

OUR VIEWS

Publisher, others step to the plate

One frequently hears sports managers and coaches, when discussing dealing with the loss of a key player, say other players must "step up to the plate," a sports idiom meaning the others must accept responsibility for keeping the team afloat.

Plymouth publisher Patrick Olson and others are proving that axiom isn't appropriate solely in the sports world.

Olson, founder of Hayden-McNeil Publishing Inc., put his Patrick and Patricia Olson Foundation out in front of a month-long book drive aimed at putting 100 books in each of the Plymouth-Canton school district's 350 K-5 classrooms.

That's 35,000 books Olson wants to put in the hands of youngsters across the district. And Olson has pledged to make up any shortfall of books not donated during the book drive.

School district officials figure Olson is putting himself on the hook for anywhere from \$200,000 to \$500,000. He's willing, he said, because so many of the things that compete for our children's attention are unhealthy and, frankly, not useful.

Olson knows getting kids to focus on reading can be tough. It's a habit best acquired early, and if he can help teachers in their efforts to build that habit in children, all the better.

Penny Joy, the district's K-12 curriculum coordinator for language arts and social studies, points out research shows classroom libraries should have 25 books per child. That's 600 books for a classroom with 24 students, a total of 210,000 books for a project this size. This book drive isn't about to hit that figure, but that's not the point.

The point is, the district has a need, and Olson stepped up to help fill it.

He's not the only one "stepping up." The Friends of the Penn are making it their mission to save the historic Penn Theatre in downtown Plymouth from a potential date with a wrecking ball. The group, a grass-roots effort started by Plymouth resident Jennifer Philpot-Munson, is growing almost daily in support, and its efforts to raise awareness and — more importantly — money are beginning to produce results.

The group is suddenly in competition with Redemption Ministries, International, the church ministry currently leasing the Penn, to see which group can save the theater. Both groups seem to have similar plans for the theater, and a joint venture of some kind would seem prudent.

Citizens in both instances are "stepping up to the plate," meaning our children will have books to read and our town could still have a historic treasure many consider the face of Plymouth. In our book, that's a home run.

We can all support the environment

Friday is Earth Day and no matter what your political preference or religious belief, the environment is an issue we can all support.

We salute the early champions of conservation and the voices who lobbied for clean water and clear air legislation throughout the decades that has improved the quality of life for all.

Local Earth Day events for many years centered around recycling — bottles, cans, plastic and paper.

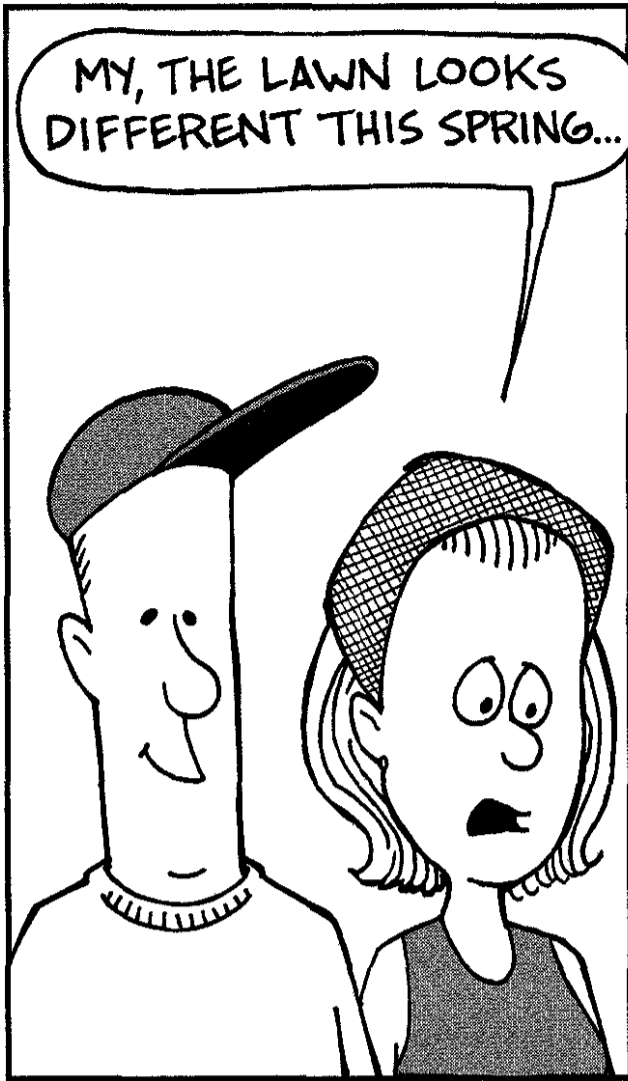
In our high-tech world, it's also about recycling and reusing the new tools of life in 2005 — cell phones. So don't toss that old phone in the trash.

