

Opinion



Mandy's Musings



By Mandy Zerr
Patriot Writer

There are few finer pleasures in life than a recently cleaned public restroom. The tile floor is shiny, the mirrors are spotless. But most importantly, the toilet seats are all up and standing at attention, ready to be slammed down for your butt to be its first encounter that day.

But the clean public restroom is as rare as it is beautiful. It's a necessary evil that both men and women must face almost every day of their lives.

Being a woman, I don't know what goes on in men's bathrooms (nor do I want to), but I've seen women's public bathrooms, and their condition is often appalling. They are smelly, unsanitary, and just plain nasty.

After years of observing female restrooms, I realized that the traumatic experience of the public toilet could be lessened by eradicating one simple female habit. It is the most potent problem of the public toilet, a restroom aerodynamic performed by women every day - hovering.

The female population will of course know all about hovering (which may also be known as "squatting").

However, for the benefit of the male reader, hovering is something ladies will do to save their precious bottoms from touching a toilet seat that someone else's bottom has touched. To save themselves from potty cooties, they hover or squat above the toilet seat only to make a bigger mess for the tragic fool who stumbles into the stall after them.

And I am always one of those tragic fools.

I don't condone hovering,

mostly because I can't do it. And not from lack of trying.

As a result, I'm the one who gets stuck wiping up after hoverers with bad aim. And they all have bad aim.

It's probably because I have this hover handicap that I have a hard time understanding why someone would want to hover in the first place. I agree that a wet seat is a turn-off, but if the seat is dry, why tax yourself?

I'm a firm believer that going to the bathroom should be a relaxing, and even a reflective, experience. Hovering doesn't allow for any of that.

Even medical science agrees that hovering is wrong. I once saw a TV talk show hosted by a doctor who said it's possible to get an infection from hovering.

When you hover, you're straining yourself, and nothing flows like it should. Therefore, whatever's left in your body could cause you problems; problems that would be much worse than the imaginary problems acquired from just sitting on the damn seat.

But I'm not an unreasonable person. I understand that there may be a mental condition that leaves the hoverer unable to sit down on a public toilet seat, not unlike my physical condition that allows me to do nothing else.

I am happy to report that there is hope for the die-hard hoverer. Hope in the form of a great invention that will help the hoverer overcome her fear of sitting down - the toilet seat cover.

Found in public restrooms round the world, the papery wonder keeps would-be hoverers safe from direct contact with the evils of public porcelain.

Ladies, it doesn't have to be hard. Just imagine the possibilities. If *nobody* hovered, there would be no wet seat, and the whole purpose for hovering would disappear. It's that simple. Nobody hovers, there is never a wet seat, and it is possible to just sit down, relax, and let Mother Nature take her course.

What a beautiful pee it would be.

Contact Mandy at mbzerr@berksmontnews.com.

That's What Friend Is For: child abuse help

From Friend Inc. Community Services

The Child Protective Services Law was originally passed in 1975. A number of amendments have occurred to the law over the years, with the last amendment occurring in 1998. The most significant amendment occurred in 1995. The purpose of the law is to make it easier for folks to report cases of suspected child abuse and for each children and youth agency in each county in Pennsylvania to establish a separate unit to investigate cases of suspected child abuse.

Pennsylvania law defines child abuse as any of the following when committed upon a child under 18 years of age by a perpetrator:

- Any recent act which causes non-accidental serious physical injury;
- An act or failure to act which causes non-accidental serious mental injury or sexual abuse or sexual exploitation;
- Any recent act, failure to act or series of such acts which creates an imminent risk of serious physical injury, sexual abuse, or sexual exploitation;
- Serious physical neglect that endangers a child's life or development or impairs a child's functioning.

A perpetrator is defined as a parent, paramour of a parent, individual (14 or older) residing in the same home as a child, or a person responsible for the welfare of a child including a person who provides mental health diagnosis or treatment.

In 2002, there were 24,408 reported suspected child abuse reports in Pennsylvania, 21 percent of them were substantiated, and 79 percent of them were not substantiated. In Berks County, there were 877 reports of suspected child abuse, with 113 of those, or 12.9 percent, being substantiated. The highest number of substantiated reports happens to be in the category of sexual abuse, for both Pennsylvania and Berks County. There were 49 children who died from child abuse in Pennsylvania in 2002. None of those deaths were from Berks County. Another staggering statistic is that in Pennsylvania in 2002 there were 2,989 reports of suspected child abuse received in daycare centers. A total of 245

(eight percent) of those were substantiated.

There are certain people in Pennsylvania who are required, or mandated, to report cases of suspected child abuse. Those are people who come into contact with children as part of their profession, like teachers, pastors, police officers, mental health counselors, doctors, and nurses. However, anyone may report child abuse. If you suspect a child has been abused, you need to call childline, the statewide central registry at 1-800-932-0313. Childline will forward the concerns to the appropriate county. You may also call the local agency, Berks County Children and Youth Services, at 610-478-6747, especially if you have any questions about the appropriateness of your concerns to report.

