Letters & Opinion

The Power Of Kindness

To the editor:

The Holidays are upon us once again. The halls of Souhegan High are just buzzing with excitement. There is energy different from the typical holiday's hustle and bustle. It is all about the spirit of giving.

Area agencies have provided wish lists from families less fortunate in our community. Each student advisory is busy making wishes come true. It is heart warming to hear the students talking about what they are giving, as opposed to what they are receiving.

Students, and staff, are busy making lists, collecting, and wrapping the gifts for people they have never met. These young people are not turning their heads away; they are taking action to help. Too many times we hear stories of teenagers gone wrong. I am witnessing a shining example of teenagers gone right. I for one, want to thank our community for raising this upcoming Generation of Compassion.

I was one of those children. I was 7 when my brothers and I woke to a Christmas with no presents. I was devastated. In my young mind, I thought, that I must have been one of those bad little girls that Santa ignored. Christmas no longer was magic for me, I felt terribly alone. Things got even worse when I was 9. My parents were killed, my brothers and I were separated, and I was sent to an orphanage.

When was 16, season arrived and I was still at the orphanage. I had given up on wishes from many years before. Christmas was for other kids. I was not aware the staff entered my name in a Radio Charity event asking for donations. They announced," A 16 yr old girl, loves music, and waits to hear favorite songs played on her transistor radio."

Christmas morning, I expected the usual mittens and hat. I was shocked when I was handed a large beautifully wrapped gift. I burst into tears, when I opened my very own record player. I was told someone had donated it, when they heard about me on the radio. For the first time in years, I felt the spirit of the season return to my heart. I still feel it every time I witness acts of kindness.

So all you Anonymous Santas! Your donations have the power to heal broken hearts. Years from now someone will be telling the story of your gift. Your gift of kindness will be passed on to new generations. And so it

Merry Christmas, Margaret Bagley

Safety And Well-Being Of Students Is Of Highest Priority

To the editor:

Ms Silva, your article: Going Public Why I Don't Want Cameras, Amherst citizen 12/1/2009, describing Souhegan High School as a "community of learners, born of respect, trust and courage" is commendable but somewhat idealistic. Two of our three children have graduated from SHS, I can assure you that the community of learners you describe is in fact, simply human. I would encourage you to access the police reports, a matter of public record. It would be wonderful to have a high school where every "scuffle" is settled with conversation and counseling. Although an effective exercise to have those involved write about the experience, I am not convinced that this assignment will be a deterrent to "scuffles" in the future.

Had the concerned parents at the Nov 7th School Committee meeting been allowed more than three minutes to present their case for moderate security on campus, you would have understood that no one is proposing the level of security, which you describe in your article. A quote from your writing: "We would need to have a security guard watching a live feed of all the cameras positioned throughout the building. Is that what people want?" I do not think that locking the door behind you and surveillance in and around the building is excessive, nor does it represent the "gotcha" mentality that you describe.

I appreciate the honesty of your comment, "Mostly, though, I do not want cameras in our high school because I do not want to give up my personal privacy. I do not want to be watched as I walk down a hall or engage in conversation." In addition, "We do not pay lip service to our mission statement; we have used it as an active teaching vehicle for 18 years".

The SHS Mission Statement reads in part:

To challenge and expand the comfortable limits of thought, tolerance and performance

To inspire and honor the active stewardship of family, nation and globe (http://www.sprise.com/shs/about.aspx?id=1652)

The issue of security is more about the student and less about your personal privacy. The issue of security is about putting good stewardship into practice. The safety and well-being of all students is of highest priority. Whose comfortable limits are being challenged? Of whom is good stewardship demanded if not those who lead and guide our children? What is it about moderate security that makes some feel uncomfortable? Has our once progressive school become archaic?

> Ellen Cunis **Amherst**

Letters To the editor:

The Amherst Citizen is eager to serve as a community forum. We welcome your letters, opinions, and commentaries and make every effort to run them in their entirety. We do reserve the right to edit. The views and opinions expressed do not necessarily represent the position of the staff of The Amherst Citizen.

Please direct your letters, views and commentary to the Editor, The Amherst Citizen, P.O. Box 291, Amherst, NH 03031-0291, or e-mail your submission to: news@amherstcitizen.com. We will attempt to run your letter as submitted (space permitting) providing it is signed and phone number is included.

