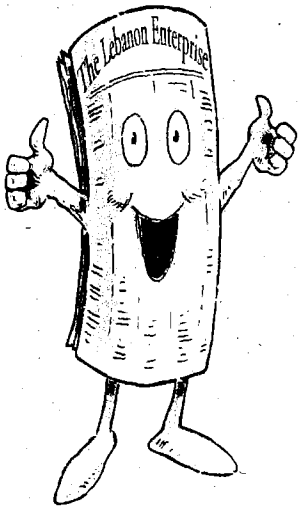


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■ GUEST COLUMN

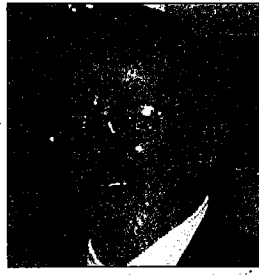
MCPS has more issues than bedbugs

Editor's note: This guest column includes some graphic content that is not suitable for young readers.

Several weeks ago when the news of bed bugs hit the community children were immediately pulled from the Marion County High School. But, what if I was to tell you that the Marion County Public School system has a much more serious problem than mere bed bugs? What if I were to tell you that what the school system has allowed to be taught and read in the libraries and in the classroom equates to mental pornography!

In our society more and more things are becoming sex oriented. After all "sex sells." Simply look at some of the billboards in Louisville, the ads on our television, and the movies that are being aimed at children. There are all sorts of sexual innuendo! While these are things that big corporations are using to sell their product to the adult population these shouldn't be things that the local school system allows to be taught to our young people!

Let's just think about this according to the facts for the



Alexander Campbell

moment, which you won't get from your school system. The CDC reported in 2013 that, "47 percent [of high school students] had ever had sexual intercourse." That "34 percent had had sexual intercourse during the previous three months, and, of these 41 percent did not use a condom the last time they had sex." Also, the CDC notes that only "15 percent had had sex with four or more people during their life." Clearly, among the teenage population there is no ignorance of what sex is, because this has already become an epidemic!

Thus, this is why I believe that the school system, the teachers involved, the principals and the superintendent need to be shamed. They should be the ones to make

sure that books are screened of this garbage. And to show you just how bad some of this stuff is a book that high schoolers are reading (*Looking For Alaska* by John Green) talks about all types of sexual and graphic material! Not to mention that the students are reading this aloud. This isn't the only book available but it is one I want you to notice.

The "F" word is used 16 times, the "Sh" word is used 27 times. One scene on page 126 and 127 in the book goes like this, "Lara unbuttoned my pants and pulled down my boxers a little and pulled out my penis. 'Wow' she said." Then it proceeds to state that oral sex then was performed. All of this is in detail. Now let me ask you something, what do you think is going to go through the mind of a young man with hormones racing through his body as he sits in the middle of class?

Another scene in the book discusses the finding of a sex tape where it goes into detail of the event, take for example this quote, "We ran with it to the TV room, closed the blinds, locked the door, and watched the movie. It opened

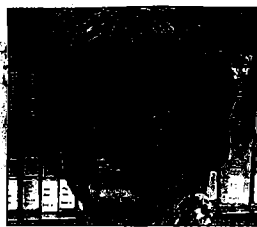
See **Campbell**, page **A7**

■ GUEST COLUMN

Free people read freely

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Benjamin Franklin, one of the preeminent Founding Fathers, once said, "Without freedom of thought, there can be no such thing as Wisdom; and no such thing as public Liberty, without Freedom of Speech." As a publisher and writer, Franklin was no stranger to controversy. Certainly, the ruling British authority of the time took much offense at Franklin's writings. Yet, Franklin believed so profoundly in the freedom to seek knowledge that he said, "If all printers were determined not to print anything until they were sure it would offend nobody, there would be very little printed." Franklin's younger fellow revolutionary, Thomas Jefferson, said that without the freedom to write and read as we please, liberty itself could be lost. A study of Jefferson's own book collection shows his voracious appetite for reading. He read widely, including from authors with whom he may have disagreed. Jefferson was certainly a fan of the classics



Kim Hardin
MCHS Media Specialist

including Socrates.

