

# Letters

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really on the interstate. These cool cars really call for attention. Most Fortwo Smarts come in bright and flashy colors rather than dark colors. I like them so much because they are energetic looking and really help conserve gas. It's very special to me that finally my favorite car is where I live. Keep an eye out for the first Fortwo Smart in Jamestown.

**Colette Baker**  
Grade 5 – Jamestown School

## New equipment gets the job done

I read with interest Mr. Willis' letter to the Press last week. It wasn't clear to me if he was talking about things or people. If it is personnel he was writing about, a shorter version of this type of logic might be "Chew them up and then spit them out."

If it is equipment/things, then let us be specific to Jamestown.

In 1972, the town bought a track machine/bull dozer to work at the landfill. When the landfill closed, it was used to help compost materials brought to the transfer station. Each year, because it was wearing out, it got more costly to operate. It got worn out, but we continued to try and make do. Finally we had to do without. What happened was that composting—a very important environmental operation, either didn't get done or became more expensive for the town to accomplish by hiring outside contractors to haul the material away.

The same flawed mentality existed with the rest of the town's equipment. Trucks were worn out, wouldn't start, dangerous to operate and when we needed them the most, could not perform.

Two years ago in one of our snowstorms, five out of six plows were out of service. We had an antiquated backhoe, which we were using to load salt. When one driver finished using it he had to leave it running unattended until the next driver came because if we turned it off we couldn't get it started again.

We now have some decent equipment to work with. When it snows, we can plow, we have a new pay loader which enables us to efficiently load our salt trucks, work on our construction projects, move all kinds of material, and ask Harry at the landfill how much easier it is to compost materials with this new piece of equipment.

The town bought a used street sweeper trying to make do and keep expenses down. The result is it never worked properly, and is very expensive to operate. The age of the piece of equipment made it impossible to get parts to keep it running. End result: streets did not get swept. You cannot provide the type of service a community is entitled to with equipment that is worn out, dilapidated or antiquated.

I would also like to take this opportunity to point out to Mr. Willis that in no successful private operation, either on this island or in this country, does any manager operate with the flawed mentality put forth in his letter. UPS, which is the model for all fleet operations nationally and internationally, has been as successful as it is because it operates with a philosophy which is in direct opposite of the negative thinking advocated in Mr. Willis' letter.

**Paul Robertson**  
Jamestown Highway Dept.

## Help crack down on teen drinking

Does your child drink? According to statistics, two out of five children have consumed alcohol before entering the ninth grade, and the average age to begin drinking is not as an upperclassman in high school.

The average age of a child's first drink is now 12, and nearly 20 percent of 12- to 20 year-olds are considered binge drinkers, this from the American Medical Association. The statistics for high school are even more shocking; more than 50 percent of students at North Kingstown High School (NKHS) have consumed alcohol. Next time you see a group of teenagers from NKHS, according to statistics, every other one uses alcohol. Do these statistics shock you? Well luckily, there are people who are trying to bring these numbers down. The Jamestown Substance Abuse Prevention Task Force and our local police are trying to do something about it.

On March 6, MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) held a conference to discuss the issues of underage drinking in Rhode Island. Task Force Coordinator, Laura Holsley, Student Assistance Counselor Stephanie Nocon, State Rep. Bruce Long, Police Chief Tom Tighe, Lieutenant Bill Donovan, and I represented Jamestown at this event. We heard the story of a father who just four months ago lost his son due to underage drinking. He talked about how he never thought it could happen to him, never in his town. Even

though he tried to warn his child about the effects of alcohol, he was killed in a drunk-driving accident. Sadly, Jamestown and North Kingstown have lost their share of young people. We, on the Jamestown Task Force and Jamestown Police, as well as Rep. Long, will do anything in our power to prevent tragedies like these, but we need your help.

At this conference, we strategized about how to combat underage drinking in our town. We created a multi-faceted plan to raise awareness, educate students and citizens of the effects of underage drinking, and increase enforcement of the drinking laws. The task force would like to begin an awareness campaign about the effects of underage drinking in our community, and what you can do as a citizen to assist. We are expanding substance abuse education at the Lawn Avenue School, where Project Northland, an alcohol curriculum for grades 6, 7, and 8, has begun. Youth groups and the general Rules of Conduct at the Teen Center encourage healthy behavior, not destructive ones. It would be great to have a program for parents to help their kids with peer pressure making healthy decisions and to realize that it just may be "their kid." Our police will crack down on underage drinking, and those who enable it. We are working on an anonymous tip line, for anyone who wishes to call to report underage drinking or parties. The police talked about doing "ride-alongs," so citizens can learn what really goes on in their town.

The name of the conference was "Underage and Underground," not only because it is a secret kept by these teens, but because eventually, it can lead to teens being literally underground. With a lot of hard work and your support we can have an impact on underage drinking in Jamestown.

