

OUR VIEWS

How prepared is too prepared?

When children in most Farmington elementary schools have a conflict they can't resolve, teachers send them to peer mediation.

The combatants sit down together with someone their own age, talk about their differences and find a way to compromise and live together peacefully. Last week's PTA school board candidate forum left us wondering if a few adults wouldn't benefit from that kind of guidance.

We have to wonder first what board member Pam Christian was thinking when she blindly accused the PTA of fixing the debate by giving questions to one of the candidates beforehand. Her gripe? Candidate Cheryl Swain seemed too well-prepared on some of the issues.

How is it possible for a potential school board candidate to be "too well-prepared"? Isn't that part of the job description?

Maybe Christian has forgotten that Swain has presented her own research on several "hot button" issues at public forums. Maybe Christian felt she had to defend and support the candidate she prefers.

To be sure, there's nothing wrong with school board members privately backing a candidate. However, this isn't the first time an elected official has stepped over the line to attack another candidate. In Christian's race two years ago, a school board member sent out a letter attacking one of Christian's opponents.

As we said back then, those kinds of tactics simply have no place in any election, much less a school board race in which all the participants have one goal in mind: educating Farmington area children.

Christian walked straight to the press table with her accusation during the candidate forum. We hope if she comes up with any evidence of wrong-doing, she brings it to us and the PTA Council.

And if she finds no evidence, we hope she has the grace and courage to bring her apology forward as well.

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DARTA agreement makes good 1st step

After numerous stalls in the state Legislature, area leaders have made the right move to get mass transit back on the road in the metro Detroit area.

Last week, the leaders of Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties and the city of Detroit, working with Gov. Jennifer Granholm, agreed to form a Detroit Area Regional Transportation Authority. The area leaders side-stepped the slow-moving Legislature by using the Urban Cooperation Act of 1967, which allows local governments to come together for regional objectives.

As U.S. Rep. Thaddeus McCotter said, county and city leadership stepped up to do what's best for the region. A DARTA bill was passed last year by lawmakers but, in one of his last acts as governor, John Engler vetoed the bill. It was reintroduced this year, but has made little progress through the conservative Legislature.

The regional agreement will help to free up \$850,000 in federal money earmarked for planning and DARTA staff. It will also show Congress that the Detroit area is serious about mass transit and help bring in operational funding.

Detroit is one of the few major metro areas without a fully coordinated mass transit system. The suburban SMART bus system and the city's D-DOT do cooperate on scheduling, but there is a real need for long-range planning and development of a system that meets the needs of all area residents.

A transit system is essential for getting many people to and from work. But it will also help in developing shopping and entertainment districts.

By next year, DARTA needs to appoint a chief executive and by 2005, it will have to develop a comprehensive public transportation plan.

This is just the first step and many questions remain about what kind of system will work for metro Detroit. But at least we're finally on the road to some answers.



Officials from the metropolitan region - including Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano, Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson, Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick and Macomb County Commissioner Nancy White, pictured at a recent leadership luncheon - have taken a big step toward addressing the region's mass transit issues. Their most difficult work, however, lies ahead.

Supports Bolsen

Karen Bolsen has my support for the Farmington Board of Education. Karen will be a tremendous asset to the Board. As the parent of students in the Farmington system, Karen knows the issues first hand. She already has taken a leadership role in the community as co-chair of the Multi-cultural Multiracial Community Council.

All of the candidates for School Board should be commended. But I believe Karen Bolsen's substantial experience as a community activist gives her the advantage. In her many activities promoting the value of diversity, Karen had demonstrated the ability to listen to many viewpoints and develop a positive course of action.

My daughter will be entering Harrison High School next year, and I am confident that Karen Bolsen will be responsive to the views and needs of Harrison students and parents, as well as other students and parents throughout the school district.

Andrew Mickelthoff
Farmington Hills

Thanks Democrats

I thank the Democrats of the Texas legislature for challenging the illegal redistricting bill proposed by the Republicans. I thank the Democrats of the Michigan legislature for fighting against the proposal of Rep. Shirley Johnson to build new roads before repairing existing ones. I thank the Democrats (and a few Republicans) of the United States Senate who fought to reduce the irresponsible tax bill sought by an irresponsible president who likes foreign affairs more than fixing the economy at home.

For those of you who feel the Democrats are not capable of fighting back or being heard, listen to the growing rumbling of discontent here in Michigan and throughout the country.

The Democrats are the party that fights for your civil rights, fiscal responsibility, and the common person.

