

OUR VIEWS

Swaim would bring balance

Farmington school district residents who go to the polls June 9 have a tough choice to make.

Cheryl Swaim, John Goshorn and Karen Bolsen all have the potential to make positive contributions. However, we'd like to see voters bring Swaim's fresh, unique voice to the board.

Why? Because an effective board should be balanced, and Swaim would bring a background largely different from other board members. A student who waited to go to college and gained practical experience in the workplace, she now co-owns a manufacturing business with her brother.

None of our sitting school board members have Swaim's firsthand experience with the world vocational education students will face when they graduate. More importantly, she brings an innovative and "outside the box" perspective as a woman working in what has traditionally been a male-dominated realm.

Swaim asks thoughtful questions and asks them respectfully. On her own time, she researched issues important to her, then presented her findings to the board.

She also supports an idea Goshorn proposed two years ago, which involves taking the board "on the road." Yes, finances are tight and spending a few hundred extra dollars every month is a decision that should be carefully considered.

We believe, however, the return in goodwill and parental involvement far outweighs the cost. We hope board members will at least consider their options — like asking parent-teacher groups to host these meetings and take on some of the financial burden. Simply closing the door to this idea seems short-sighted.

Her willingness to think "outside the box," her varied business background, connections to the manufacturing world and her inquisitive, open nature have convinced us Cheryl Swaim would be a wonderful breath of fresh air for the Farmington school board.

Academic All-Stars shine with promise

Congratulations to Ellen Cappo, Mercy High School; Emily Gruben, Mercy High School; Andrew Martin, Farmington; Julie Swallow, North Farmington; Daphne Atienza, St. North Farmington; and Mark Rundle, Southfield Christian, our area's latest addition to the long roster of *Observer & Eccentric* Academic All-Stars.

All-stars come in many forms. For most of us, athletes are synonymous with the term.

Names like Al Kaline, Steve Yzerman and Barry Sanders surely come to mind for many Detroiters as individuals who led not only through their athletic prowess, but how they carried themselves off the field or ice as well. It is those special qualities that make someone a true all-star.

The same can be said for high school and college athletes who showed special qualities even earlier in life. There are examples in every school that we can point to with confidence that great things are in store for these youngsters.

For the past 19 years, *Observer & Eccentric* newspapers have honored a different kind of all-star; teens whose special talents and skills are showcased in the classroom instead of the ball field. The tradition continues today as the newspaper honors 60 remarkable teens who comprise the 2003 *Observer & Eccentric* Academic All-Stars and runners-up.

As in previous years, the 2003 All-Stars were chosen by a committee of high school principals on the basis of their grade-point averages in academic subjects and their ACT and SAT scores. Factors such as community and school involvement also were taken into consideration.

This year's group comes from many different backgrounds and walks of life. Most, in discussing their selection, credit a specific teacher who prodded them along the way to be the best they could be academically, and list strong parental support as a key to their academic success.

The names and faces of all 60 All-Stars and runners-up, along with a brief biographical sketch, are included in a special section inside today's newspaper. Take a few minutes to read the accomplishments of these high school students and their significant contributions not only in the classroom, but in the community.

They are our future and will provide the next generation of leadership. Better to get to know them now rather than later.



While other high school and college students spent spring break partying at warm vacation spots, Mercy High students like Margot Spera worked hard to make the world a better place, through the school's Alternative Spring Break program.

Supports Bolsen

I am delighted to support the candidacy of Karen Bolsen for a position on the Farmington Board of Education. Having known Karen for almost eight years and worked with her on the Farmington/Farmington Hills Multicultural Multiracial Council, I've had the opportunity to witness the quality of her character and the extent of her skills.

Karen's qualifications for the job are many, but four are particularly important. ■ **Courage** — Being on the Board requires being in the public eye and making difficult decisions. Karen has clearly demonstrated that she has the courage needed to be a leader in challenging times.

■ **Vision** — Karen knows the kind of community she wants to live in and the kind of schools she wants for the children of our cities. She has the intelligence and savvy to make her vision reality.

■ **Commitment** — As co-chairman of the MCMR, Karen has regularly given hours of her time to serve the community. That unselfish kind of commitment is necessary to be a successful board member, and Karen will make the personal sacrifice.

■ **Collaborative skills** — Karen's personal warmth and ability to work well with people will be invaluable to her as she interacts with other board and community members. She consistently builds bridges, not barriers.

As a community member, parent, and educator, I offer wholehearted support to Karen Bolsen.

Mary Brown
Farmington

Stop signs needed

As I read the article in the April 24 *Observer*, I simply had to respond.