**Mariel Mastrostefano**  
Jamestown

## Great team of young men

Unique in today's extraordinarily selfish 'what's in it for me' world are 14 local teenage boys I recently had the honor of coaching alongside Frank Rosa, the St. Mark's High School Boys team, which competed in the Catholic Athletic League. If it were not for the most biased, one-sided game of refereeing we (and the head of the league admitted) have ever been involved in, we would certainly be state champions and maybe even New England champions.

They say it takes a village to raise a child. Well Jamestown, to-

date with this group, you've done a great job.

Beyond the lines of the court, where collectively this is as talented a group of basketball players as has ever played from the island, these kids genuinely respect each other. They fight for each other, stick up for each other, and unmercifully kid each other, affectionately. Their smiles are contagious, their laughter infectious. Collectively they do not give up. You'd sleep well serving in combat with this group of kids watching your back, provided you could keep from laughing out loud, and along the way you'd come to appreciate their potential as leaders as much as I have. This is a special group of kids who will most assuredly challenge all of us as all teenagers do, but as a group is a fun group to be around.

Regardless of their teammate's individual talent level, they celebrate each other's achievements with the same passion, on and off the court. The guy who averages 20 points showed the same incredulosity and genuine joy all year long for his teammate who scored his second or third basket of the year. They leave no one behind on or off the court. Everyone is included.

Some of these kids have faced challenges that I think their friends have helped them come to grips with, albeit perhaps not with intention, but through relentless example and action over many years. With this group it's never just yack, its real. They share everything with zero pecking order. There is, under the hood, some real character in this group of young men. Hard to put your finger on. It's just something over time watching them interact – you come to appreciate and admire. At their core, several of these young men have the real potential to be accomplished leaders, and special ones at that.

Nice job parents, nice job Jamestown.

**Chris Crawford**  
Jamestown

## Time to rework teacher contracts

The results of the New England Common Assessment Program proficiency tests (NECAP) administered to the states eleventh graders last year were truly disturbing. Only 61 percent were found to be totally proficient in reading, 36 percent in writing and 22 percent in math.

These results are the just the latest evidence that Rhode Islands public schools are failing to prepare our

students to take their place in the hi-tech world we live in.

I urge all readers that are outraged by the NECAP results to do what I did and review the teacher contract for your town. Most of them can be found on the Education Partnerships web site ([www.edpartnership.org](http://www.edpartnership.org)). The first thing you will see is that these lengthy documents have nothing to do with providing our children with a good education and everything to do with protecting jobs and benefits and restricting the demands placed on teachers. The most glaring shortcoming of these contracts, however, is their failure to hold teachers responsible for student achievement.

The contracts set forth compensation plans based exclusively on years of service and degrees earned. Under this system all teachers with the same years of service and degrees held receive the same pay regardless of whether they are outstanding or ineffective. Making things worse, provisions of the contracts and of state law make it virtually impossible to terminate ineffective teachers.

It is time to scrap the present tenure-based compensation plans and begin work on developing and implementing plans that permit principals to reward teachers for outstanding performance and for possessing strong skills in math and science.

The industrial-style teacher contracts now in place are totally inappropriate for dealing with a professional workforce. They impose highly specific work rules governing all aspects of day-to-day school activities, denying principals the flexibility required to effectively manage their schools. A strong argument can be made that work rules should not be the subject of collective bargaining.

The NECAP scores should serve as a wakeup call to school committees throughout the state that it is time to stand up to the unions and take back management rights that over the years have been negotiated away. In order to turn around our public education system it will be necessary for school committees around the state to band together and bring pressure on the General Assembly to modify state laws regarding collective bargaining, tenure based compensation and seniority rights which now restrict their ability to provide their students with a quality education.

**Robert Ziegler**  
Bristol



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**LEGAL TIP**  
In a personal injury lawsuit, evidence of the plaintiff's pre-accident alcohol consumption was admissible, even though blood alcohol testing indicated he was under the legal limit at the time of the accident, the South Carolina Supreme Court has ruled.  
The plaintiff drove his motorcycle into the driver's side of the defendant's car as it turned left across the road. In the emergency room several hours after the accident, the investigating officer smelled alcohol on the plaintiff's breath. A blood sample showed a BAC level of 0.036 percent, below the legal limit for operating a vehicle.  
A trial judge denied the plaintiff's motion to exclude evidence of his alcohol consumption, finding it was probative as to comparative liability. A jury then found plaintiff was 70 percent at fault.  
The supreme court affirmed the ruling on admissibility.  
*The Supreme Court licenses all lawyers in the general practice of law. The court does not license any lawyer as an expert or specialist in any field of practice.*



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**Now that we're living together...**



**Why don't we make it legal?**  
**Yes, you MUST have a license for your dog!**

Getting a dog license in the Town of Jamestown is easy and cost effective. Treat your pooch to some doggie jewelry. It comes with a numbered tag for easy tracking if your dog gets lost or picked up by the Dog Officer.

**It's the Law... Avoid a \$55+ fine!**  
**Call: 423-7200**

During the month of April you can receive a dog license at the Town Clerk's Office, 93 Narragansett Avenue. You **MUST** have a current rabies vaccination certificate.