

EDITORIALS

Students, the community gain from competence

It has taken some time, but conservative and liberal ideas about how best to instill confidence in young people have melded into something truly constructive. An article by Kylie Shafferkoetter that appeared in last week's *Dallas Post* told about the "Dallas Schools Project," a joint venture between the Dallas School District and College Misericordia that seeks to bolster middle school students' self esteem in a most rational manner — building confidence through competence as they are tutored in their subjects by volunteers at the college.

This may not sound like an earth-shaking idea to many ears, especially those whose common sense has told them all along that an individual can only feel good about themselves when they have *something* to feel good about. But many well-intentioned educators and social workers put the cart before the horse, so to speak, for several years, claiming that feeling good about oneself was necessary before improvement could take place. Young people who took that opinion too seriously have been shocked to find that in the world beyond school, employers and associates care less about how you feel about yourself and more about what you can offer them. Valuing oneself has little value in that context.

This is not to say there's no reason to be concerned about people with a poor self concept; it's certainly easier to tackle intimidating new tasks with some expectation of success rather than an assumption of failure. It's even better if that confidence is built on past achievements instead of a theory of behavior. Even if someone lacks a sufficiently high opinion of themselves, at least they'll be of some value in society if they possess a useful skill. We've all known insecure but adept producers and overconfident fools whose opinion of themselves far outweighs their worth.

So, we'll add our praise for the Dallas Schools Project to that already pouring in from parents and teachers. This is a worthwhile venture that should be expanded as necessary, so that all of our kids have the opportunity to strengthen their skills, and thereby gain confidence in their abilities, and their value to others and society in general.

Let's take litter seriously

While there wasn't a lot of snow this winter, there was enough to cover the litter that mars our roadsides. Now there's no escaping the disgusting display of individual carelessness and official apathy. The roadsides in northeastern Pennsylvania are probably the trashiest to be found anywhere in America, and speak volumes about the low level of concern for natural beauty that exists among too many of our neighbors. The state's response has been inadequate; Pennsylvania seems to rely on Adopt-A-Highway volunteers to pick up after their sloppy fellow citizens, and the people who do so are to be congratulated. But even they must wonder why state and local government don't do more to discourage wholesale disregard for the appearance of our communities.

We have a few suggestions. First, a firm crackdown on litterers, with stiff fines and effective publicity of those caught despoiling the land and water. Then, greater attention to cleaning up roadside trash by state, county and local crews, perhaps using the arms and backs of minor criminal offenders. Finally, regular policing of their own land by everyone who owns or rents roadside property.

The trash that is spread about our region makes a statement about us for all the world to see, and it's not a pretty one. Let's each do our part to change the image others have of us, and perhaps that we have of ourselves.

Publisher's notebook

Ron Bartizek



Speaking of competence in basic skills, listen to this. After leaving a McDonald's restaurant (Not in the Back Mountain, thankfully), I asked our 7-year-old Carl how much change I should have gotten back when I gave the teenage girl behind the counter 78¢ for a 73¢ charge. He immediately said 5¢, and in doing so showed he was more competent in math than someone 10 years his senior. When I gave her 78¢, she mistakenly rang it up as 73¢, the right amount. Discovering her error, she was faced with calculating the change in her head. After fumbling with the coins a moment, she took a dime, handed it to me and asked feebly, "I owe you 10¢, right?" I corrected her as politely as I could, all the while wondering how this young person would ever become more than a counter girl at McD's. The answer, sadly, is that she won't, unless she finds a way to overcome the lack of concern her family and school have shown for her welfare. That's a tall order, and one that isn't filled by most people in her shoes.

Someone, you may say, must fill those fast-food jobs, and you'll get no disagreement on that, just as people like me were gas jockeys while in school and maybe a little while after. But we came out with the ability to do more and better things. Too many people today don't, and we'll all pay a price for that in the long run.

