

Pointlessness

Whoever it was that came up with the saying, "idle hands are the devils playthings", sure must have had a lot of free time. Let's face it, a busy person would be far too engaged to come up with it. On second thought, maybe it was in fact a busy person who thought it up. You know that saying, "if you want to get something done, give it to a busy person." Some lazy guy was given the assignment to write a cautionary saying about the evils of time wasting and passed it on to his hard-working associate. Maybe that's how both maxims came about.

In any case, I want to go on record as one who despises any and all forms of laziness and finds activities of nothingness deplorable.

Ok, it's 11 o'clock on a Sunday night. I've just watched the golf and two NFL playoff games so I figure I'll surf the net till my head bounces off the 'delete' key. I go on a Google search for the Stupidest People of 2004 and come up with nothing because I spelled 'stupidest' incorrectly. After a few more icon clicks I end up on a website called, and I'm not making this up, *Pointless Websites*.

The first pointless website of amusement is Uselessfact.com. It's a very utilitarian looking site with one useless fact on its only page: "The world's largest number with a name is a googolplexian." Not so useless as it turns out, because it's the exact number of times someone has knocked at my door, taken one look at me when I answered, and asked if my parents were home.

Another website along the same lines went under the address of gullibleinfo.com. Their mission statement stipulates "the hardworking team at Gullible Info works hard (a bit redundant there) to ensure that every fact appearing here is true. But if we slip up, let us know!" Now that's confidence. Posted on their January 17 page, "More Germans speak French as a second language than English." Or, "There are more varieties of cheddar cheese than are residents of Cheddar, UK." WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO WITH THAT INFORMATION?? January 16 listings included this gem: "The average person showers 16 times for every one bath they take." If you applied that to the guy who sat next to me on the subway last week that would work out to 1/2 a bath a year.

Did you know that 81% of American households currently have at least one can of chicken noodle soup? Or that the average pen could draw a line 1.5 miles long before running out of ink. Or that more accidental suicides occur on St. Patrick's Day than on any other day? Maybe that's because more people accidentally log on to gullibleinfo.com on March 17.

The best bang for your lazy, free buck had to be dogjudo.com. This is a website that caters to animal lovers who want to see dogs dressed up in martial arts garb performing judo moves on one another. That's what I call niche marketing at its best.

There's a venting website that allows you to whine-for-free. Once you log on you're faced with a page that simply instructs you to type in your whine and submit. There are no whines of past subscribers to read, there are no whining links, no

Jeff Lumby's view from the country

animated whining icons to be entertained by, just your tedious whine hunt and pecked in courier font. I know this because of what I typed into the space provided. Your site sucks!

I thought the Poll of the Day website would be of interest until I saw questions like: Why do croutons come in airtight packages? It's just stale bread. Oh, stop it please, my ribs! Another one asked if one synchronized swimmer drowns, do the rest have to drown too? I have an answer, but I can't say it here. Also from the Poll of the Day website this compelling query: If you try to fail, and you fail, have you succeeded or failed? I don't know guys, why don't you ask your webpage designer.

If I had to cast my vote for the best waste of time on the net, the Oscar would go to... Insult-o-matic.com. Dishing the dirt since 1999. Your website tour includes a trip through the Personalized insults page designed to rip you a new one in a customized manner and more than one font. There are six categories to which you have to input information. Amount of abuse you desire. Gender. Political affiliation. Intelligence. Weight. Looks. On my first pass, I went with an average amount of abuse, male, Republican, Smart, Average and Average. Here's what it spat out. "You are a fascist, armchair-philosophizing, hog-humping, wiener." Now I know this thing is bogus cause a couple of those things aren't even true.

On my second try I thought I'd select intense abuse, male, democrat, stupid, overweight and ugly. Here's what came out. "You draft-dodging, Hillary-loving, witless cow-like egotistical, butt-kissing nose-picker." Heck, everyone I know falls into one part of that insult or another. You can also have your insult written in Shakespearean form or in Pirate lingo. Yes at Insult-o-matic, they aim to please.

So, if you have time to kill and you're bored by the 738 new, soon to be defunct specialty channels, you can't afford an X-box or Ipod and your Etch-A-Sketch is leaking sand, why not try an edifying search through the fog of bad Internet sites. Maybe, just maybe you'll be entertained for a few minutes... you lazy, vapid, banal, head-scratching, sweat-pants wearing, toe-picking, couch-moulding, beer-chuggin, space-taking, Springer-lovin', whisker-faced lump of humanity.

Sorry, I gotta go, Desperate Housewives is on.

HDSB votes to end school closure studies

BY BERNADETTE WARD

Halton District School Board trustees who voted to end school closure studies with the hope that new provincial guidelines will allow for new schools while old ones operate below capacity have definitely taken a gamble, says Dusty Papke, Director of Education.

For hundreds of students in growth areas such as Georgetown and Milton it will mean making do if the expected changes don't materialize.

"In the short term it will mean we will have to find alternate arrangements, either with portables or bussing to other schools," said Papke.

Paul Tate, Chair of the Board, doesn't see the move as a gamble. He says that Gerard Kennedy, Minister of Education, has given indications for six months at least, that the current policy is not practical.

Tate is also emphatic that pitting one neighbourhood against another is no way to educate students.

"It seems to me, and to some others; that programming is what we're all about - teaching kids," says Tate, who doesn't want to see kids in either overcrowded or underutilized schools, both having a negative affect on programs.

The issue of how much risk has been taken will be resolved in the near future according to Ministry of Education spokesperson Wilma Davis. Although unable to provide a precise date, Davis advises that an announcement from the province is due shortly, possibly within weeks.

It's the possibility that they've gambled and lost that bothers Ether Gardiner, Trustee for Wards 1, 2, 3, 4 and Halton Hills and a dissenting voice on the recent vote.

"From my perspective, I was very, very disappointed not to move forward with closure studies," said Ethel Gardiner.

Gardiner-figures that if the province's new rules allow the board to build despite having excess capacity in areas such as south Oakville and Burlington, all will be well. If not, growth areas will

be in a mess.

"It's not easy to close schools, people love schools, but we need to look at how to accommodate all children across Halton," says Gardiner.

She notes that areas such as Georgetown south are undergoing incredible growth, with a huge development of over 2000 homes coming in.

"We'll be right back to where we started before Silver Creek," she says.

Silver Creek, a 650-student capacity school is already at 800 and no new school is slated for Georgetown until 2008.

Elaine Westerhof, Manager of Planning for the board, has the numbers to back this up. Projections for the 2005/2006 school year indicate that the board has 230 students more than they currently have spaces for.

Both Gardiner and Tate point out that Milton is another hot spot with the Sherwood development creating a bulge there.

Tate observes that despite the construction of a new school on Bennett Street, Milton could still be in crisis.

"I'm really glad we still have Martin Street, it will be a holding school for all the kids that will be coming into the new Sherwood development," he says.

Acton, also undergoing development, will fare somewhat better as McKenzie-Smith Bennett Public School is currently operating under its 670-student capacity and Gardiner feels the school will be able to handle the new growth.

For Halton Hills it means pushing the date for building the new school back and creating an over-capacity situation for the schools already in the community.

Tate and Gardiner agree that the current situation speaks to looking at needs in individual communities, a problem for a large regional board like Halton that is in a growth situation.

"The fact that we have surplus spaces in Burlington doesn't help us at all," says Gardiner.



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