I was coming out of the Deet Store on Dec. 19, 2002 after 4 p.m. and stepped off the curb to go to my car across the parking lot when I looked to my left and saw this woman coming down the lane to my left. She wasn't going too slow so I stopped. She stopped, then I proceeded to go when she hit me and I was thrown to the concrete.

They called 911 and the ambulance came and put me on the gurney and put a neck brace on me.

I cannot describe the intense pain in the back of my head. I won't go into anymore details because what needs to be done is put stop signs at the end of the lanes. No one bothers to stop now when I go downtown. I am paranoid crossing the street.

Thank goodness she got a ticket and a point. So I hope something will be done. I love downtown Farmington for being unique.

Ruth Schwartz
Farmington

Restore dignity

Professional sport events, whether played on grass, hardwood floors, or ice, have begun after the national anthem, or hymn like God Bless America have been sung.

For a few minutes, the crowd in the stands and the musicians have had the opportunity

LETTERS

to reflect upon the freedom to enjoy and value life in America, protested and preserved by men and women who have fought for their country. Absent were the noises, gestures, and pictures of life common today on the street, movie screen, or TV.

Not so any more. The anthem today is a time to chew gum and look about the stands if you are a player. For the singer, it is a time to show off her or lounge appearance and, especially, singing style with lengthened vowels, pregnant pauses, and deep sound of sound of certain words. Add in the picture — close up — of a scantily clad female vocalist, with special attention to her bust.

American symbols are being mocked for commercial value today. It is my hope that the public will eventually reject this mockery and restore the dignity inherent in the flag and its music.

Lawrence Niblett
Farmington Hills

Bad charter bill

As residents in Farmington, I read Steve Sutton's letter entitled "Disheartened" in your April 17 issue with great interest.

The fact of the matter is that the Republican-controlled House of Representatives passed a bad charter school bill. First of all, there is no oversight of the more than 300 charter schools currently in the state, and adding more of these schools to an unregulated system makes no sense.

We need to make sure that charter schools are held to the same accountability standards as public schools. The bill passed by the House doesn't even come close to this standard, although State Representative Aldo Vagnozzi of Farmington Hills tried to add an amendment to the bill that would provide for oversight of charter schools. The amendment was defeated, mostly along with partisan lines.

Many of these charter schools are run by out-of-state, for-profit companies that put the bottom line before educating our kids. The companies that manage these schools must open their books to Michigan taxpayers before we add even more to their profits at the expense of the Michigan public school system.

Finally, there is no evidence that charter schools perform at the same level as Michigan's traditional public schools. A recent state report shows that 11 percent of the charter schools that serve elementary and middle schools students fail to meet student proficiency benchmarks. Michigan charter high school students graduate at a rate of only about 60 percent, compared to well over 80 percent for traditional public schools.

Are these the "advantages" that choice and competition bring to education in Michigan, as Mr. Sutton claims?

In these dire financial times, before throwing more money out-of-state companies for even more unregulated charter schools, shouldn't we be making sure that the ones that are currently operating are doing the job they've been hired to do?

Pamela and Matthew Green
Farmington

Seeking '30s pals

I would like to hear from people who lived in the Farmington area in the 1930s. I grew up and went to school there and kinda miss the old town. I lived at 22820 Lakeway Street and often skated on the creek next to Grand River Ave. I also lived on the Power Road between 11 and 12 Mile Roads. Close to the college where I worked. Any answer will get a reply so thanks in advance.

Cal Hopkins
Horizon Pointe Apartments No. 224
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Manistee, MI 49660

Good jobs

Good jobs are not a constitutional right but likely the result of free enterprise. Investment to build products comes from capitalists, prudent wage earners and retirees that buy stock. Workers then purchase goods, creating a circle of prosperity.

We cannot block out the world, nor do we want to. Tariffs and subsidies save inefficient industries that should change or quit. High taxes stifle investment and kill jobs. President Hoover wrote the book on those remedies, and if we don't want a Depression sequel we must learn to compete internationally.

Benefits meant to improve jobs increase our disparity with foreign pay — healthcare, retirement and minimum wages don't apply to the unemployed. Labor laws protect minorities, handicapped and union members but make production difficult and do nothing to enhance product quality.

Our government breaks up successful companies as monopolies. The high tech market is not saturated — it is over-regulated. Consumer protection agencies often become political, demanding prices that are lower than costs. A product glitch can draw punitive settlements that enrich lawyers and bankrupt employers. Taxes that take 60 percent of dividends leave no incentive to buy stocks and very little money to purchase products. It is time to stop class warfare and work together. Everyone is richer when investment is better.

Mark Bergman
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

"It was very rewarding to help the human community."
— Charlotte Grabman, Mercy High student and participant in Alternative Spring Break

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