Editor's error: In reformatting last week's editorials, I cut off the first couple of lines of the Notebook, where I waxed poetic (or least intelligible) about the Hale-Bopp comet, which is the most spectacular cosmic display I can recall. You didn't miss much.



Stately barns, first turn on Conyngham Rd., Lehman. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

A Case for conservation



Alene N. Case

Did you ever wonder why it seems that new industries choose to build on farmland or other undeveloped land when there appear to be plenty of previously used industrial sites available? Well, it wasn't your imagination. Because of fears of liability and excessive clean-up costs, companies have shied away from reusing abandoned factories or building on previously occupied sites. In order to address this situation, the USEPA initiated the "Brownfields" program and the Pennsylvania government designed a highly successful "Land Recycling Program." During the past two years, both programs have contributed to the clean-up and creative use of many former business and industrial sites.

Brownfields are so named to distinguish them from greenfields. Here in the Northeast, they have contributed to the nickname "Rust Belt." Many are abandoned steel or other metal manufacturing plants, old service stations and oil

An environmental strategy for the '90s

fields, docks and naval yards, railroad depots, and other factories whose owners have moved elsewhere. Often there are contaminated soils on the sites. Sometimes there are old tanks which may or may not be empty. And, occasionally there is contaminated ground water. We are not talking here about Superfund sites where large amounts of hazardous wastes were stored.

In order to make these sites usable again, several things are required. First, there must be a plan under which the owner or purchaser agrees to terms for an environmental assessment and clean-up to certain agreed-upon standards. These standards may vary depending upon the proposed use of the property. For instance, if the site will be converted to a housing complex the standards are much more stringent than if it will again be used for a factory or industrial park. Or, if the site is serviced by a public water supply, the groundwater clean-up does not have to obey such stringent rules as if this groundwater will be used in the new facility. These more flexible standards are very important to the success of this program because in the past all clean-ups were measured against "pristine" conditions which were often virtually impossible to meet.

Second, public money is avail-

able through a variety of agencies (state or federal) to help with the assessment and clean-up especially if the present owner is not the one who was originally responsible for the environmental degradation. Many of the federal brownfields pilot sites are entire cities or towns that have been left with a legacy of abandoned industrial sites which are not only dangerous but also unsightly and an economic drain on municipal resources - places such as Philadelphia, Baltimore or Pittsburgh. State money is either given as a grant or lent at a small rate of interest. Often though, money comes from the private sector or even from the owner of the property.

One of the major reasons that owners and private investors are now willing to put money into these formerly shunned projects is that there is now (in PA at least) a big reduction in the risk of future liability if the clean-up is performed as agreed upon. A large part of the 1995 law that created the Land Recycling Program relates specifically to these concerns. Now people are not so afraid to purchase "used" land because the risk of future expense or litigation from prior environmental pollution is minimized under the state law.

Another benefit of the

brownfields programs is that the surrounding community becomes involved in most projects. Some have even turned abandoned industrial sites into parks or greenways for citizens previously trapped in bleak downtown areas. But, the most tangible result for these citizens is the increase in local jobs when new industries move in or current ones expand. Since many of these so-called brownfields are near public transportation or are within walking distance of unemployed people, these jobs are easier to get to than if the industry had located in a suburban area.

It is obvious that these programs can lead to win-win situations if they continue to be used conscientiously. There will be a second annual Brownfields Conference held in Kansas City, Missouri, Sept. 3-5, 1997 (contact 1-888-795-4684). It will focus on fostering "effective partnerships that facilitate the revitalization of contaminated properties." Now, think about that for a moment - isn't that a lot better than the bulldozing and paving of more farmland or forests? This is one time that a little flexibility has opened many doors to help cities, industries, workers, citizens and our natural surroundings. Is this perhaps one route to sustainable development?

