

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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There's Still No Evidence Of Need For Certification

The county health department's second public hearing on certifying food service managers has come and gone, and still there is no clear evidence of a problem crying out for solution.

No statistics have been presented indicating a food-borne illness problem in Brunswick County. Restaurant sanitation grades do not seem to be at all below average. There is no evident consumer demand for the program. Indeed, there is little apparent health board support for the proposal. Not a single board of health member bothered to attend the first hearing. Only one did the second.

And now restaurant managers—as if they weren't already in a line of work fraught with pitfalls and profit-drains—may be forced to attend school to prove they know what they undoubtedly already do know if they are able to maintain legitimately high sanitation grades.

Among the 40 or so faces in the crowd at last week's public hearing were several veteran restaurateurs who've operated respected establishments with consistently high sanitation ratings for more than a decade. Should they be honored for this accomplishment by being bound in red tape and made to pay extra help to cover workers attending mandatory certification classes?

While the health department staff no doubt conceived this idea as a service to the public, it adds up to little more than an added hassle where none is justified. It looks a lot like government for the sake of government. And at the expense of small business.

Getting 'Dear Volunteer' Letters? Read Fine Print

I don't know about you, but hearing stories about disreputable fundraising outfits makes me so angry my teeth hurt.



Susan Usher

It happens all too often, and all too subtly—because we allow it to happen. In a few cases, the fundraising stratagem may actually be illegal, but more often than not we're talking about naive consumers who allow themselves to be taken in by professionals who woo us with hot button words like "cancer," "heart disease" and yes, even "drug abuse prevention."

A state agency recently reported on activities of professional fundraisers operating within the state. Several supposedly reputable companies reported that in some cases not much more than half the funds they raised went to the causes for which they were meant. United Way in North Carolina, by the way, returned a very high percentage of funds raised. Generally speaking, a well-run professional fundraising effort will spend less than 15 percent on overhead, returning at least 85 percent to the charity or charities it represents.

Not so long ago, Brunswick County residents gave nearly \$500 to a so-called "area cancer drive" without reading the fine print that clearly stated most of the money raised wouldn't go to cancer research. I got the same letter and tossed it, but perhaps we should have complained—to the state, to the Better Business Bureau. It might not be illegal, but letters like this are deceptive.

Richard Owens, a resident of the next subdivision over saved the letter he got and brought it to the staff here at the *Beacon*. He was concerned that good, soft-hearted people were being used.

Legal or not, the folks behind that letter are at it again. He's brought us another letter, this time for a "heart disease campaign." Judge for yourself.

The format is identical, down to the personal memo (Mr. ___, I hope we can count on you for our ___ Area Door-to-Door ___ Drive!).

This latest letter seeks volunteers to go door-to-door in their neighborhood in July raising money "to fight heart disease." It adds, "Your volunteer work or your \$10 gift is urgently needed and will be deeply appreciated."

You bet it will be appreciated, especially by the friendly folks at Direct Response Consulting Services who pocket the 60 percent the sponsors estimate will be spent directly on fundraising. I personally wouldn't be surprised if Direct Response happened to be run by the same folks who sponsor the heart drive, just working out of different post office box sweatshops.

Calculating generously, I suspect, they figured another 20 percent would be spent on public education "in conjunction with fundraising appeals," and 10 percent each for "administration" and "program services." What kind of services? It never says.

And what would the costs have looked like if the sponsors had not been trying to save money? That's right, that's what the letter said. "To save money, we at the National Office will be coordinating this Heart Drive."

It also stated, on the back of the letter, in black and white, that though this organization was founded in 1991, it would be 1994 before its first annual report and audited financial statement would be available.

My 10 bucks says this group will be long gone by then, or perhaps operating a door-to-door boiler room campaign to support a cure for AIDS or diseases of the lungs.

Public education expenses for this "heart disease" campaign including the costs incurred in "disseminating information contained in solicitations."

The fundraising appeal I saw included only two pieces of so-called educational information about heart disease, both lacking supporting data and crafted to appeal to our fears: heart disease is a leading killer in America and that one out of every two Americans will eventually be stricken "with this dread disease."

So, it pays to consider letters of solicitation carefully before responding. Well-informed, well-intended people get taken in everyday because they didn't.

If a solicitation tugs at your heart strings the least bit and you're moved to give, stop and read the fine print carefully. Then do your homework: Is it a group whose work you're personally familiar with? Do you know any of its volunteers or staff members? Is an annual report or financial statement readily available for inspection? Any complaints on file with the N.C. Attorney General's Office or area Better Business Bureau? Is the organization included in an annual rating of national charities? If so, how does it stack up?

