

points of view

Parking scofflaw crackdown warranted

HOW ANGRY do you get when a perfectly able person parks in a "handicapped parking" space, jumps from the car and dashes into a store for that last-minute purchase?

It makes me damned mad. Folks in parts of Florida, Nevada and Virginia, and even here in Flint, Mich., have decided they're made as hell and aren't going to take it anymore. They're taking a personal approach, with the support of their local police.

They include people with handicaps who are tired of pulling into a lot, only to find parking spots labeled "handicapped" are full. They are people without handicaps, tired of

watching people with selfish motivations park where they should not.

They are also law enforcement officers who are deputizing and training teams of these residents in an effort to ticket offenders, some of whom pay fines of up to \$100.

AND DON'T forget state Sen. Doug Cruce, R-Troy, who has introduced legislation to up fines statewide, put points on that person's driver's license, and allow offending cars to be towed away at the owner's expense. Fraudulent use of handicap permits or plates would carry a minimum fine of \$100, and eligibility requirements for obtaining a permit



Casey Hans

would be tightened.

Cruce also advocates deputizing residents to ticket and fine offenders. I agree. Hit 'em where it hurts — in their pocketbooks.

Cruce said he saw a good thing and wanted to encourage law enforcement agencies statewide to

take action.

He cited a 1986 poll done in Cleveland, which asked: "What would you do if you saw someone illegally parked in a handicapped parking space?" Forty-three percent said they would park there too. The second most popular response was "do nothing."

"It's just like any other law — if nobody's going to enforce it, nobody's going to comply with it," said Lt. Sid Baker of the Flint Police Department, who helped structure that city's deputy program, which went into effect Aug. 8 after 1 1/2 years of planning.

THE FIRST month, volunteers logged 513 hours and issued 116 tickets; the second month, they worked 621 hours and issued 195 citations.

Those figures are nearly double what tickets were being issued before the program started, and Baker said it's working well.

The city has 50 volunteers ages 17-78 who went through 18 hours of training, and work in teams of two, sweeping the city in search of these illegal parkers. They work on city streets and in shopping center parking lots. They wear special blazers with patches identifying them, and their cars are marked.

Baker said the community response has been "positive, with the exception of those who got the \$100 tickets." A county coalition of handicapped people got the fine increased to \$100 in Flint in 1987 and pushed for the current program.

Awwww, "so what" you say. Big deal. Who cares whether somebody saves themselves an extra 10 or 20 feet of walking by parking in one of those spots? Most of the time, those spaces are empty anyway.

Wait until you, or a member of your family, develop a handicap and must struggle to go that extra 10 feet. Tell me then, you don't care.

Give students chance to stay free of alcohol

THIS IS one Pandora's box that needs to be opened.

That's the thought that went through my mind when reading about the testimony given by several suburban students before the state legislature.

On one hand it was heart-rending as students made a plea for some very sane legislation to help them cope with a serious problem — alcoholism.

Joined by parents, U.S. District Judge Bernard Friedman and reinforced with support from a handful of legislators, the students poured out their hearts.

"I wouldn't be able to live in an environment where alcohol is present," admitted West Bloomfield High School student Ed Worley.

Worley was backed up by his mother who testified, "I don't think that a young person should have the pressure of dealing with a roommate who uses alcohol or drugs."

THEY ARE supporting legislation introduced by state Rep. David Hongman, R-West Bloomfield, that would allow students to check off on their registration form a preference for a non-drinking roommate.

Certainly, a simple enough request.



Steve Barnaby

But the other side of the testimony, the opposition side, was, frankly, enough to turn your stomach.

A wavering state Rep. Judith Miller, R-Birmingham, withholds support, saying the checkoff wouldn't provide enough information.

A spokesman representing the state's 15 state universities testified the legislation would be a Pandora's box. The fear of liability seems to outweigh a concern for students.

The real Pandora's box is the one that shows that your children go away to college and are virtually unsupervised. Since the great social upheavals of the 1960s, college officials have about washed their hands of supervision.

Tour a campus once — the one to which you want to send your child. Oh, no, don't do it during parent orientation. And don't do it during the

middle of the day.

GO AT night, on a weekend. Week nights can be as enlightening; weekends are just more graphic.

Certainly, many, many students study. Some students are mature enough to live away from home with little or no supervision. They can enjoy themselves without being destructive to themselves or others.

But many others, far more than you probably realize, are drunk. Many of those cutesy darlings you saw cheering on their team during the day are out-of-control drunks at night as are the guys they were cheering.

They drink on the streets, they drink in their dorms. They punch holes in the walls. They flood their dorms.

They drive when they're drunk, and some of them get killed because of it.

Partying at college is a norm, not an exception to the rule. And alcohol is a big part of the party scene.

Hongman's legislation certainly isn't a cure-all. But it's a beginning for the kids who want to stay straight. They deserve the legislature's support.

Give your legislator a call, and tell 'em how you feel.

Young voters are not buying political pitch

IF YOU think that the tenor of the presidential campaign is superficial, sophomoric and too often devoid of substance, then you think the same way that many area high school students thought after watching the first Bush-Dukakis debate.

The ad libs and one-liners may have been carefully rehearsed and masterfully presented, but they didn't impress a lot of the youngsters.

"Make fun of each other. That's all they did," said Dennis Ralini, a Farmington High School senior. "Every time you turned to it, people (the audience) was laughing. What was this, a comedy?"

It's not supposed to be a comedy. It's supposed to be the process that selects the most powerful man in the world.

Nothing wrong with sharp, pointed wit and biting verbal exchanges. American political history is filled with gifted speakers. In the Capitol you will find historic markers detailing famous speeches on the floors of the House and the Senate. What speech from Mr. Bush or Mr. Dukakis do you expect to see similarly enshrined?

"Because both became insulting to each other, they both lost some credibility," said Robert Hoff, a senior from Southfield-Lathrup High School.

THE LEAGUE of Women Voters isn't too hopeful. This august group



Rich Perlberg

did not want to be part of a packaged display of sound bites and future commercials. The League hosts debates to educate the viewers, not to be unwitting partners in a political campaign. The leaders of the League have said no thanks. More power to them. The debates as planned by presidential advisers left something to be desired, according to a some of the younger potential voters.

It's not that they found the debates worthless — some thought Bush and Dukakis were able to define themselves. But the students were often turned off by what they saw as childish behavior.

"Because both became insulting to each other, they both lost some credibility," said Robert Hoff, a senior from Southfield-Lathrup High School.

Different students, of course, saw different debates. Sharon Braslaw, a junior at Southfield-Lathrup High, thought Bush was eluding questions, "using way too much rhetoric and talking in circles. A lot of his points were contradictory."

Noelle Herbert, a junior at Bloomfield Hills Lathrup High School, thought it was Dukakis who looked bad. "He was mean," she said. "he was just trying to show that he was strong, but he was rude."

For many students, the debate did not help clarify issues.

"They kind of avoided the questions and just went on attacking one another's position," said Angela Lang, also from Lathrup High.

That's how the students saw it, and you have to assume that's how the candidates, or at least the people pulling their strings, want it.

The way the debate turned out was no accident. It was carefully orchestrated by each camp. There is probably polling evidence somewhere that says such an approach is the safest way to debate.

But the next generation of American voters isn't buying it.

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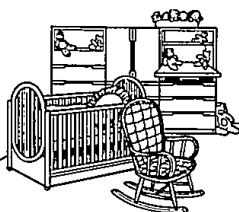
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