

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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Getting Tough Is A Good Idea

The Brunswick County Board of Education is right on target in its plans to get tough on students who break the law while on a school campus.

In policy changes recommended to the board by county principals, students who break the law at a local middle or high school could be turned over to law enforcement agencies to face criminal charges. They could even go to jail.

In addition, the student would still face suspension or other discipline handed out by the school administration.

Not only is this in keeping with state laws, it's also a good idea for many other reasons.

County schools administrators have found weapons of all types, ranging from hunting/skinning knives with 12-inch blades to, in one instance, a wrench equipped with a razor blade.

How such instances were handled varied from school to school, principal to principal. It might depend on whether the weapon was simply concealed on the student's person or actually used in an assault and if so, whether it was used in "self-defense".

The county needs clear policies and procedures to ensure that weapons, fights, assaults and other acts of violence are handled consistently from campus to campus.

Also, young people need to learn to accept full responsibility for their actions and the consequences for those actions. How else will they ever grow up and become good citizens as adults? Schools are entrusted with helping to educate students, citizenship included.

Furthermore, schools should be a safe place for students, staff and faculty, not a haven for lawbreakers.

Teen-agers used to work out their differences after school; more recently they have been taking them to school.

Why not? Odds were good that, unless somebody got knifed, the worst that could happen is that the key figures involved might get thrown out of school. Certainly there will be parents who are angered by the change in policy. As Superintendent P.R. Hankins noted, they won't like it when they're called to the county jail to post bail. Who will they blame? Probably the schools, for treating their "innocent little darling" like a criminal.

With such a policy in place, perhaps a few parents will learn something about responsibility as well.

The board of education says it is prepared to back its principals and the superintendent when the heat's on. For the policy to succeed, that kind of support will be an absolute must.

A tough policy with consistent application by administrators and strong backing by the board will make our schools better, safer places for all.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

If Service Officer Needed, Veteran Should Get Job

To the editor:
 The Dec. 12 issue of the *Beacon* quotes County Manager David Clegg as denying that he has appointed a new Brunswick County Veteran Services Officer, "despite rumors in the community to the contrary." The article also reveals that there are 207 applicants for this yet unfilled position which pays \$23,444 per year.

First, let me state that I am a veteran and wholeheartedly endorse the rights and benefits so justly earned and bestowed by our elected officials. Secondly, I support the efforts of the various county veterans organizations which support the appointment of a veteran to this position.

Manager Clegg states that to deny non-veterans a "chance to apply" would be discriminatory. The answer here is let anyone apply, but

who would be better qualified for the position than an individual who has served in our nation's armed forces?

I am puzzled however, by one aspect in this appointment. Why does Brunswick County require such a position when, seemingly, there are a host of other administrative or legal remedies available in the federal and state sectors to provide assistance on veterans behalf? Highly competent assistance is also available from the various veterans organizations.

One would certainly hope that the tenets of this position is not a case of bureaucratic "feather-bedding," but if not, let wisdom dictate that a veteran be selected to fill the slot.

Francis W. Niland
 Shallotte

(More Letters, Following Page)

It's A First Christmas For John Morgan

It's time to write about John Morgan. After all, it's his first Christmas.

In October, three tiny kittens were delivered to our house by way of an ornery female cat that, for whatever reasons, carried them beneath the house and left them there.

The kittens screamed and screamed until my niece stuck her small hand through an opening and pulled them to safety. They were undernourished, in very poor health, and two of them later died.

But not John Morgan. The grey and white striped fellow survived, despite being clawed in the face by its own mother who refused to nurse him—Mommy Dearest, Part II.

You would think that this female cat would want a better life for her son, but I believe abuse is a continuous cycle. As a kitten, she was found living off of garbage scraps beneath

What Do You Want For Library System?

It may be a courtesy gesture on the part of Brunswick County, but it bothers me a little that a public hearing today regarding the future of the local library system won't be held in a very central location.

At 6:30 p.m. today (Thursday) a committee of county and Southport officials will hear comments from county residents regarding the structure of the library system. The meeting will be held, not at the county complex near Bolivia, but in Southport upstairs in the old county courthouse on East Moore Street.