ONLY YESTERDAY



60 Years Ago - April 30, 1937 MOVE TO DIVIDE LEG. DISTRICT DELAYED

The move to divide the Sixth Legislative District and put the Dallas end in the sprawling rural division with sections of the Second and Fourth District in the lower end of the county may be delayed until 1940 according to advice from Harrisburg this week. Protests from other parts of the State, where reapportionment of districts would handicap present members of the House who want to be re-elected in 1938, have caused the Democratic leaders to consider tabling the measure.

An increase of 4 mills in the school tax levy may be necessitated at Kingston Township by increased expenses of running the district. A tentative budget was adopted at a special meeting of the directors on Monday evening. It is based upon a 30-mill levy, an increase of four over last year.

50 Years Ago - May 2, 1947 MEDICALS OBSERVE 70TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr. and Mrs. John Merical, of Lake Street, will observe their 70th wedding anniversary May 6. For most of his life Merical was a member of the Wilkes-Barre City Fire Department. Today at 93, he is the oldest member of that department. The couple has two daughters, three grandchildren and one great granddaughter.

Ground was broke on Monday by Doug Kulp, Kingston contractor for three new houses on Susquehanna St. in the former Freedman and Dattner plot just off Center Hill Road. They are the first of 20 which Kulp expects to build in this area. Two others will be built in Parrish Heights, as soon as the first ones are completed.

You could get - Sirloin steaks, 59¢ lb.; pork butts, 45¢ lb.; grapefruit, 3/17¢; Parkay Oleo, 43¢ lb.; Swan Soap, reg. 2/21¢.

40 - Years Ago - April 26, 1957 UM SHAVERTOWN SET TO EXPAND SUNDAY SCHOOL

The Executive and Public Relations Committee of Shavertown UM Church Building Fund Campaign met Tuesday evening to lay plans for the opening phases of the \$175,000 campaign which will

be conducted during the first half of June to enlarge the church sanctuary and Sunday School Department.

Sam Ashley started this week to raze the former Ritter Paint Shop at the rear of the Gregory Building on Main Street to make way for the new addition to Miners National Bank. The building until recently was occupied by the Drawthread Dept. of Natona Mills. Now playing at Himmler Theatre, "The True Story of Jesse James" with Robert Wagner and Jeffrey Hunter.

30 Years Ago - April 27, 1967 DALLAS EMERGENCY BUYS NEW HYDRAULIC JACK

Dallas Ambulance Association at their meeting last week voted to purchase a portable hydraulic jack for use at the scene of automobile accidents. The new piece of equipment is expected to speed the rescue of victims pinned in the increasing number of wrecks and crashes throughout the area.

A.J. Sordoni Jr., Chairman of the Board of Commonwealth Telephone Company announced a 64th consecutive quarterly common dividend of 23¢ per share payable May 15 to shareholders of record May 5, 1967. Sordoni stated that revenue for the first quarter of 1967, was up 7.9% over

same period last year. The Back Mountain Bloodmobile had its largest spring collection in history of 182 pints on Friday at Dallas Junior High School. Spring collections are never quite so large as fall collections says Mrs. Pearl Gilroy coordinator.

20 Years Ago - April 28, 1977 THREE SEEK DISTRICT JUSTICE POSITION

Three area men are waging an extensive campaign for position of district justice in Magisterial District 3-8 in the Back Mountain. At stake is the six year term presently held by Magistrate Leonard Harvey. Two challengers to incumbent Harvey are Donald J. Jones, Jackson Township police chief and Henry Tucker, Jr., Lehman Twp., police officer and constable.

The Citizens Advisory Committee of Dallas School District has prepared a community-school opinion survey to poll citizens, students and staff for information to assist them in preparing a long range plan for the district. Once the information is returned, tabulated and interpreted, it will be used by 12 Citizens Advisory Committee study groups to prepare recommendations regarding district needs and projected goals.

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The Dallas Post

Published Weekly By Bartsen Media, Inc.
P.O. Box 366, Dallas PA 18612
717-675-5211

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