

Community

Youngsters need discipline

By LISA BOONSTOPPEL-POT
The Herald

Hundreds of parents and teachers packed the cafeteria in Acton High School Thursday night to be "irritated" by internationally renowned parenting speaker, Barbara Coloroso of Colorado. And they loved it.

"My goal here tonight is to irritate you," Ms. Coloroso said in her opening comments to the capacity crowd. "I want to irritate you about what goes on in your home when you prevent kids from thinking for themselves."

What Ms. Coloroso termed irritating was clearly found stimulating, humorous and thought-provoking by the audience who all paid \$5 to hear her deliver her presentation called 'Winning at Parenting...Without Beating Your Kids.'

Ms. Coloroso was invited to speak in Acton by the Speakers Series Committee, a group of men who realized the community's need for information about parenting.

Committee members Bill Taylor, Ken Ellis and Dave Jones established a speakers series several years ago whereby an internationally known speaker on parenting would be invited to speak in Acton.

This is the third time Ms. Coloroso has flown from her American home to speak to Acton parents and each time, the evening has been sold out well in advance said Mr. Taylor.

The thrust of her speech was to inform parents how to teach young people to be responsible for their own behavior and learning.

"We have to teach kids how to think, not what to think," she said. "We have to let them start making decisions early so by the time they leave home, they can make decisions and cope."

Letting children make their own decisions is one aspect of discipline said Ms. Coloroso, who urged parents to discipline their children rather than punish them for their mistakes.

She explained that punishment is adult-oriented, requires judgement, arouses anger and resentment and invites more conflict. But discipline, she said, shows children what they have done wrong, gives them ownership of the problem, gives them ways to solve the problems they've created and leaves their dignity intact.

"The easiest way to discipline is to say I will not treat a child in a way I wouldn't like to be treated," she said.

Some of the common mistakes parents use to control their children include bribing, using aggression and sulking, she said.

She asked the audience, how many times they as parents and teachers had told children if you do this, if you behave or if you get good marks, we'll give you a reward. After numerous hands



Barbara Coloroso

went up in the air, she said "bribing bothers me."

"We are subtly saying to our kids that school work and behavior is so hard, we have to bribe you to learn it," she said.

She also touched on the light side of parenting including the inevitable "sex talk" between parents and children. Her advice is to go for a drive with your child down Hwy 401 and talk. "That way both of you can't escape and you don't have to make eye contact."

Anger was another topic she approached with humor while leaving an important message for parents. She asked the audience how often when they felt angry did they call their children by their full names and joked with them that they spent nine months lovingly coming up with a

name for their child which they only used when they're angry.

She concluded her presentation with the thought, how today's children grow up is important because they will be the ones making the decisions and taking care of others when they're adults and the parents are the ones who need to be taken care of.

"I think her talk was fantastic," said Mr. Taylor after hearing her speak. "As a parent as well as a teacher, I find a lot of what she suggests make sense. It makes me take a step back and think what is the best action I can take in the long run when I'm dealing with my children."

He has already invited her back to speak again but she won't be in Acton for another three years because that's how far ahead she is booked for speaking engagements.

Back to Acton Days hoopla

When Robert Louis Stevenson wrote his poems for and about children, he stated that going "Up on a swing... in the air so blue... is the pleasantest thing... a child could do." That may have been true at the time, Mr. Stevenson, but today a swing is outranked by a hot air balloon. And when the 'children' of Acton come back in June to celebrate their heritage, a balloon will be waiting in Prospect Park. Of course, the swings will be there too, but the balloon is only for the Back to Acton Days celebration June 15, 1991.

Other air-borne entertainment planned is the remote control planes and helicopters. This adept group of enthusiasts will amaze the uninitiated with their 'daredevil flying feats'. For those who prefer being earth bound, the classic cars will assemble again

this year along with an ambulance, a fire department vehicle, and the Crime Stoppers van. Everyone will have a chance to meet some of the local folks who are dedicated to the health and safety of Acton. Watch out for the bad guys from Georgetown. They'll be on the grounds this year.

For the dedicated fishermen, Fletcher Sports will hold a tournament again this year. Mr. Fletcher will be on hand the entire time for the benefit of amateurs who do not know the difference between a bass and a carp. He will also be glad to point out the differences between fish and remote control boats. The boats will not qualify in any division. Of the tournament so please do not try to land these with your rod and reel.

This year's live entertainment

will include Black Bart challenging all comers, (he's still the champ in Acton), our roving clowns, and the Acton Citizens Band. The Acton Square Dance Club will also be performing. For the young at heart, the dance Saturday night will feature local talent popular with the teens in this area. (More on this later.)

The participating service clubs are The Lions and The Rotarians. The Athletic Associations involved include Te Swim Club, Soccer Club, Acton Sabres, Acton Tanners, and The Halton Hockey School. Local church groups will be contributing to the day's activities. As usual, the Olde Hide House will be a major source of support (behind the scenes), and the Chamber of Commerce will be active, visible and aromatic. Yes, they will sponsor the Beef Bar-B-Que again this year.

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