Not very convenient for those of us who live in the western end of the county, especially those who work for a living. Not a convenient time of year, for those swamped with Christmas this and Christmas that. But when something is important, you try to make time for it. That's why, if you care about the quality of library service in Brunswick County, you need to try to be at the meeting today.

Presently six library trustees are appointed by the Southport Board of Aldermen and six by the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners. Trustees meet six times a year usually, just every other month.

The library operates mainly with



Susan Usher

state and county funds, but does receive support from the City of Southport, and to a lesser degree, other municipalities.

Because of the way it is set up, the library itself cannot own property, accept grants or do much else except exist on a day-to-day basis. Southport holds title to the main library building in Southport, Shallotte holds title to the West Brunswick Branch. At present the trustees hold title to the land in Leland where a new branch will be built.

The limits on this way of doing business came to public attention when the trustees voted to accept a grant from the state for a new branch library at Leland, after volunteers there had raised the local share of the cost, found land and done most of the other legwork involved over a

five-year period. But to reorganize the library so that the county can accept the grant and work proceed with the project will take only not a willingness by the county to do so, but agreement from the City of Southport as well.

The time seems right to make some overall changes in library operations.

This is an opportunity for Brunswick County residents to tell the powers that be how they would like the library system operated. That includes appointments—how many trustees should there be for the board to operate effectively? Should every town have an appointee on the board, or just those that support library operations financially or that hold title to a library building? Or should it be by county district or some sort of rotation basis? How long should the terms be?

Where should the money come from to operate the system in addition to the state's portion? Presently the county provides the bulk of local operating funds, \$125,000, while about half or more of the towns in Brunswick County contribute nothing to their area library, others a token sum.

What about library staff? Should the county, assuming it could, guarantee continued employment of all library personnel? Should the library director be required to live in Brunswick County, as are other county department heads? Should other library employees be required to live in the county?

Some of the questions are tough, with no pat answers. Others shouldn't be so hard to deal with.

Our library has been operating on a shoestring, with inadequate staffing, inadequate facilities and inadequate hours.

As tightly funded as they are, both the public schools and Brunswick Community College have technology in their resource centers the county library lacks.

This is a chance to let Brunswick County Commissioners know that you think library services are important, an asset to the entire community.

If you can't go to the meeting or are uncomfortable speaking before a group, write the county a letter or give your local commissioner a call. Let them know what you think, one way or the other. It's your library they're talking about today.



Why Do Vices Have To Be So Much Fun?

The Andy Rooney phrase "d'ja ever notice?" comes to mind sometimes when I think about things in this world that are slightly off kilter.

Today, I'm wondering why the things that are dangerous or detrimental to us are often those things that we enjoy or covet.

We all have a vice or craving that we secretly indulge. Like driving over the speed limit or digging into a cheeseburger or sweet dessert.

My strongest analogy in this situation is to compare environmental concern with quitting smoking.

There's been a big movement started in the past 10 years or so to make smokers appear stupid and careless, but I don't think it really works.

There have also been many different kinds of environmental awareness campaigns about the benefits of recycling, cleaning the waters and forests and cutting down on smog and pollution in the air, but I don't think anyone listens.

The tobacco industries are still thriving and news polls show that



Dori Cosgrove Gurganus

millions of teenagers still start smoking each year.

Companies that sell products dangerous to the environment still thrive, styrofoam containers are still used and plenty of people still throw glass, plastic, newspaper and aluminum in trash cans instead of recycling them.

I wish I could point blame at a certain generation, but I know people of every age who smoke and people of every age who don't think about the condition of our planet.

Sure, the numbers are less than they have been in many years, but the addictive habits still exist for some strange reasons.

One problem is that people who

go around collecting cans and reminding others that they should do so also are labeled as 1960s hippie throw-backs or nerds with really boring, safe lifestyles.

It's also too inconvenient to pack it all in the car and drive out of our way to dump it at the recycling station.