One cell phone company, Verizon Wireless, will be collecting used cell phones Friday to mark the 35th anniversary of Earth Day.

The company's HopeLine program benefits from the collection of wireless phones and accessories from any wireless service provider. Most of the phones and equipment are refurbished and sold. The proceeds are used to purchase newer wireless phones for domestic violence survivors and to support domestic violence shelters and organizations. The others are recycled in an environmentally friendly way.

In 2004, consumers throughout the U.S. donated more than 1.6 million phones to HopeLine, of which 140,000 phones were recycled, according to Verizon. That means more than 200 tons of electronics waste and batteries have been kept out of landfills.

Earth Day 2005 is the perfect time to start making a difference. Whether you take a walk and enjoy nature, plant a tree, or renew a pledge to reuse and recycle household items — include that old cell phone, too — take time to reflect and enjoy the outdoors and pledge to preserve Mother Earth.



LETTERS

Wake-up call

During Plymouth Township's last two elections, (the purchase of bonds for the Township Hall and the election for supervisor), I was quoted in the newspaper and said in the debate that the current administration couldn't build the Township Hall without it being over-budget and that they couldn't pay for this without raising our taxes because of all the spending they have been doing for the last four years.

Six months after the election we are now \$1.1 million over budget on our new hall, (which keeps growing every day). The board made pledges and promises to Plymouth Township voters in the literature they put out during the elections saying, "We will not raise your taxes, no new taxes we can do it without a tax increase."

Now they want the voters to approve a tax increase on May 3, an increase of 0.3 mills. I say let's make them keep their promises, let them do it all without a tax increase.

During the election they bragged about all the belt-tightening, budget cutting, sound investments, how excellent fiscal managers they have been, and that they had over \$5 million dollars saved, then why do we need an increase?

When our officials want a tax increase they threaten to lay off employees, and when they want to get re-elected they brag about all the money they have spent. When will they learn to just live within their budget like they should?

If this gets voted down they said they would bring it before the people in August or November for just the renewal alone. Our officials have no problem wasting our money on a second election, I asked them to word it as two separate issues in this election so we could vote on each one separately. No, they want you to have no choice, it's all or nothing this time.

The board made such a big issue of the cost of an election when I made them do just one for the new township hall. What hypocrites. I ask that you vote NO on this increase because either way there will be lay-offs, they keep spending more than they take in. I keep saying this, but no one seems to care.

Don Schnettler
Plymouth Township

Think of people

(Phil Powers's) suggestion to analyze our Michigan situation like the thinking of a CEO ("Wanted: Bold leaders to suggest sweeping changes," *Observer*, April 7) is excellent.

Then our Legislature would have to forget what party they represent and do what is good for the state, not think of their ego, or re-election possibility.

What might be a thought is elect people who are older and are not in office to enhance themselves. For instance, people who took early retirement. Such as educators, managers, accountants and small business owners. These people have real business sense and not theories. I am a native Michigan citizen and

very disappointed in the situation we are in. My dad would always say, "The unions will run this country."

I look forward to your columns on all subjects.

