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Letters to the Editor

Editor:

I am family therapist in Moraga. I have been hearing a lot from teens I treat about their own concerns regarding peers or even younger Jr. High kids posting on Facebook or texting pictures of themselves in various states of undress. "Sexting", sexual messages and photos, has become a very common behavior in our local area, much to my concern. As we know, once information is let loose onto the Internet, there is no way of controlling where it ends up and for how long. The technology component is a complicating factor of another larger issue, I believe. The world went through a giant upheaval during the sexual revolution and the use of shame as a control mechanism was no longer acceptable. In many cases at the present time, nothing is being taught about self-respect as a motivator of behavior. Long-term thinking has never been a strong suite of adolescents. They are surrounded by images and messages that encourage doing anything that gets attention, the more sexual the better. If asked, I doubt any would be pleased to be remembered as the girl (or boy) whose nude photos were shared by everyone due to an impulsive gesture.

I believe we must get to know our children better so that we can have more open discussions about the repercussions of actions, especially those that become public. Adolescence is a time of pushing the envelope and taking certain risks. There needs to be a better understanding about implied messages. If a girl will share these kinds of private images or engage in aggressive sexual messaging what behaviors might be expected to go along with that kind of thinking? Often, these connections don't seem to be made and it is only after exposure to public shaming or sexual aggression that the real understanding comes. Parents need to be involved in exploring those risks with their kids while instilling a sense of self-pride that goes beyond academics and sports and nurtures their children through the rest of their lives.

Cynthia Brody
Moraga

Editor:

"There go the people. I must follow them, for I am their leader." -- French politician Alexandre Ledru-Rollin
What delicious irony! February--Global Population Speak Out Month with over 250 population experts from 26 nations speaking out on the penalties of perpetual population growth--and we have a photo of 14 Lamorinda leaders shoveling sand and saying, "Altogether now . . . let's bury our heads!"

By all means, let's build a fourth bore . . . particularly when our local Congressmen can con 300 million Americans who can't spell "Caldecott" into helping pay for it. Of course we all know their \$197 million contribution will turn out to be only a down-payment as actual costs soar over the bore.

Meanwhile, east Contra Costa's agricultural land is paved over for more homes and roads and industrial centers. Makes sense: Reduce food production while increasing food consumption.

Is there any hope for America? For California? For Contra Costa? Not much . . . As someone familiar with municipal governments asked me years ago, "Have you ever met a mayor who wanted to say, 'My city's population is stable and sustainable?'"

To find hope one has to leave the U.S. Some of Great Britain's environmentalists are pointing out England is moving toward the population density of Bangladesh. And in Australia, some environmentalists are suggesting citizens intentionally waste water in hopes of convincing their politicians to take their heads out of their drought-driven sands and stop encouraging more births and more immigrants.

While Lamorinda residents spend 24 to travel 4 (minutes and miles) our smiling leaders shovel sand in celebration of a fourth bore for '24.' What a snore!

"The obscure takes time to see, but the obvious takes longer." -- Edward R. Murrow

Edward C. Hartman
Moraga

Editor:

When did wheat, something human beings have been consuming for over 10,000 years, turn into cancer causing poison? Why are you promoting a radical viewpoint about health and nutrition. What kind of doctor is Theresa Tsingis?

I was appalled after reading Part 2 of the "Bread-Staff of Life, or Slice of Illness". I have a Bachelors Degree in biology, and have taken immunology classes, and take offense to her article. How the article is written she is implying almost all auto-immune disorders are caused by eating wheat. She also lists diabetes as an autoimmune disorder, which it is not. If it were that easy then by simply ceasing the consumption of wheat we can cure all auto immune disorders.

Also, she states that very small amounts of wheat can cause a reaction. The very small amount she is referencing is

the amount of wheat that a person who has celiac disease can eat before they get a reaction. She is implying this small amount will cause a person with "wheat allergies" to get a reaction.

I have meet people who have celiac disease. As children they were very skinny because eating wheat stopped their ability to absorb nutrients from food, and when they eat wheat they get very sick. People with celiac disease have real disease, the rest of us do not.

Is there scientific proof of wheat allergies? What percent of the population has them? She even states in her article there isn't any way to test for them. That is because they don't exist.

Did you see the latest on Autism? Turns out the scientist who first linked Autism and vaccines has had his medical license removed, his research rescinded, and was trying to sell a competing vaccine to the one he was trying to get off the market.

After the third installment of the series it turns out Dr. Tsingis is trying to open a store to sell her wheat free goods. Trying to scare people into thinking they have wheat allergies to help her open a bakery seems disingenuous at best. I think you as a journalist have to raise the bar higher. Putting out articles like these with half truths confuse people with no scientific background, who can not see the inaccuracies in them.

Erik Owens
Orinda

Editor:

Less than a year has passed since the Acalanes School District hit local homeowners with conversion of a 2005 existing \$189 tax, to a "forever tax". Now, it's back again for a new tax. This time, it's blaming loss of State subventions for need to seek added revenues.

Regrettably, there seems inadequate District awareness that there is a simple resolution for this perceived revenue deficiency - just revert to levels of teacher expenses which prevailed prior to the Teachers Union-owned State Legislature, imposing its class size reduction dictates...and thereby, heavily increasing local teaching personnel costs. This K-2 class size reduction to a 15-20 student/classrange, from 25-30 (starting from 30+ in 1960), has caused major increases in class room and associated costs (including need for more classroom space, etc.). It also brought into the teacher population, large numbers of under-qualified teachers. Published CATO Institute studies reveal that 72% of such reductions have no impact on "accomplishment", a 13% degradation on same - and, this largely, because as many as half of "subject teachers" now lack minors or majors in such subjects.

During times of relative prosperity, these "size" costs have been manageable to a degree...especially, since in the same time frames, the Legislature raised mandated education shares of overall State revenues to 40%+ (with provision for a +5% increase in years when State revenues decline). According to a State budget website data, that share is now up to 57%. And, since teacher unionization has been growing since the '60s, teacher costs have risen significantly - but, without improved "productivity" ...by some studies, even a few percent drop.

Clearly, despite District work now underway in reducing teacher levels, it needs to respond to its revenue shortage in the same fashion any other enterprise whose costs are mainly work force headcount - and, is losing revenues. So, should Acalanes act the same way...i.e., reduce staffing to levels which revenues will support. This particularly, should not result in underfunding non-classroom functions such as safety or vital maintenance services.

There too is reason to again remind, that the District's over all money management needs some "revisiting". As noted in these pages last year, the district has engaged in several very costly "non-voted upon" consultant-driven bond re-financings. The result of which enabled the brokers and advisers to rake in 41% of the total overall re-fi proceeds.

See Bloomberg Markets Magazine October 2009 issue, re the real Acalanes story .

Attorney General Brown also claims such actions are illegal!

In closing, nothing should be inferred here as criticism of teachers - only of their unions and how they have downgraded a once highly honored profession - one, a historically respected/admired "community of professionals" ...doctors, lawyers, engineers, ministers, etc.. And now, downgraded to the equivalent of faceless "toilers" - just common denominator names on a payroll, where base pay is the same, regardless of differences in quality of effort or student outcome.

Finally - this writer is a lifelong "education fan" - son of a school teacher mother, and a recipient of a superb education in one of those long ago CA classes of 30 to 40 students.

Donald Lively
Lafayette

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