

points of view

Gifts could put smiles on many faces

AS PEOPLE, we don't always do ourselves proud.

Our intolerance, our fear of people who are "different" and the ugly side of our nature is seldom better displayed than when a group home moves into a neighborhood.

The cries of protest are predictable. We are concerned for our safety, we say. We are concerned for our property values.

When such pleas seem cold and self-serving, a hypocritical concern for the residents of the group home is voiced. They will be too close to busy roads, we say if a city home is proposed. They will be too far from hospitals and other services, we say if a rural home is proposed.

Some of us are becoming more honest with our protests. We flat out say we don't want "those kind of people" in our neighborhood. The targets of these protests have often been the mentally retarded who were the first to use group homes in large numbers. But no one is immune. In several affluent Oakland County communities it is now a sin to be old. We actually say, "We don't want our children to have to live near old people."

WE'VE SAID IT in Birmingham, Bloomfield Township and West Bloomfield Township, to name three places.

You can imagine how we react



Rich Perlberg

when we learn that our new neighbors are going to be former patients of a hospital for the mentally ill.

Even people with good intentions have marred the image of the mentally ill. When group homes for the retarded were first proposed, advocates sometimes soothed us by saying, "They are just retarded, they aren't mentally ill," recalls Rod

Krupka who is with Community Residential Services of the Ypsilanti Regional Psychiatric Hospital.

Despite initial misgivings, many of us learn to accept if not embrace group homes as neighbors, he says. That's partially because the fears are far more imagined than real. If we don't warm up to group homes, we usually are not bothered by them either, Krupka says.

"Nothing serious has happened," he said. "I don't want to say that sometimes people don't get sick and have to return to the hospital. We've called police a couple of times, but there have been no neighborhood injuries, no property damage."

USUALLY, OUR WORST incon-

venience is to hear loud noise from the group home or to be hustled for a cigarette, he said. The goal for most of the group home residents is to assimilate to various degrees into the community.

Krupka was on the phone recently asking for some help. The adult residents of these homes aren't often able to enjoy happy holidays. The Community Residential Services is trying to remedy that by obtaining two gifts each for the 180 to 200 clients they serve in group homes in many suburban communities including Southfield, Farmington, Novi and Royal Oak.

They are asking people to spend about \$10 a gift. Or people or organizations could supply a gift for ev-

eryone in a group home for \$50.

"You can call us up and we'll tell you that Joe W. likes rock 'n' roll and you might buy him a record," said Krupka.

Krupka works in Pontiac. You can call him at 452-8968. Andrea Weberman will take the call if he's not in. They will gladly accept contributions and buy the gifts themselves. But it seems to me that it is much more in keeping with the holidays to buy the gift yourself.

It will make someone happy because, after all, people in group homes like to get presents just like you and I do.

Maybe they are not so different after all.

Inner suburbs must work to save future

THANKSGIVING is one remnant of a lifestyle soon to pass with the turning of this century. Although we moon over how it used to be, families are changing.

Eating together has become a rarity. Seeing a mother has even become a rare experience.

Too bad? Probably. But for bigger reasons than are readily evident.

You see, many times we treat our communities in the same neglectful way we treat our families.

Rarely do we see communities combining to solve a problem. More often we see them fighting one another. Everybody suffers.

If we, as communities, don't help each other, we are in big trouble. As this last election shows, Washington sure isn't going to do anything. Neither Michael Dukakis or George Bush has an inkling of what to do to help solve the problems of middle America.

Washington is a monster, consuming itself with debt beyond imagination and special interest greed which has a bottomless appetite.

It has become a club composed of persons, nearly all wealthy, who are financed by special interest groups which only have their special interests in mind.



Steve Barnaby

Worse yet, they waste our money "defending" us against the Soviet Union and Manuel Noriega.

But those of us living outside the beltway know the real enemies are the drug runners, racial and economic discrimination and continuing exploitation by developers of our most precious resource — the communities in which we live.

That's right, your community, at least if you are in carshot of this newspaper's circulation area.

YOU MAY not have noticed, but the inner ring of suburbs, which once thrived at the expense of Detroit, are themselves beginning to hurt.

The developers are nearly done with us. Like roving paladins, they are moving on to greener pastures which they enjoy so much in turning into shopping malls, subdivisions and

cluster housing.

Today, communities like Clarkston, Lake Orion, Oxford and Holly are "the" communities in which to move.

The inner ring is being left behind — by retailers and homeowners, alike. Certainly, in this time of prosperity it is difficult to see. But look beyond the haze to Novi's retail boom and the Oakland Technology Park. That's where the jobs are and that's where the housing is being built.

For the inner ring, it has become suburb against suburb. And now, like families, we must work together. We can no longer run from the problems which have haunted this metropolitan area for so many years.

The inner ring of suburbs is rapidly becoming the core of the metropolitan area. It suffers from all the problems of the core area. As economic opportunity decreases, crime is increasing. Drugs are becoming a way of life. Violence is a real fear among many residents.

It is time for us to open our arms and to work at rebuilding the core, whether that core be Detroit, Southfield, Birmingham, Livonia or Redford Township.

It's the family thing to do.

Why does good teacher get problem students?

Q: My daughter is in the fourth grade with an outstanding teacher. My daughter has no classroom behavior problem but there seems to be a predominance of children in the class who have had problems in earlier grades. Why does this excellent teacher tend to have most of the problem students?

A: Probably because the administration knows that the teacher is an excellent teacher and probably the teacher doesn't complain, which can lead the administrator to place problem children into her classroom.



Doc Doyle

This is unfortunate. If there are impulse-ridden, acting-out children in the fourth grade in one building they should be distributed among all fourth grade teachers. I have known one teacher who badgered the principal so thoroughly

to keep impulsive kids out of her class that to keep peace the principal placed the acting-out children with another more accepting teacher who seldom complained. The teacher that complains the least and gets an overload of behavior problems can eventually become bitter, become a saint or burn out.

The answers provided here are the opinions of Dr. James Doyle and not the Troy School District. Questions for this column should be sent to Doc Doyle c/o the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150.

keeping up with government

Looking for information about state government? The League of Women Voters has a toll-free telephone service (1-800-292-5823) that may be helpful.

The league's Citizen Information

Center in Lansing offers to help people find out about such things as pending legislation, the state constitution, election laws, voting regulations or tax information.

The telephone is answered from

10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. weekdays.

The telephone service is paid for by the league's education fund. The League of Women Voters is a non-profit organization that works to keep voters interested and informed about governmental issues.

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