

# THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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## Students Must Know Somebody Cares

Your attention is directed to what may very well be one of the most unusual letters to the editor columns ever to appear on this page in the Beacon. The centerpiece at right is a touching letter written by a student at West Brunswick High School. It is surrounded by responses from three school officials.

One thing that makes it unusual is that the name of the student writer has been withheld. It is the first time this editor has violated the paper's policy that requires the writer of any letter to be identified. Upon reading the letter, the reason for withholding this name should be obvious.

It is also unusual to solicit responses to a letter for publishing at the same time the letter is printed. The reason for this approach, hopefully, will be obvious as one reads the letter and responses.

The purpose of printing the letter is not to issue a blanket indictment of the students, teachers and administration of West Brunswick High. Whatever the level of the drug activity is at West, it is no doubt on a par with other high schools in Brunswick County, the state and the nation.

As a newspaper, we couldn't ignore the student's letter, although, admittedly, we have no way of verifying any specifics it outlines. What was verifiable is the sincerity of the student and the likelihood that there are many students in the school system who feel the same way.

It is important to let this student and others know that this newspaper, school officials and the community care about the problem. That's why responses were sought from the principal, the superintendent and a member of the school board. That is why these responses appear at the same time and in the same place as the letter.

The willingness of these three school officials to publicly respond to this letter is appreciated. They have not only shown they care by responding, but their responses outline steps being taken to deal with the problems of drugs in the school.

Take the time to read not only the letter, but the responses to it. Perhaps you will conclude, as we have, that the schools are doing as well as the community at large in coping with the drug problem.

It is not simply a problem of the schools. It is a problem of the community, of the county, the state and the nation. It is a problem for all of us, and we have to let our young people know we care—even if we don't have all the answers.

## Hurry Back, Bill

Bill Faver's popular column, which has been part of the Beacon editorial page for over a decade, will not appear for a time. Bill is taking a leave of absence to recover from major surgery.

We know readers will join us wishing him a speedy, complete recovery. While recovering, he and his wife Catherine are staying at their Holden Beach home.

## Going Down In A Blaze Of Glory

Does it seem like everyone around goes into a frenzy of activity just before battering down the hatches for the winter?

The minute the leaves start changing colors—when trees start turning off the old water supply—people go crazy. It's as though we too want one last blaze of glory. Like the trees, we seem to fear our own "water supply" or source of energy is going to dry up any minute. That winter will actually freeze the juices flowing through our body.

In this rush of energy fed by cooler temperatures and lowered humidity, we start holding yard sales and meetings, enrolling in self-improvement classes, washing windows and building decks.

You'd think we were never going to have an opportunity to "do" anything ever again.

From a distance we must look like so many squirrels scrambling to gather enough acorns to last the winter. Instead, perhaps we're storing up the kinds of memories and activities needed to maintain sanity through the dreary, overcast days of winter. Maybe our bodies instinctively know we won't have enough energy or motivation again to



Susan Usher

thoroughly clean the house or get ourselves organized—at least not 'til spring returns our steady diet of sunlight.

For some of us, that's literally true. It's been proven that there are people who must have a constant supply of sunlight in order to thrive. In winter we are more apt to become physically sick or depressed, or to operate at generally lower levels of performance than those less tied to a need for sun.

Based on my instinctive urging to hibernate so long as it's dark outside, I think I must fall in this sluggish wish-the-sun-would-come-out-again group.

Winter is blessedly short around here, but still not short enough, at least for those of us who depend on the sun for our energy supply.

## A Response By A Member Of The School Board

Dear West Brunswick Student:

It may seem unusual to you to find responses to your letter to the editor in the same issue of The Brunswick Beacon in which your letter initially appears. The editor was understandably so concerned about your letter as to provide typed transcripts of it to the Principal, the Superintendent and the undersigned this past week in order, in the words of the editor, to give "an opportunity to make a written response to the letter at the same time it is published." This response expresses my views and not necessarily those of other School Board members and I have not been authorized nor am I attempting to respond on behalf of the entire School Board. I appreciate this opportunity to communicate with you.

First of all, you can be assured that as a parent as well as a School Board member, I share your concern about any illegal use, possession or distribution of drugs including alcohol—itsself a powerful drug—at West Brunswick, or for that matter at any of our schools. Not only do such substances interfere with the main purpose of our schools—the education of young people—but it goes without saying that drugs and alcohol are devastating to family life, economic productivity and social order.

However, I recognize that a general agreement on these points regarding drugs and alcohol is of little value to you unless somehow we can address your specific concerns. It is difficult to respond objectively to your letter without some knowledge of the specific facts or the events to which you refer. I contacted the editor by telephone and expressed this concern to him. In response to my question as to whether or not any objective investigation of these matters had been conducted, I was told that the editor's primary concern is not investigative in nature but is twofold: First, that you as a student, believe that drugs are a problem of the magnitude that you suggest, and, secondly, that either you have the impression that no one cares about the problem, or you have not been adequately advised as to how to express your concerns to the proper persons.

