

Letters

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great one.

It was a wonderful weekend, having spent most of Saturday with Richardson family visitors we haven't seen in years, who gathered from the West Coast and the South to reconnect with family throughout Southern New England. They left years ago, some as young children and came back as grandparents, for a great reunion.

That wonderful day was followed by the super birthday celebration, which caught me totally off guard, thanks to my whole family who planned and executed a great surprise. My thanks to the PAC Club staff for delicious food and to everyone who came to celebrate with me making this birthday a memorable one.

Thanks to the Press for the happy birthday photo, and to everyone who sent me birthday greetings. Many treasured memories were recalled throughout the party and in the days that have followed and are much appreciated by one octogenarian who will never forget her 80th birthday.

**Charlotte S. Richardson
Jamestown**

Won't put up with doubled fee

The police department has taken over the billing for the annual fire/burglar alarm fee and I am in receipt of a bill for double the amount I have paid in the past.

I have an alarm that I put in 10 years ago because I wanted fire protection for my animal. At the same time, and I presume still, it was one alarm going in on one phone line to a central station that monitors this alarm and calls the police department if they are unable to reach me or my back-up contact person.

Apparently the town has not been charging us enough over the last ten years and now has interpreted the ordinance to read a separate yearly charge of \$36 for fire and burglar as opposed to one fee for the alarm. I have no problem paying for a permit to install the alarm and I have no problem being charged extra if my alarm goes off repeatedly, but, if my neighbor calls in a fire or burglary or I call 911, there is no fee. Why should we be paying twice as much as before when there is no increase in service by the town whatsoever?

I have to believe this is a cheap attempt to generate cash by way of these relatively little fees that most people choose to pay because it is not worth their time fighting. I've had it and believe we need to stand up and say enough! This increase is capricious and excessive and totally unfair.

**Sydney Waller
Jamestown**

Adopt an unwanted cat this month

Many of us are fortunate enough to have the companionship of a pet. As animal guardians, we take full responsibility for them, ensuring their health, safety and well-being. Sadly, countless animals still endure a life void of the mere necessities of food, water and shelter. Many are adult animals whose families no longer want them or who can no longer care for them. Others are kittens and puppies born because owners did not have their pets spayed or neutered.

Rarely surviving for more than a few years on their own, these animals die painfully by abuse, starvation, or disease. Some end up at the local animal shelter. Typically these animals have litters of their own, bringing more unwanted animals into the world. Such is the sad truth of the pet overpopulation.

I have seen the suffering of these animals and the challenges that shelter workers face on a daily basis. They are forced to euthanize one animal after another due to our society's carelessness. Living creatures have become disposable items to be cuddled when cute and abandoned when they become inconvenient. Such disregard for animal life pervades and erodes our culture. As members of the community, we can make a difference.

The single most important thing we can do to end the abuse of companion animals and the killing of unwanted cats and dogs is to spay or neuter our pets. Please consider the facts: Every day 70,000 puppies and kittens are born in this country. In seven years, one female cat and her kittens can produce 420,000 cats. In six years, one female dog and her offspring can produce 67,000 puppies. An estimated 6 million cats, dogs, rabbits and other animals are destroyed in animal shelters throughout the U.S. each year. Countless more suffer on city streets, because there are simply not enough loving homes for them all.

Spaying and neutering can also prevent certain types of cancer and other diseases, allowing cats and dogs to live longer and happier lives. With all the love and happiness our animal companions give to us, it is a small price to pay for the health of your pet and the prevention of unwanted kittens and puppies.

June is Adopt-A-Shelter Cat Month. Please consider adopting a cat from your local animal shelter or rescue group this month and give a home to an animal in need - there is a loveable pet just waiting to join your family.

Visit www.petfinder.com for a comprehensive list of adoptable animals and shelters in your area. Local groups in New England have established low-cost spay/neuter programs that make the surgery affordable. To find a low-cost program near you, call your local humane society or shelter, or call toll-free (800) 248-SPAY or visit www.spayusa.org.

**Alexandra Welch-Zerba
ASPCA**

Jamestown an education model

I am writing in response to William Kelly's viewpoint in the May 15 edition of the Jamestown Press. I have struggled with this from the moment I read it for so many reasons. The main reason being the feeling his views evoked in me. The only other time I have felt such hurt and disappointment was when I was asked by a family friend if I planned to place my son, who was born with Down syndrome, in an institution.

Mr. Kelly's insensitive views hit home just as hard as that ignorant person who felt that because my son was born with a disability he was not worthy of a loving, caring home. Mr. Kelly's article left me feeling as though my son is nothing more than a tax burden to him and to the town we live in.

Yes, it is true, Jamestown is known for its incredible special education program; however, he failed to mention that we are also known for our amazing school system as a whole.

How do I know this? For the past year I have contemplated moving closer to my family in Bristol so I have thoroughly researched the Portsmouth, Bristol and Barrington school systems. I was told the same thing by their educators, administration, a principal, special education teachers and parents both of typical and special needs children, which was to stay in Jamestown because my children would never receive the type of education they are getting now. I was impressed with just how highly regarded our educators and administration are by their colleagues.

Mr. Kelly also failed to mention the powerful impact that children with disabilities have on our typical children and vice versa, which is facilitated through small, integrated classrooms. Please understand that it is not just the fact that my son is integrated with his typical peers but also our small classroom size that has such an enormous impact on his progress. He would get lost in a large classroom. I cannot

tell you how many parents have come up to me and told me how much their children enjoy being in class with my son. As a parent of a child with a disability, words will never express how happy that makes me.

My fears have been cast aside and my son has been embraced by his classmates and teachers. It is overwhelming. We are very fortunate that our children (please keep in mind that I also have a typical child) have the opportunity to grow up with children who have disabilities. It teaches them compassion, empathy and understanding far beyond anything they could learn from a school book. I see it every time I am in his classroom. His classmates are amazing little people that treat him with patience, understanding and love.

It is unfortunate that many of the previous generations did not have such an experience. I am sure it would have changed some of the shortsighted, ignorant views we see today. As not only a parent but also a taxpayer I feel members of our Town Council should be properly educated when casting such strong opinions regarding the fate of some of our town's most vulnerable members.

I feel Mr. Kelly would benefit greatly from seeing my son in his classroom with his typical peers and hope he takes the time to do so. It is an experience one truly cannot understand until they have seen it for themselves.

Mr. Kelly, you questioned at what cost is this program to the taxpayers. I would think it is as important as giving our policeman the safest vests and our fireman the most effective equipment. It would be unconscionable to do anything less, just as it would be unconscionable to lessen our educational standards to save a dollar.

**Beth Garcia
Jamestown**

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