Security Cameras Have Become A Excitement And Optimism Runs Fact Of Life

To the editor:

We would like to pose this question to Peggy Silva; "Why does the inclusion of security cameras translate into the termination of the intervention and teaching strategies currently in place at the high school?" One does not exclude the other. Having cameras still allows teachable moments and does not inhibit the opportunity for mentoring our students. A cooperative approach addressing the changing security needs of our high school seems to only add to the quality of their learning environment. It seems an unfair representation to state that we need a full time person monitoring security cameras in order for them to prove affective. The cameras that have been utilized at the middle school, have not required constant monitoring and have proven to be affective. Perhaps the area that Peggy may be demonstrating some naivete to which she refers, is in the culture of Amherst which has not remained as it was 18 years ago.

Times have changed and unfortunately not completely for the better. Using Columbine as support for the ineffectiveness of security cameras seems an absurd analogy. Does it nullify the necessity of a police force that crime still exists? Of course not.! It is impossible to attempt to quantify the amount of crime that does not occur because of security measures that we employ within our community. The use of security cameras has become a fact of life in all public settings including transportation, parking lots, banks, stores as well as schools. We don't ask the adults who work within those settings to manage the potential and existence of any crime without the support of other measures. Why do we expect that of our students? It is an unreasonable burden to place on the shoulders of our students to be responsible for the 5% of the students who are busily engaging in criminal activities on school property.

Personal privacy is certainly something we are all protective of these days. We should remember, though, that the security of our students transcends the comfort of the staff. We do not believe that this request for cameras is an emotional or reactive response to recent events in our community. We feel that these events have merely served as a catalyst for our community to recognize the growing needs of our high school and to respond appropriately.

No one is asking the school to abandon their founding mission, but merely to recognize the current state of society and not sacrifice the safety of our children by clinging to principles that may truly need some extra support and a little updating. As times change, so must we all.

Mary Lefebvre

"Rep. Hodes Deserves No Thanks"

To the editor:

Nancy Iannuzzelli, in her letter titled "Thank you to Rep. Hodes," thanked our congressman for his vote in favor of health care reform. Unfortunately, Ms. Iannuzzelli is seriously mistaken on the costs of the health care bill. Contrary to her assertions, taxes will increase—and not just for the rich. According to the bipartisan Joint Committee on Taxation, by 2019, when the bill would be fully in effect, any families earning over \$75,000 would see a net hike in taxes. In addition, a large amount of the costs of the bill has been put onto the corporate sector, and those costs will be passed along to people at all income levels in the form of higher prices and increased premiums. This is all on top of the fact that the drain in private sector resources, as well as a job-killing employer mandate, will lead to a loss of even

But we do not have to rely purely on forecasts to see what a disaster this federal takeover will be-we have only to look at the government-run failures that our New England neighbors have created. According to the Wall Street Journal ("No Maine Miracle Cure," Aug. 21, 2009), Dirigo Care in Maine has only slightly fewer uninsured today than before it went into effect, meanwhile it has caused insurance premiums to go up 74 percent in only four years (and premiums are almost four times more than the same policy in New Hampshire), and taxes have gone up, despite the claims of proponents that cost savings would completely pay for the plan. According to the Cato Institute, Mass Care has similar problems, including increase in private insurance premiums at a rate of double the national average, crippling deficits in the program, and increased wait times.

In fact, the government has been the source of the problems in our healthcare system. So instead of looking to the government to solve our problems, we need the government to undo the damage it has done over the past 50 years and just get out of the way. Popular Řepublican proposals that call for tort reform and allowing purchase of insurance across state lines are a good start, but we should do more. We need to let individuals have the control—insurance should be personal and portable, not employer-based. We need to encourage individuals pay for their own medical costs by offering a tax credit for 100 percent of all health care dollars. We need to encourage charitable acts in the health care community by providing 100 percent deductions for acts of charity. We need to increase competition among providers by rethinking medical licensing laws, increasing the ability of physicians assistants, midwives, and other non-physician practitioners to treat patients. And finally, we need to reduce government interference in the market by giving Medicare enrollees a voucher-empowering seniors to choose a private insurance plan that best meets their needs and allowing them to keep any savings they achieve from choosing a more economical plan.

Only when we unleash the free market, which has been shackled by the government for decades, will we truly see the reduction in cost, increase in accessibility, and increase in quality of care that we all want.