As belief and opinion go hand in hand, reasonable people can agree, disagree or simultaneously agree and disagree in part as to how to approach and find solutions to problems. In this vein, others responding to your letter will doubtless outline specific means being taken to address the drug issue in the community and the schools, and I will not, for the sake of brevity, repeat this information. I would simply point out, and I think you will agree, that our schools do not exist in a

vacuum and whatever social problems exist at any given time will sooner or later surface in our schools. We need the help, guidance and assistance of the entire community—not just teachers and school administrators—but students, parents and all citizens in successfully confronting and overcoming such problems.

What we must guard against, however, is an overly impatient and exuberant approach in our response to such problems, including drugs. Perhaps, unwittingly, such exuberance is contained in your letter. For example, you state in your letter, "Drug deals are done in the classrooms, right in front of teachers. I should know, I've seen it done too many times. How can this be allowed to go on?" This statement implies, indiscriminately, that most, if not all teachers at West Brunswick,

are callously indifferent to the problem, consciously choose to ignore it, or that they wink and turn the other way. Such a statement is overly broad, does many fine teachers at West Brunswick a disservice, and could be harmful to their reputations and characters.

Another portion of your letter which bears clarification is in reference to the drug dog. We have a dedicated drug enforcement division in the Brunswick County Sheriffs Department which devotes many hours to drug education as well as to law enforcement in our community. The drug dog is a new and invaluable tool in detecting illegal drugs. The School Board has been contacted by the Sheriffs Department regarding the demonstration of this dog and its capabilities throughout the school system, and the possible use of the

dog in detecting illegal drug activities. The Superintendent with the assistance and input from middle and high school principals is formulating a proposal at this time to present to the school board and the board's attorney for approval to establish, consistent with law, an effective and systematic policy regarding use of the drug dog in all of our schools. This is an area in which we must proceed with caution in order to simultaneously maximize effective use of the drug dog while at the same time complying with existing law and protecting against any civil liability to Brunswick County and its taxpaying citizens.

In response to your need to express your concerns to the proper persons, you are absolutely correct in stating that you "Can't do it alone." Everyone must "stick together" and help each other in confronting drug problems. I would suggest the following procedure for any student at any of our schools in reporting drug violations or expressing concerns about drug use and abuse:

1. Contact the teacher closest to the problem; if you get no response,
2. Contact your principal or an assistant principal; if you get no response,
3. Contact the Superintendent; if you get no response,
4. Contact any School Board Member; if you get no response,
5. Take the matter to the full School Board.

In addition, you should do the following:

1. Comply with any procedure established in your school for reporting drug use, possession or distribution or your concerns regarding the same.
2. Inform your parents of your concerns. They can help you and want to help you.
3. Depending on the nature of the problem it may be advisable to contact the Sheriffs Department and make a report. Indeed, in certain circumstances it may be a violation of the law not to file a report if you have knowledge of the sale, possession or distribution of illegal drugs. Our law enforcement officials both need and deserve our assistance in performing their duties.

In closing, rest assured that many people do care about the concerns you raise in your letter. Hopefully, together we can overcome and eradicate the poison of drugs in our community, and our schools are part of that community.

Thank you for having the courage and conviction to come forward and express your concerns.

Doug Baxley  
 School Board Member  
 Shallotte

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## Nobody Cares

Where do you turn when there's nowhere left to go? Everybody knows that drugs are a big and growing problem everywhere and, no matter how hard we try, we can't stop it all. But school is a different story. It can be stopped.

I used to think there were more students who didn't do drugs than did, but now I'm beginning to wonder. It hurts me to see people ruin their life and people who can stop it just turn their backs.

I first noticed this problem my freshman year. I talked to what seemed to be a concerned teacher, she seemed to honestly listen to my cries about my friends and drugs. She told me the best way to help them was to turn their names into the office, so I did. I risked them finding out that I was the one that told on them for nothing, because you know what was done about it? Absolutely nothing, as far as I know, they weren't even questioned.

Any day of the week during lunch you can walk behind West Brunswick High School and get any kind of drug you want. Drug deals are done in the classrooms, right in front of teachers. I should know, I've seen it done too many times. How can this be allowed to go on?

What I don't understand is that the administration will throw you out of school for smoking a cigarette in the bathroom, for fighting, or even skipping school, but you can snort cocaine or smoke pot behind the school and nothing seems to be done.

It's like they're saying, as long as you stay out of our sight we don't care. Our school doesn't need a bad name. How can anyone turn away and hide from this sad problem? What can I do if even the principal ignores me?

I thought I had nowhere else to go and then I remembered law enforcement. I confronted them and they simply said the administration had been asked if they would allow deputies to bring a drug dog into our school for a day, the response at that time was, "No." That's some kind of school. Hiding from a problem will solve nothing and until someone who cares about our future does something, it's only going to get worse.

