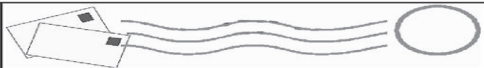


Vandalism aftermath

Letters



To all Media outlets:

Last week, early on Tuesday morning, vandals broke into Robert Little Public School in Acton. The end result was a trail of senseless, random destruction. Our community woke up that morning to find their school wrapped in yellow police tape. Two neighbourhood teens have been charged by Halton Regional Police.

As word got out that the school was closed and why, I found myself fielding one phone call after another. I had expected many calls from concerned parents. But these calls came from TV news reporters, radio stations and newspapers all wanting to know if they could come to the school to cover this story. As Principal, I was surprised that so much attention was being paid to such a little school in a little town, despite what had just happened. When I asked one of the reporters why they were covering this story so intently, she said that this was exactly the kind of story people would want to know about. I nodded, thinking something like, "I guess you would know about these things." What happened over the next few hours

proved to be for me an unexpected, educational experience.

As the story of our break in and the resulting vandalism appeared in newspapers and on radio and television, I began to get other calls and emails and faxes. These came from our own wonderful community as well as people all over the wider GTA, Niagara, Guelph and Cambridge. Offers of concern, sympathy, clean up crews, helping hands for any need, computers to replace those damaged, books for the library, office supplies and furniture... and fish. Lots of fish - and aquariums, pumps, lights, stands and on-site expertise. It has been nothing short of overwhelming.

Which brings me to the purpose of my letter. As one of my teachers put it, "We want folks to know that their voice has been heard. That as staff and students, we have been comforted to realize that so many people care and are willing to help in immediate and practical ways."

Some things were lost that Tuesday morning. But what we found was how much this school means to this commu-

ity and that we have new friends from our larger community. Some resources were damaged. But other resources, the strength of a small community, the people who stopped whatever they would have done that day to offer a helping hand, the folks who offered their resources to renew and refurbish our school, were strengthened. Some "stuff" was destroyed. But the stuff of people caring for each other and being connected in the common purpose of providing our children with a safe and secure place to learn and grow, will never be destroyed.

So thank you. Thank you to the reporters and camera crews and photographers who insisted on telling the story. Thank you to every person, every community organization, every small business, aquarium society, pet store and retail outlet. Thank you for caring, and more, for demonstrating your care in so many wonderfully practical ways. We are a richer school community for your kind support.

Very sincerely,
Bob Tadman
Principal
Robert Little
Public School

To the Editor

Re "Vandalism aftermath - the cleanup and the questions"

Chris and Andrew are a valuable part of our community too ...

The principal of Robert Little remarked, "that sometimes bad stuff happens to good people." Let's also remember that, "sometimes good people do bad things."

There is no condoning what was done. My family is distressed by the scenes of destruction at the school my children attended. But more distressing are people who seem willing to sacrifice two young lives in revenge for the destruction of "stuff" that can be repaired, cleaned or replaced.

The Andrew and Chris we have known for years are good young men, valuable members of this community, who made a mistake. They are not hardened criminals in need of "old fashioned public shaming" or to be placed in "the stocks." The Bible suggests that he who is without sin should cast the first stone and who would that be among us?

While the quality of our community can certainly be measured by how well we pitch in to help clean up, surely it is also measured by how well we forgive and support two troubled young men to learn from a mistake.

The community of Acton that we have been part of

for 25 years is better than a community simply bent on vengeance and retribution. I hope we can find our "satisfaction" not from finding some Draconian, degrading and brutal way to punish Andrew and Chris, but from forgiving them and reaching out to them with offers of help, support, understanding and forgiveness. They can learn from this mistake.

The poet Robert Frost said:

"If one by one we counted people out

For the least sin, it wouldn't take us long

To get so we had no one left to live with.

For to be social is to be forgiving."

Let me suggest using Frost's words;

For to be a community is to be forgiving.

Paul Boese,
David, Helen
and Evan Colvin

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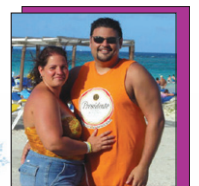
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