> Carolyn McKinney **Amherst** Secretary, Liberty Caucus of New Hampshire

High For SHS Basketball

To the editor:

The Souhegan Boys Varsity basketball team under the direction of head coach Mike Heaney and led by senior co-captains Stephen Daigneau, DJ Petropulos, and Sam Protzman begin the 09-10 campaign with a Dec. 18 matchup at defending state Class I champion Portsmouth. The outlook is good for the Sabers this year as they come off their first playoff season in hree years at the varsity level in 08-09, and a near perfect 17-1 mark on the junior varsity level. New Hampshire Sports Blog.com gives SHS a pre season Class I ranking of 6th out of the 23 participating schools.

I would like to take this opportunity to ask for your support at the games this year. I know that it means a great deal to the players and their families who sacrifice much to represent our town in competition. Souhegan will be participating in the Cheshire Tire/Ted's Shoes and Sports Holiday Basketball Tournament at Keene State University Dec.27-29, and will play their home opener on Tuesday, Jan. 5 vs. John Stark. Please log on to www.souheganbasketball.org for schedules and other information pertinent to the program. I hope to see you at some of the games, and let's go Sabers!!

> Mike Boehm **Amherst**

Town Budget Process

Report From the Town of Amherst Ways and Means Committee

The Town of Amherst Ways and Means Committee (W&M) has been meeting for the past two months looking at all the Town of Amherst department budgets. During this review process, the W&M assigns one or more members to each Town Department in order to allow for one-on-one meetings with department heads and detailed discussion of individual budget line items and warrant articles. The W&M wants to provide as much of that information as possible to assist the citizens of Amherst in making their decisions on voting day. We intend to submit periodic articles to local media outlets in order to keep the public informed of the overall budget development process and provide details regarding specific issues under discussion. This process will continue until the voters cast their ballots in March. We hope that this and future columns will help to stimulate conversation on the town's budget. Please note that the Town of Amherst Ways & Means Committee only deals with the town budget and not the budgets for the schools.

The focus of this article is to provide information regarding a proposed warrant article for a Road Reconstruction Bond. A similar article for road reconstruction was turned down by the voters last year. The condition of some roads in Amherst has been deteriorating for some time. As a result, The Road Funding Analysis Committee (RFAC) was appointed by the Board of Selectmen (BOS) to look at the condition of the roads in Amherst and develop plans and cost estimates for repair. The RFAC produced the Road Funding Analysis Committee Report dated October 27, 2008 (available at Town Hall and Amherst Library). It is a very thorough analysis of the 122 miles of town roads in Amherst. The RFAC determined that about 23 miles of these roads needed to be completely reconstructed. They are primarily older roads such as Boston Post, Corduroy, Merrimack and others. These roads are primary routes in the town and were built long before modern road standards were introduced in the 70s. They are heavily traveled and have seen an increase in traffic over the years and an increase in the weight of that traffic. It is important to note that need for reconstruction applies only to certain sections of roads and in most cases not the full ength of the road. State roads, such as 122 and 101, are not included under this evaluation or bond.

Discussion at this point is focused on a bond request for 3 million dollars to reconstruct approximately four and one half (4.5) miles of the twentythree miles of roads deemed in need of reconstruction. The specific sections of roads to be reconstructed would generally follow the priorities recommended in the RFAC report. However, the Director of the Public Works Department will be able to make adjustments to the plan if necessary. For instance, if a section of road encounters flood damage, it might move up in priority. The costs are yet to be determined and would be spread out over the length of the bond.

What will happen if the town continues to put off this infrastructure spending? The roads will deteriorate further and the repairs will be more expensive (infrastructure needs don't get cheaper). If the town is unable to keep up with future routine maintenance (such as resurfacing) on current good roads, more miles of roads will deteriorate to the point of needing to be completely reconstructed. We have been putting these repairs off for some time now. W&M is asking the BOS to investigate 1) whether it is more efficient to bond the entire 23 mile reconstruction work needed than to subdivide the bonding requests, and 2) to verify the time period over which the repair work would be completed. If this bond is presented and passed, state law does not allow monies from it to be diverted to other areas of the town budget.

In general, The W&M supports some kind of bonding authority, but there are many more questions to ask. One thing is certain. We will never have enough money to do all the things we want to do, but we need to work with the BOS to prudently develop a plan that best serves the citizens of Amherst. Your input will allow us to research any of your concerns and to communicate with the BOS on the issues that you raise. The Road Reconstruction Bond is only one of many areas that we are looking at. It will be well into January before we begin to formulate our recommendations to the vot-We would welcome your e-mails at waysandmeans@amherstnh.gov.

> Town of Amherst Ways and Means Committee John Siemienowicz, Chairman Charlene Carper David Chen Peter Eiche Dee Fasoli Jack Kunkel John Maynard Steve Nelson

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