We need your help. Somebody, somewhere has to be able to make a difference. I can't do it alone and right now that's how I feel.

I have a great idea, instead of our Booster Club feeding the football team or buying new uniforms, why not do something worthwhile—why not form a Students and Parents Against Drugs Association? Think about it, it makes sense. We need someone who's willing to listen to us and take some sort of action to let us know you care.

A Student At West Brunswick High

## A Response By The Principal Of West Brunswick High

To the editor:

I want to thank you for the opportunity to respond to the student from West who wrote your regarding drugs in our high school. Perhaps many high school students feel that "nobody cares" because they expect instantaneous solutions to their valid complaints. In reality, however, major problems such as this require considerable time, much effort and of course, many people working together before significant progress is made. Our concerned young people are just learning to adapt to this fact.

That one of our students is concerned enough about drugs at West to take the time and put out the effort to utilize the media to rectify an undesirable situation is highly commendable. A worthwhile goal of any school should be to produce active and caring citizens and it pleases me to see the fruits of our efforts.

As the principal of West Brunswick

and the parent of a student at West, I deeply care about this issue. I am acutely aware that drugs are more than just a school problem. Many members of our community recognize it as well. Administration began the 1986-87 school year by informing all students that anyone caught with illegal drugs in his or her possession would be transferred immediately to the alternative school. We still adhere to that policy.

Several weeks ago, I personally saw a student under the influence of drugs. One of the actions taken was to have a counselor establish group counseling for abusers. She has done that, but the students, when approached, denied that (s)he had a problem and refused any assistance.

Within the last two weeks a concerned student reported to me that she saw drugs transferred in a classroom "in front of the teacher's nose." Realizing that perhaps

teachers can't readily recognize various controlled substances, I instigated plans through the counselors for an upcoming workshop regarding this issue.

Another effort to deter this problem as well as others is the confining of students to the cafeteria and courtyard during both lunch periods. We have over 1,000 students supervised during this time by five or six adults. Admittedly some illicit activities escape us, but we're trying.

Last year we started SADD (Students Against Drunk Drivers), and many students assured me that all the drug and alcohol abusers were in it. To my knowledge we have no expressed interest in such a group this year.

On Wednesday and Thursday, October 21 and 22, Don Gates and Gene Hardee from the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department spoke about the effects of illegal drugs to more than 150 students at West. They emphasize

ed the potentially fatal and/or destructive consequences of cocaine, crack, LSD, crank, marijuana and sundry inhalants.

Two weeks ago I called the superintendent to check on the legality of bringing the drug dog to West during a school day. I'm awaiting advisement. However, the Sheriff's Department did bring the dog to our parking lot during the Homecoming game.

Administration and faculty are intensely concerned about the distribution and/or usage of drugs at West Brunswick High School. I often share this student's feeling that "no one cares." Perhaps this student's cry for help will touch the hearts of parents, too, so that we can all work together and strive for a drug-free high school... and community.

David R. Corley, Principal  
 West Brunswick High School  
 Shallotte

## A Response By The Interim Superintendent Of Schools

To the editor:

In response to concerns expressed to you by a student from West Brunswick High regarding the prevalence and use of drugs in the school by students and the apparent lack of concern about the problem on the part of teachers and administration, I wish to make the following statement:

The Board of Education, Administrators, and teachers most definitely do care about the welfare of our students. During the past year a commitment was made to develop a Comprehensive Drug Education Prevention/Intervention Program for all grades, K-12. This commitment was based on a growing concern on the part of the Administration that while Brunswick County Schools were not in a "crisis" situation, that we have the same kinds of problems with drugs that other schools in the state have and it is time to address those needs.

The school system accepts the challenge of providing drug free schools for our children. We feel that this can be accomplished by such strategies as:

Preventing drug experimentation through a drug education program for all students in grades K-12; providing a system for intervention and treatment for students as well as post-treatment and follow-up care to

provide support for the students who must go back and face the same peer pressure that got them into trouble in the beginning; Involving the parents and community in an attempt to support the school in their efforts.

I am also pleased to announce that an Advisory Committee has just been formed comprised of concerned citizens and community leaders who too, care and are willing to assist the schools. A policy is forthcoming on the use of the drug dog in the schools. As soon as the legal aspects on the use of the dog are resolved, the policy will be put in place by the school board.

As a word of encouragement to the

concerned student, I wish to say that your school is taking the lead right now in asking for assistance to move forward with the above plan, as quickly as possible. I invite you to discuss your concerns with the principal or counselor immediately. Also, I would welcome an opportunity to discuss any concerns that you or other students may have regarding this or any other problems you are experiencing. There is much that students can do, also I would welcome your suggestions.

Dr. John A. Kaufhold,  
 Interim Superintendent  
 Brunswick County Schools  
 Bolivia