I know from experience that people who say to a smoker, "You know, those things are bad for you," are ignored. It also makes a smoker want to light up another cigarette right there on the spot and blow the smoke in the non-smoker's face just to shut that person up.

Besides, it tastes good and helps you feel relaxed.

I, for one, smoked for six years because I thought it made me look older, and perhaps more cool. I also heard this from other fellow smokers who admitted that they started so they could look cool or adult, then couldn't stop for many years because they enjoyed it too much.

Luckily, I stopped smoking four months ago, but sometimes I think about how I enjoyed it.

Since I've been collecting bags of recyclable items in kitchen pantries and car trunks, I've heard comments like "Oh, Dori, that's so GREEN of you," or "Oh geez, I'm saaaaah-hhreeee I threw that away."

Maybe the excuse for not recycling is that there's no drop-off station nearby. Well, is Sunset Beach's station too far away or should everything just go in the landfill?

Then, the person will role their eyes and say "Well, I guess I could." Yeah, helping the forests, water and oxygen stick around so our planet is inhabitable for our grandkids sure is a pain.

Don't worry, I'm pointing a finger at myself as well.

It's easy for me to talk about cigarettes and garbage, but if you tried to make me stop buying a chocolate bar every week or so because it was found to cause cancer, then you'd hear me whine.

It's hard to give up something enjoyable, though hopefully it would be worth it, but why are vices so often the things that are fun?

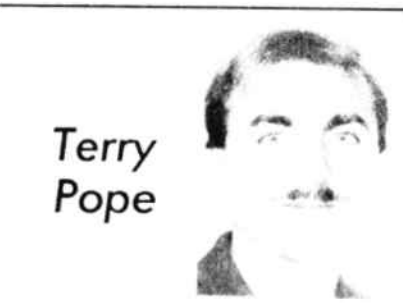
a Brunswick County trash dumpster in Maco.

Ironically enough, it was my niece who also saved the mama cat from an orphanage or untimely death. She waved a few pieces of cat chow in front of the kitten's nose to coax her from beneath the dumpster. Then home she went, thin and starving.

Her independence and aloof demeanor never faded, and when she had her kittens beneath a tractor plow I figured a mother knew what was best and simply left her alone.

One morning I awoke to the sound of screaming kittens. By afternoon, they were still screaming, and mama cat was seen sunning herself on top of the rabbit house out back, unconcerned and with just a faint trace of a smile on her face. I thought it was odd.

"She's abandoned them kittens. That's what she's done," my mother insisted. She's always quick to size



Terry Pope

up a situation, and 99.9 percent of the time her instincts are right. But this time I gave the benefit of the doubt to the suspect.

Why would a mother break her bond? Did she flip her feline wig? But enough evidence existed to indict the hussy. When placed face to face with her own flesh and blood, her greedy, green eyes grew fiery and she couldn't hide the anger. She spit, hissed and denied her own son before fleeing the scene. I guess she had her reasons.

John Morgan, we quickly found out, had quite an appetite. He was named after the child character on the television show, I'll Fly Away, which has become one of my favorites this season.

His two siblings were just too weak to survive. It became a challenge just to keep John Morgan alive, especially for my mother, who would never touch a cat before he arrived.

Morning and night, she would warm a bottle of milk and fill his belly before setting him back in his box in front of the refrigerator, where he likes to sit because of the warm air that flows from the vent. Many times I watched her wrap his tiny body in a single paper towel and hold him as he struggled to drink milk in place of that denied from his own mother's breast.

As time passed, John Morgan out-

grew his hamper feeder and was ready for a man's dinner. At first, he'd walk right through a plate of milk and kitten chow, and we even feared he was blind.

But John Morgan just grew stronger and stronger and even tried to eat the kitty litter before he found out what it was for. When near tragedy struck the other night, he pulled through.

He somehow managed to pull his collar up into his mouth. It strapped his chin open and he went into a fit, screaming and fighting an imaginary giant. He nearly strangled himself before help could arrive.

The next day he was back pulling on the Christmas tree ornaments, knocking over the lighted Santa Claus and getting an occasional swat on the rear. He's been through a lot in a few short months. I wonder how many of his nine lives are left?