Tamara Hanratty
Farmington Hills

Dissent

Since I have a No War sign in my yard I feel compelled to answer a previous writer's concern over these signs. A society without dissent in all of its forms is not a free society. It is basically anti-democratic to suggest that everyone should think alike.

The troubling subtext of his opinion is that anyone who does not agree with the majority is unpatriotic. A grave national crisis involving the pre-emptive invasion of another country requires more debate not less.

The direction of such thinking is towards authoritarianism. The mere idea that anyone should move in lockstep with everyone else is detrimental to our national well-being. A healthy and vigorous discussion of substantive issues is the hallmark of a true democracy.

Too many Americans have become detached and indifferent to the entire political process. This does not bode well for the future. If this trend continues the results will be disastrous for this country

LETTERS

and the world. I will continue to express my opinion whenever and wherever it is possible. And I will continue to see it as my civic responsibility to do so.

Mary Johnston
Farmington Hills

Fresh voice

Congratulations on seeing the need for a fresh new voice for our School Board.

Our community needs a fresh perspective and new ideas, not the same worn out rhetoric that seems to permeate our city council and many committees. Wasn't it the Multi-Cultural, Multi-Racial Committee that threatened the success of our Founder's Parade by demanding the removal of one Shriner's Unit because it "stereotyped" native American Indians?

This action almost caused a complete withdrawal of all the Shriner's from our parade. This kind of leadership we certainly don't need on our school board.

Now, if we can only get concern parents and citizens out to the polls. It is time to break up the "clique" that has existed on our school board for way too long.

Bill Smith
Farmington Hills

History's yardstick

Some choose their leadership based upon a "fresh face," "thinking outside the box," a "new voice."

Might I suggest a more reliable method of measurement, like a history of involvement, high integrity, demonstrated commitment to this community and its children?

Using this yardstick, it becomes apparent that Karen Bolsen is the best candidate for the open position on the Farmington Board of Education.

Jim Hall
Farmington Hills

Vote

With democracy and capitalism under attack from both within this country and from abroad and recognizing that the preservation of individual liberty is dependent upon an educated citizenry, participate in the upcoming school election and consider the following when deciding who to vote for.

Vote for a candidate that has and is willing to express an opinion on how our money is spent and the quality of the service delivered. Reject the notion that you have to be a Board member to have an informed opinion on the decision made by the Board.

Vote for a candidate that understands and supports measurement of student performance and holds both the student and the School accountable for that performance. Reject the notion that testing for a solid foundation of learning is somehow invalid because it doesn't "measure the entire student."

Vote for a candidate that recognizes that all students should graduate with a common base level of knowledge, understanding, and competency in democracy, citizenship, government, economy, and the three Rs. Reject the all too common mantras of Farmington Public Schools

that the students should decide what they do and do not need to know and that requirements are an archaic notion.

Finally, vote for a candidate that expects more from Farmington Public Schools than most students do okay. They have the community support and the programming to do better. You need to expect more than "okay."

Dave York
Farmington Hills

Appreciates Ford

Instead of a letter filled with grievances, I would like to send a letter of appreciation for Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit. Starting with the valet drivers (five young men and women came to our rescue to help guide my father out of the car and safely escort him into a wheelchair) and ending with the 24-hour staff, all of the Henry Ford Hospital staff were more than accommodating.

The nurses (even the ones who were not assigned to my dad) would come to check on him, answer questions, and help with his care. The doctors were compassionate. They would explain matters in lay terms and allowed us to actively be involved in my dad's treatment. The nurses' aides (or personal care staff) were respectful and treated my father with dignity. And the social worker strove hard to place my dad at an appropriate aftercare facility, which suited all of his needs.

Even the 24-hour staff were concerned and compassionate. The staff worked well together as a team. Everyone's objective seemed to be to make my dad comfortable (as well as us) and to ensure his safety.

The hospital was clean and bright and had state-of-the-art technology. The admission and discharge processes were quick and efficient.

My dad has Alzheimer's and can be a difficult patient at times. Seeing him deteriorate so fast is devastating, so when strangers come to your aid and strive so hard to make you feel comfortable and supported, it really makes you stop and take notice. And notice we did! My mother and I wish to thank the staff at Henry Ford Hospital (Detroit) Neurology 5th floor for making my dad's stay so peaceful, offering a weary traveler a haven.

Andrea Wolfson Hawkins
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

"A lot of people try to understand what we go through, but these people really understand because they're in the same situation."

- Peg Krueger, Michigan Military Moms member

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