a career in the health care industry, for which he has already started to do some consulting. He's turned down one offer to work for a Detroit-area health care system, but is considering another.

"I've always enjoyed going into crisis situations, fixing them and moving on," he said. "Health care is in a big crisis right now ... That's one of the reasons we came up with a prescription drug plan."

In conversation, the old adage, slightly reworded, holds true: You can take the man out of politics, but you can't take politics out of the man.

Raczkowski compares a prescription drug bill he once sponsored in the state House with a new plan supported by his Democratic successor, Aldo Vagnotzi, and the Granhholm administration. It involves developing a cooperative bulk



Long gone are the days when Andrew Raczkowski wore out pair after pair of shoes, canvassing neighborhoods during campaign season.

buying plan with other states, to lower the cost of prescription medications.

"That was my bill, and at the time, Aldo was saying it would never work. Now he's out there co-sponsoring the bill, and I appreciate it," Raczkowski says.

"He's my state rep now, and he needs all our support." Raczkowski seems at ease with his new life, proud of his past and empathetic with state lawmakers facing an enormous budget deficit.

In December, he worked on proposals to address the budget crisis, which he has presented to the Granhholm administration.

"I think some of it will be used in the next couple of months," he said.

"The Senate election taught him you don't have to go negative to get your point across. And you don't have to be rich, either."

Even though he lost to incumbent Carl Levin by a wide margin, the campaign also spent the least amount of



Raczkowski found an opportunity to help out a local senior during his last campaign for state representative.

money per vote of any other non-targeted U.S. House or Senate race. He was also honored by Levin's kind remarks, which took up more than half of his election night victory speech.

Raczkowski accepted his defeat with good grace. A humorous post-election radio ad, which took up more than half of his election night victory speech, won an award through the American Political Consultants Association.

While he vigorously denies any interest in running for Farmington Hills mayor or city council — not to mention June's school board election — politics may still be in Raczkowski's future.

But not until national leaders decide whether the U.S. is going to war.

ANDREW RACZKOWSKI

Born: Dec. 29, 1968

Education: Harrison High School in Farmington Hills; B.A. from Eastern Michigan University, 1990; Master's from Central Michigan University, 1996; Juris Doctorate, Detroit College of Law, 1997

Military service: Enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1986 as an infantryman; earned Paratrooper and Pathfinder badges while in service.

Legislative highlights: Elected to his first term as 37th District Representative in 1997, term-limited in 2002; youngest Majority Leader in State House history; served on Health Policy, Regulatory Reform and Criminal Justice, among others.

Business background: President, Mainline Communications Group, a specialty advertising and print production company he started in 1993.

Religion: Catholic
Marital Status: Single

Just back from a weekend spent with his Army Reserve unit in Ohio, Raczkowski is a little anxious about his future — not what will happen, but the timing.

"It's not a question of if I'll be activated," he said. "It's when."

Though frustrating, a life of uncertainty has forced Raczkowski to get his affairs in order. All of his valuables and important papers are filed in one location; he says he has never been more organized.

"And then there are the six-mile 'ruck marches' during his Reserve weekends, to keep him in top physical condition. Soldiers hike carrying 55-pound packs.

"You're training all the time," Raczkowski said. "It's good."

because it's getting me back in shape."

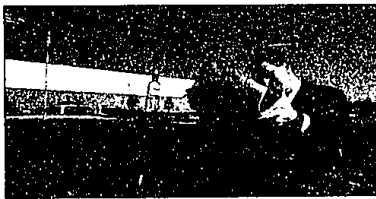
He likened his legislative service to Army training — hard work, but rewarding and worthwhile in the end.

"You can't make everybody happy, no matter how hard you try, but I'm proud of my service, and I hope the people we served are proud," he said.

He also acknowledged the hard work of his legislative staff — Rusty, Randy, Marcia, Mindy, Cami and Dennis.

"I'm proud of their service, and I appreciate everything they did for the people we served as well," he said. "We gave it all we had."

FILE PHOTO
Hubred/Observer.com.net
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Will "Rocky" run again? Despite an overwhelming defeat against heavily favored incumbent U.S. Sen. Carl Levin, he says he hasn't lost his enthusiasm for public service.

William Grace students take Underground RR trip

BY SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER

William Grace Principal Mark Morawski, sporting a straw hat, began the school's Underground Railroad program Feb. 21 by reading *Under the Quilt of Night* by Deborah Hopkinson.

He projected the colorful pages onto a screen as the group of students sat on the floor listening intently during an all-school assembly held in honor of Black History Month.

Break up into small groups, Morawski instructed as the simulations began. "There will be guides. Danger lurks about." Students experienced life in the 1850s with characters dressed up to portray people in history, various persons who participated in the



Students paint backdrops to set the scene for the Underground Railroad simulation.

Underground Railroad and appropriate time-era displays.

As the students embarked on their journey, Morawski cautioned them, "You must all be quiet. You must be silent."

All the classrooms were darkened with black paper across

the windows, with one left free to allow some light. "School lights were off to help create the mood," said Laurie League, a student teacher from Wayne State University who helped with the event.

"Students passed through the halls using flashlights or homemade lanterns," League said. "Many of them dressed as individuals from the time period, traveled with their 'agents' from room to room, decorated as Safe Houses, while reminding each other to 'Beware of bounty hunters.'"

In the rooms, the students helped construct a paper quilt and learned details of the Underground Railroad from staff members and parents who portrayed characters like novelist Harriet Tubman and statesman Frederick Douglass.

Teacher Vitas Underdyk surprised students as he burst out of a crate containing Henry "Box" Brown, who was shipped from Richmond, Va., to Philadelphia via train, League said. Each station that was consid-

ered "safe" would have a quilt or quilt piece on it, which recreated a signaling system used by fleeing slaves. If they didn't find a marker, students couldn't enter.

The production was the vision of third- and fourth-grade teacher Fay Stone, Music teacher Linda Rempel also took an active role, teaching students songs sung by escaping slaves.

Students produced background sets, working mainly after school, that created scenes ranging from 1850s Maryland to freedom in Canada, League said.

Some slaves walked across Lake Erie from Rochester, N.Y., to Canada on ice floes, she added.

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