

POINTS OF VIEW

Bad things sometimes happen to good people

This started as a letter of support for a local family who have been our good friends for over 30 years. It became a petition signed by many friends and neighbors who sent it to the Observer.

The editor suggested a column be written about this incident, one that touched so many lives.

Over the last two weeks, Farmington server articles have related an unfortunate incident involving two foster children in the home of Hal and Jane Poindexter, longtime Farmington residents.

These children — Crystal, 4 1/2 years, and Karvel, 20 months — slipped out of the house at about 7:50 in the morning. Fortunately, the Farmington city manager apprehended them four minutes later about 100 yards from the Poindexter home.

Karvel had stepped out into the Grand River traffic. Many of us can relate similar events in our homes where our children have slipped past us and have gained an hour or so of "freedom." No matter how vigilant, at some time in our parenting, children do escape our control.

They're loving people

We know the Poindexters to be loving, caring and vigilant people. They have been active in church work, Little League and high school sports. You

may have seen Hal pushing a stroller with two to four children along Grand River, the adjacent subdivision, or at Baskin the adjacent.

This is their favorite "midpoint destination" on their daily 60- to 90-minute walks in the late afternoon or early evening, when Hal gives Jane some "daily relief" from the fostering of four small children.

In our experience when children "got away," they were perhaps returned by a neighbor or found in some hiding place. In this situation, they were rescued by the Farmington city manager and sent to the Farmington police station, where Hal found them safe and sound.

'Whims and biases'

This story should stop here, with the two children returning to their foster parents, the only parents they know. However, foster children and foster parents seem subject to the whims and biases of our administration and judicial system. For both the children and the foster parents, this can be a very painful experience.

The Farmington police reported the incident to Protective Services, and the children were removed from the Poindexter home. It is sad that after being reunited with their parents their real danger lay with the organizations who are supposed to help protect them.



JOAN POLUS

Between the combined actions of Protective Services and the Orchards, the Poindexters' foster care supervising agency, Crystal may have lifelong emotional scars.

At birth Crystal was one pound, three ounces; she survived that. However, she has had several other equally shattering experiences. Her first adoption went sour. After about nine months her adoptive family turned her back into the system.

Fortunately, she was again placed in the Poindexter home. Upon return, a vivacious and normally active 3 1/2 year old was depressed and despondent. She had regressed to the 2-year-old level.

Subsequently she was again let out for adoption. This time the prospective adoptive parents returned her before adoptive placement.

Cost in emotional growth

In two days Crystal had pulled her hair out at the roots. These bad placements cost her two years in emotional growth. To help resolve these problems, she was placed in special speech programs through the Farmington Schools and the Hawthorn Center. In the past three months she had been experiencing progress.

Rather than recommending that these foster children be returned to their loving and capable foster parents, the Protective Services investigator made the abrupt, disruptive and emotionally devastating decision to recommend that the Poindexters be cited for neglect.

Based upon this decision, the Orchards immediately removed Crystal, Karvel and Tony from the Poindexter home.

It took the Poindexters 10 days to convince the Orchards that they had made a bad decision. Crystal was then returned to them. The beautiful part of their happy reunion was that Crystal sang "Angels Watching Over Me" all the way home.

The Poindexters possess a living faith in God and instilled this faith in her young life. She trusted that God would help her through her difficulties, and he did.

The Protective Services investigator knew that in eight years of fostering,

raising four children of their own and raising three adoptive children, a complaint had never been lodged against them.

The Orchards had never received a complaint, and assigned the Poindexters their most medically difficult challenges (the premature, physically difficult, abused and handicapped), reportedly considered the Poindexters to be one of their best foster homes and they had successfully "fostered" over 20 children.

In fact, the Orchards has twice nominated the Poindexters as "Michigan Foster Parents Of The Year." Once they were honored as one of three finalists for this award.

One good thing did come out of this incident: Crystal is getting new adoptive parents. The Orchards has approved an adoptive request by... the Poindexters.

As with the other three adoptions, they see a need unlikely to be filled by others. You see, Crystal has attention deficit disorder (ADD), and probably Huntington's disease. Also, five days prior to this incident, Crystal was diagnosed as having epilepsy.

At this time we don't know whether there will be a happy ending. Protective Services has not yet notified the Poindexters that charges have been dropped.

Joan Polus, a 22-year Farmington resident, is a retired nurse.

LETTERS

Stop callers

The state of Michigan needs to have a tougher and enforceable law that will enable law officers to prosecute telephone annoyance callers.

Most of these calls are hang-up calls. While the calls can be traced to a particular telephone owner, it is virtually if not literally impossible for the law to prove who the individual is that made the calls.