More important, don't let bloodsuckers such as these discourage you from giving to legitimate charities, especially those doing good work in your own local community.

Yap, Yap, Yap; What Makes Fido Tick

"What Makes Dogs Bark? Nobody Knows For Sure." That's the headline on a news release about scientists studying why you can't save your life get Fido to pipe down. No kidding.

Sounds dumb enough to be a taxpayer-funded project, but it's not. The source of this dauntless mission to pierce the darkness is the venerable National Geographic Society. In an uncharacteristically glib article, the society offers these tidbits about barking:

■ "It's because they (dogs) are immature characters, like teen-agers, very hard to train."

■ A biologist at Hampshire College in Amherst, Mass., once clocked a sheep dog in a remote Minnesota field that barked nonstop for seven hours. "I don't know if the dog is a record-holder, but I'm certainly the record-holder for listening without interrupting," says Raymond Coppinger "with a rueful grin." (Columnist to Coppinger: Avoid Minnesota. Acquire a life.)

■ Another researcher timed a cocker spaniel that yapped 907 times in 10 minutes.

■ Dogs that sound off because they have nothing better to do are called "boredom barkers," says Bonnie Beaver, chief of small-animal medicine and surgery at Texas A & M, and that's really her name.



Lynn Carlson

■ Seeking instant cures for barking, some dog owners have gone to such lengths as noise-activated devices that emit offensive odors or squirt water on offenders. A British inventor recently came up with a gadget that hangs around a dog's neck and emits a pungent lemon aroma every time the animal barks. Typical anti-bark collars produce unpleasant sounds or mild electric shocks.

Most such contraptions have one thing in common, the experts say: They don't work.

■ "Almost nothing will keep terriers from barking; it's in their genes," says a psychologist at the University of British Columbia who has studied canine intelligence, as it were. "Everybody who owns a little terrier will tell you that its favorite game of

all time is imaginary burglar. And it's always played between 2 and 3 in the morning, when in fact the dog is announcing that a leaf has fallen against the wall of the house."

Before I proceed, let me state that I am not a dog person. I realize that this confession is likely to endear me to the *Beacon*-reading public in much the same way that my beloved husband did by publicly admitting his distaste for stock car racing.

("He don't like NASCAR and she don't like dawgs. Them people's dangerous!")

One year Santa brought my son a yellow Labrador retriever named Abby, and we got along quite well. But I didn't become a dog person. Proof? I never had even the faintest desire to let her sleep in my bed, ride in my car, lick my face, have puppies, or accompany me on vacation.

She grew up to be fat, doe-eyed, obedient and dumb as a box of rocks—all acceptable qualities in a dog, as far as I'm concerned. But I just couldn't get that best-friend thing going with an animal whose entire life revolved around chasing a slobber-slick tennis ball as far, and as often, as any human being would throw it.

Preferring pets who are fastidious,

haughty, disloyal and immune to human guidance, I am a cat person. But please, you gabby dog defenders, resist the impulse to call and tell me that emptying a litter box is infinitely grosser than having your hand touched by a cold, wet dog nose. Not to me.

That YOUR weenie dog never yaps. It does.

That YOUR afghan hound is smart. It ain't.

That YOUR chihuahua is cute. Wise up.

Then I won't have to try to convince you that my 10-week-old kitten is a joy, even though he has in a single month:

■ Shredded most of the skin on my hands, arms, feet and legs in the course of his adorable playful antics; ■ Taught himself to crouch, jiggle and tear across the room from different angles, producing an alarming ripping sound as he scales the furniture, stereo speakers or window shades;

■ And made it abundantly clear that he will for the rest of our sojourn together disregard any rules I am foolish enough to try to enforce.

Eric might be a subversive as far as racing goes, but he's on the right track with critters. He has aquariums.



BARBOUR © 1993 CAROLINA

Reckless Commentary Ignores Its Own Facts

You are driving through an unfamiliar city on a crowded interstate highway at dusk, trying to find the exit for a motel where you have made reservations for the night.

The sun is in your eyes. Cars are zig-zagging across the lanes. You pass a green sign that might have had the correct route number. You are not quite sure. But you're about to pass the exit. So you quickly swerve down the ramp.

A moment too late, you realize that it was the wrong exit. Oh well. No big deal. Just wait for the traffic light and get back on the highway.

For most of us, those are about the most demanding split-second decisions we are ever forced to make. Except those who work in law enforcement.