Some other things you can do to combat the very serious problem of child abuse are:

- Believe your child if he comes to you with a disclosure;
- Do not conduct your own investigation;
- Do not interrogate your child;

- Do not videotape or record your child's statement;
- Call Children's Services or the District Attorney's Child Abuse Unit;
- Let the professionals conduct the investigation;
- Encourage the child to talk to the professionals and to tell the truth;
- Write down anything the child says to you and turn it over to the investigators;
- Give your child a lot of love and support;
- Work through the professionals to have your child get a medical exam or sexuality evaluation, if necessary;
- Let the child know they did the right thing by disclosing;
- Let the child know the abuse was not their fault;
- Do not allow the child to have any contact with the perpetrator, especially in sexual abuse cases, until recommended by Children & Youth, and the therapist;
- Make sure you screen your potential babysitter or daycare provider and get references;

Child abuse is a significant

problem in our society including our own county of Berks. It does not go away by ignoring it. Please call Childline at 1-800-932-0313, the Berks County District Attorney's Child Abuse Unit at 610-478-7171, or Berks County Children's services at 610-478-6700 if you have concerns. Children's Services is there to investigate complaints, protect children, and rehabilitate families. They are not there to remove children from their families, unless they are in danger of further abuse by staying there.

We just celebrated Child Abuse Awareness Month in April. Let's all continue to do what we can to become more aware of the problem and to report appropriate concerns.

This article is brought to you by this month's guest writer Melissa Haydt, supervisor of the Child's Sexual Abuse Unit at Berks County Children and Youth.

To inquire about Friend Inc.'s free services, call 610-683-7790.

Letters to the Editor

In support of Kutztown's mayor

To the Editor:

I see "the boys of summer" are at it again. When are you going to hang it up about the mayor? I am totally frustrated that every meeting is about Mayor Marino and what he has done and what he has failed to do. I cannot understand the citizens of Kutztown allowing you to spend their hard-earned tax money on lawyers and lawsuits against the mayor and have yet to take the issue to court. Haven't you realized that this might be a lost cause?

The most interesting part of this whole scenario is this: Gerry Marino is the mayor until his term expires and I am sure that if he chooses to run again and loses, then he gave it a good try. There are many of you on council that need to consider what you are saying and reporting.

The little town of Kutztown is just not what it used to be and I cannot understand how the people

of your town keep electing you all to office. There have been too many suggestions made by council that are offensive toward the mayor. You keep on accusing, and yet nothing has ever been completed as far as the lawsuits are concerned. Is this because there is not just cause or can the accusations against the mayor not be substantiated? Think about any future lawsuits you might be considering because it is money being spent that is not yours to be so frivolous with, and I do hope the townspeople wake up about this.

In the end, I have this to say: 'Go, Gerry, Go.' Keep fighting against those who hate you so much that they have to make up nasty things to say and do against you. You are a decent human being who is trying to make the best of what council has given you or allowed you to know, and no matter how hard you try to make things work for the better of the community, borough council will continue to put roadblocks in your way.

The vision you had hoped to realize will probably never come true for you. Borough council has stopped you in every instance. You know they are just waiting for the next election and hoping you do not run. If you choose to run again, good for you, and if not, then the town will return to what it was. If that happens, council will run the town the way they want it and it does not matter what others would like to see happen.

Kutztown has been lucky to have you as mayor. It was just that some do not like outsiders and they never realized what you were trying to do for the town, nor were they willing to listen to you. Your suggestions went by the roadside. They could not see your vision, nor did they care to do so. I guess council will never realize the potential of some good people who would have liked to change some things in the town for the better, but are too intimidated by who is there to serve them.

Barbara Kessig
Alburtis, Pa.

Ti dbit in article was interesting

To the Editor:

I was intrigued by the article written by Eric Veronikis, "Fleetwood students show area servicemen support" (*Kutztown Area Patriot*, April 29, 2004). To say the least, our servicemen deserve all the positive support we can give them in the face of some of the undeserving media negativity.

One interesting comment made by Kendra's mother relates to the "camel spider" that is really not a spider or a scorpion, but a unique animal known as a solifugid.

Solifugids (in this case: Galeodes arabs) are never two-feet long, but grow to the size of a man's hand (that's big enough). Some species are also found in our own western deserts. They like the shade and will follow your shadow at 10-plus miles per hour. The Internet can provide reliable information, but beware of some

sites that like to exaggerate. Even some of our servicemen have a sense of humor in spite of difficult circumstances.

William F. Seip
Baltimore, Md.

Thanks to those who donated

To the Editor:

I would like to thank everyone in the Kutztown area who donated cat food and supplies for my Girl Scout Bronze Award project for the One-by-One cat shelter.

With your help, I collected: 15 rolls of paper towels, 951 paper plates, 64-pounds of cat litter, trash bags, nine bags of cat treats, 79 cans of cat food, 12 boxes of cat food, 21 bags of cat food, 30 cat blankets and 80 cat toys.

On behalf of myself and the cats, we thank you.

Leanza Altenderfer
Kutztown, Pa.

EDITORIAL POLICY

The *Kutztown Area Patriot* welcomes letters to the editor concerning local issues. Letters must include the writer's signature, address and telephone number. Unsigned letters will not be published.

We encourage our readers to write letters to the editor on any local issue. Letters should be issue-oriented.

Personal attacks on individuals should be avoided, and letters which appear to attack individuals will not be run. An "individual" is defined as any person involuntarily placed in the public eye. Elected officials and other public figures are considered not as individuals, but as the institution which they represent. Comments regarding public figures should deal directly with their actions in a public capacity or in reference to the institution which they represent.

Send letters to The *Kutztown Area Patriot*, 302 State St., Hamburg, Pa. 19526.

Letters will be printed on a space-available basis. Unless noted in an editor's note that a topic has been closed, all letters which have been received (by signed authors), requiring no anonymity, and which deal with LOCAL ISSUES, will be run as quickly as possible. The editor reserves the right to cut words, sentences or complete paragraphs.

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