Tony Wisniewski
Plymouth

Support the Penn

Of course, there is unbelievable public support for preserving the Penn Theatre. I have yet to speak with a single person that is not interested in preserving the theater, and that is not willing to back it with financial support.

Kellie Kuhn
Plymouth

No city support

I was pleased to see (Plymouth Mayor Stella Greene) at the (Friends of the Penn) meeting last Sunday night, Envision the Penn at the Masonic Temple in our downtown. I would have liked to hear her speak about the Penn as well.

But, really, the point of this letter is to ask about the "tight" resolution the city commissioners gave about the Friends of the Penn. It was made very clear that you would not be giving any financial aid to this endeavor. OK, so the city does not have the money. But why was I left with the impression that the city was mainly concerned that it clearly would, in no way, shape or form be helping this group with any money at all, no matter what?

I mean, what the heck is our city all about? Moving Subway stores in and office supply stores out? It seems to me that you could have stated the whole thing much more positively. For instance, saying that you were thrilled that this group had formed to save the Penn and that you would do anything at all that you could do to help them, but that you just did not have any money right now to help financially.

The same intent is there, however, that resolution or statement would have been so much more supportive to all the people who are working their butts off to save our town. Whoever saves that theater, or helps, will be a friend of Plymouth for sure, forever because, once again, if we lose the Penn, we will lose Plymouth.

What do you want to see happen? How do you think it should work, not that the city has gotten involved at all in this effort. Was the city just going to let the Penn go? Seems like it to me.

Elaine Attridge
Plymouth

Saving the Penn

Saving the Penn Theatre is probably the most important issue Plymouth has faced in the last 10 years. As an attraction for both locals and visitors, young and old, it holds a key place in our downtown. We must save it. The history of Plymouth is in that building more than any other in this town.

The building itself is very intact. Its uses as a movie and event facility are as viable as ever. But, most importantly, it

has the potential to serve the community for many years to come, providing a multi-use entertainment facility that Plymouth cannot afford to lose.

I attended the "Friends of the Penn" meeting at the Masonic last Sunday. The group of seven board members made various well-planned presentations. The recording of Lloyd Oliver ("the Voice of the Penn Theatre" recordings for 20 years!) and the clips from the movie *The Majestic* with Jim Carrey were both humorous and on point.

At the end was a Q&A session. A few questions had been answered when someone (a genius, whoever you were!) asked the FOP board, "Why do you want to save the Penn?"

Now, I was ready for the usual bit, re-iterating the same lines of what had been already discussed. Instead, like in *The Majestic* movie (worth seeing now, by the way) a magical moment occurred. Each board member stepped cautiously up to the microphone, thought for a second or two, and put forth the most personal and touching reasons one could imagine.

Each was unique. Some remembered going there as a child. Some had moved away and recently returned to Plymouth to raise families. Another located here from a foreign land, and found Plymouth to be a perfect home. Another said historic preservation is important in small towns and makes them attractive.

FOP Community Awareness Committee chair Ellen Elot started to speak about growing up in Plymouth, too. But she stopped and called out to her son and daughter who were in the back of the room. They came forward. And, with her arms around her kids, her voice breaking just a little, she said, "This is why I want to save the Penn. I went there, and I want them to go, too."

Well, I don't have any kids, but I'll sure go along with Ellen on that. The Penn can certainly offer a lot to kids as well as adults.

Let's start a new day for historic preservation in Plymouth. If you have not yet, visit www.friendsofthepenn.org and make a donation or sign up for a committee or just get informed.

Mark Oppat
Old Village

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

"We insist (Plymouth and Plymouth Township) fish or cut bait ... If they're committed, then sign. If they decide they don't want to go forward for their financial reasons, they have to say that. But, they'll be on the hook for significant dollars, as we're over a million dollars (in design costs) into this project."

— Alan Helmkamp, assistant Wayne County executive for government relations, on the status of the Sheldon Road underpass project

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