There's an old saying that a police officer's job is 99 percent boredom and 1 percent terror. If you choose that line of work, there is a good chance that some day you'll be required to make a snap judgment that will mean the difference between life and death for yourself, for a crime suspect or for innocent bystanders.

It appears that Lt. Ronald Hewett of the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department was put into one of those situations when two Wilmington teen-agers allegedly sped off in a stolen GMC Suburban after he stopped them on U.S. 17 last week.

Only Hewett and the two suspects can tell us exactly what happened out there. But we do know that shots were fired. And that the fleeing vehicle was driven wildly up the highway for about two miles before it overturned and rolled down the pavement, ejecting its two occupants.

Sheriff John Carr Davis did the right thing by immediately calling in the SBI to investigate the case. Working until late that night, ten agents combed the two crime scenes and interviewed witnesses to determine whether Hewett had been justified in firing his service revolver at the suspects' vehicle.



Eric Carlson

As of this writing, the SBI's final report has not been completed. However, Sheriff Davis said the preliminary investigation indicates that Hewett "acted properly and violated no policy" of his department.

Right now, that is all the we have. Because the alleged driver of the stolen vehicle remains hospitalized in critical condition. The other larceny suspect is a 15-year-old juvenile who has not been identified.

But the editors at the *Wilmington Morning Star* presume to know more about this incident than their own reporters. They have indicted our criminal justice system in a slapdash editorial that begins:

"Fleeing in a stolen truck is practically a capital crime in Brunswick County."

Without offering a shred of evidence to contradict the SBI findings, the *Star* concluded that Hewett's action was "reckless." The editorial said the officer should have been "more sensible and responsible" because the suspects were not thought

to be "armed or particularly dangerous," nor did they pose "an impending threat of grave injury or death to any person."

Nothing in the *Star's* news accounts of this incident supports this editorial point of view. Their stories reported that the Suburban was stolen in Wilmington. That it was pulled over by Lt. Hewett. And that he fired four shots, hitting the left rear tire three times as the alleged thieves sped off.

The paper reported that the suspects drove north on U.S. 17 at speeds of up to 70 miles per hour, passing two tractor-trailer trucks on the right-side grass shoulder before the vehicle overturned and flipped several times in the southbound lane of a busy U.S. highway.

The paper also reported Sheriff Davis' determination that the SBI's preliminary investigation indicated that Hewett had acted properly.

Evidently that was not the story the *Star's* editorial writer wanted to believe. So he or she ignored the paper's own reporting and conjured up another version of events. One that fit his or her point of view.

The *Star's* news accounts did not say whether or not the alleged car thieves were thought to be carrying weapons, because the SBI has not released that information. But the editorial writer assumed they were unarmed. He claims that as far as

anyone knows, "they were kids who swiped a truck for a joyride."

But if he had read the *Beacon*, he would have known that these "kids" are suspects in a series of car thefts and that a felony arrest warrant on another auto theft charge was issued for one of them a week before the incident. If he had called his own city police department, he would have learned that additional charges against one of these "kids" are pending there, too.

The editorial writer fails to acknowledge that a 4,000-pound station wagon tumbling down the highway at 70 m.p.h. might pose an "impending threat of grave injury or death" to oncoming traffic. He ignores the possibility that Lt. Hewett might have fired at the speeding vehicle to avoid such a calamity.

Nor does he consider that any officer who could shoot three out of four bullets into the tire of a moving car might just as easily have put one of those slugs into the driver's head and removed the "impending threat" immediately.

Instead, forced to make a snap judgment in a situation about which we know very little, Hewett apparently took the measured response of deflating one of the vehicle's tires.

All evidence released so far suggests that Hewett acted responsibly. That same evidence indicates that the *Morning Star* didn't.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Reporter Is Always Accurate, Fair

To the editor:

On behalf of the Varnamtown Board of Aldermen, we wish to officially commend Doug Rutter for his reporting of our town news. His columns on our town affairs have always been of the highest caliber, both in accuracy and fairness. Mr. Rutter's professionalism is a credit to himself and *The Brunswick Beacon*.

Too often we forget to thank those individuals that contribute so much to their communities. We do not want to make that mistake.

We wish to sincerely thank Mr. Rutter for his efforts

on our behalf. He has spent many hours at our meetings and worked hard to insure the activities and actions taken to enhance our town are reported to all interested individuals.

We have chosen to demonstrate our appreciation in this manner so that Doug, his *Beacon* friends and, hopefully, all *Beacon* readers will be aware of his contributions to Varnamtown.

Mayor Judy L. Galloway
 Varnamtown

(More Letters, Following Page)