However, unless it can be proved who actually made the calls, as the law stands, trying to prosecute is a lost cause.

I was victim to one of these callers for a period of an entire year. It is similar to being harassed by a stalker. I thought it was children playing a prank. But after about a thousand calls, sometimes as many as 10 in 10 minutes, I had the telephone company trace them.

It turned out not to be kids, but a

neighbor, whom I did not even know. They later bragged about not being prosecuted.

The telephone company told the police where the calls came from and the police told me. The owner of the phone and his wife denied everything. Because of past experience, the police did not prosecute.

I would like to see community backing for such an enforceable state law.

Kenneth Kemp, Farmington Hills

Ego hurt talk

In response to John Telford's Aug. 9 column:

We invited the two speakers because we wanted to hear two different approaches to our educational system. I personally thought that Telford had several good suggestions to improve schools, but his constant use of his own career as superjock, teacher and administrator wore thin on the audience. That was part of the reason for

the confrontation, not any "Christian values" thing.

The other thing that bothered the audience was that his attitude was that he was there to speak and we were there to listen.

It's just good business when your business is having rough times to go out and talk (and listen) to your customers.

Loretta Adriaens, UWSA Interim Coordinator, 12th Congressional District

Contracted pay cuts show 'class' act to our students

QUESTION: As a teacher in a district near the Plymouth-Canton School District, I believe the Plymouth teachers' decision to give back their pay raise this year is going to hurt us in future negotiations. I understand West Bloomfield teachers, custodians, bus drivers and non-certified staff did something similar. What do you think?

ANSWER: I'm proud to say that I taught and was an administrator for 17 years in the Plymouth-Canton School District and a central office administrator in West Bloomfield for nine years, both quality districts.

I'm proud to say I was president of the Plymouth Education Association that fought and won the right for collective bargaining in 1968. And I'm proud to be an alumnus of today's PEA that showed class and style throughout the turbulence that has gone on in the Plymouth community.

With no teacher concessions, this turbulence would have eliminated 30 teacher/counselor peers, increased class size and done away with all student activities from debate to football.

Whether one is down on educators or supportive of educators, all should be most proud of the message the Plymouth and West Bloomfield teachers send to children. It says Plymouth and West Bloomfield care more about the kids and the instructional program than a few extra bucks in their pockets.

It says Plymouth and West Bloomfield teachers' organizations are not going to punish students because of the political battle that is being waged by Lansing's politicians and the MEA state leadership.

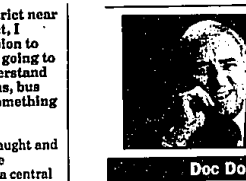
It says Plymouth and West Bloomfield teachers recognize that many of their citizens have had it with skyrocketing property tax increases.

Just consider the alternative. Let's say Plymouth or West Bloomfield teachers voted not to take a pay freeze.

The message to students, especially at the middle school and high school level, would be that teachers are in this business just for money. So please don't lecture about right and wrong values or that dedication to children stuff. Just do the teaching thing and let's get on with it.

But also remember, we students all grow into adults. We become taxpayers. And we will vote. We will remember how our teachers decimated our instructional program, our athletic teams, our debate team, our band, our journalism program, our science and computer clubs — those cherished activities of adolescence that young ones remember and reflect on the rest of their lives.

It didn't happen in Plymouth or West Bloomfield and, in this case, the winners were



Doc Doyle

Whether one is down on educators or supportive of educators, all should be most proud of the message the Plymouth and West Bloomfield teachers send to children.

many; the teachers, the parents, but most importantly the kids and their instructional programs.

Other winners were Plymouth's superintendent, Mike Hoben, and West Bloomfield's superintendent, Seymour Gretchko, and their boards of education. Had the Plymouth or West Bloomfield teachers perceived that, over the years, Hoben or Gretchko and their boards of education had been evil adversaries, the vote to take a 3 percent cut would never have happened.

And whether the educational community liked it or not, there has been substantial pressure. Raises are leveling off in the business world, many are out of jobs. It is not business as usual.

With the uncertainty of Gov. John Engler and his troops, let's hope other school districts, education associations and non-certified unions give the community, their boards of education, the central office and their own leadership time to assess what is or is not coming out of Lansing.

All this notwithstanding, the teachers in Plymouth and West Bloomfield and the non-certified employees in WB showed "class" when voting to maintain a quality program.

Let's hope other school districts in this readership area follow the example set by these teachers.

Determine the money needed to maintain a quality instructional program and, if necessary, do as they have told the public so many times during millage elections: Vote for the kids.

James "Doc" Doyle, a resident of Northville Township, is president of an educational consulting firm, Doyle & Associates.

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