Literature, both classic and modern, by its nature makes us uncomfortable. Socrates, one of the original classics, compared himself to a gadfly, making the people of Athens uncomfortable and forcing them to confront some of the ugly realities of their city. Unfortunately for Socrates, the First Amendment was a couple of thousand years in the future, and he was put to death. In the United States if someone disagrees with the written word or finds it uncomfortable to look at the messiness of the human condition, they don't force the author to drink hemlock, as Socrates was forced to do. They have the freedom to simply not read. The Founders would argue that intellectual freedom, even

when uncomfortable, is far better than the alternative. Jefferson would argue to read well is to read broadly. Don't take my word for it, look at his bookshelf.

Engaging in literature that makes us uncomfortable does not mean we condone the actions we are reading about. Reading about a murder in *The Lebanon Enterprise* does not force us to murder. However, reading about a murder in Shakespeare forces us to confront the sometimes dark reality of the human condition. Because Mark Twain used the language of his day in *Huckleberry Finn*, doesn't mean he was an advocate for racism. To the contrary, he was shining a light on its ugly realities. Because Harper Lee described in blistering detail the injustices of the pre-civil rights south, doesn't mean she condoned those injustices. In fact, she was abhorred by them. George Orwell, in painting a picture of a totalitarian government wasn't glorifying totalitarianism, he was warning us of its dangers. *The Scarlett Letter* does not force us to engage in adultery. The book raises questions about who should throw the first stone.

See **Hardin**, page **A7**

■ GUEST COLUMN

Senate is working toward budget deal



Jimmy Higdon
State Senator

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The Senate is working diligently toward a budget compromise the Commonwealth are not left without a state budget at the end of the session. We do not want to waste taxpayer dollars by calling a special session.

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Additionally, we proposed to fully restore cuts to K-12 education and the Family Resource and Youth Services Centers (FRYSC). We also proposed to fully restore the judicial branch's budget to ensure the court system can continue to function.

Even while busy with budget negotiations, we passed quite a few bills this week including:

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See Hardin, page A7

■ GUEST COLUMN

Author John Green supports local teacher

Editor's Note: John Green wrote this post on Facebook on Friday, April 1

I'm always thrilled to hear about schools that use my books in their classrooms and so I was delighted that a teacher at Marion County High School chose to teach *Looking for Alaska* to her senior English class. The teacher sent a permission form home to parents and this semester a parent opted out for their student, so that teacher provided a different reading assignment for that student.

Now those parents have been going to community members and school board members and reading only certain excerpts from the book claiming that it is "pornographic" and "erotic" without reading the whole book. The school board is

facing pressure to remove the book from the classroom and the school. A letter will appear in the next edition of the local paper that says that the teacher responsible for teaching this "garbage" is "godless", "shameful", and "untrustworthy" and says that the teacher should lose her job.

This is not the first time *Looking for Alaska* has been challenged, nor will it be the last. (youtube.com/fHMPtYvZ8tM and fishingboatproceeds.tumblr.com/post/79459303763/paper-towns-and-looking-for-alaska-challenged are just two examples.)

Please join me in emailing letters of support of the teacher at Marion County High School who has stood by the inclusion of *Looking for Alaska* in her curriculum. It's

important to keep your letter as civil as possible, even if this kind of thing turns you into a giant squid of anger. To add your voice of support, please write a letter addressed to [the board of education or *The Lebanon Enterprise*].

I am so grateful to those at Marion County High School who have supported *Looking for Alaska* and understand that I am not out to corrupt teenagers, and who further understand the importance of reading books critically and thoughtfully as a whole, rather than focusing on individual scenes ripped from their context.

Thanks for supporting *Looking for Alaska* and thanks for being awesome.



Jimmy Higdon

State Senator

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- HB 352 would update regulations relating to security interests in motor vehicles.

- HB 382, which would immediately transfer a vehicle's title to its new owner upon its sale from a dealership, providing the proper paperwork is filed.

- HB 111, as amended, would require public school to post the Kentucky child abuse hotline number. Additionally, this bill gives more flexibility to school calendar scheduling.

- HB 263, as amended, would require more transparency in the public pension system.

- House Concurrent Resolution (HCR) 187, which urges the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agency and the Department of Homeland Security to require advanced screening of all inbound shipments to the United States to intercept illegal synthetic drugs and

See Senate, page A7

General Assembly to reach a compromise. Although legislators are not at the Capitol this week because of the veto recess – a roughly 10-day period in which the governor decides whether to sign bills into law or reject them – a budget could be approved on April 12th, the legislative session's 60th and final day. I am committed to making sure this occurs.

To understand how we reached this point, it helps

he recommended that a large portion of state government reduce spending by nine percent next year and maintain that level in the budget's second year. He also called for a corresponding cut for this fiscal year, which ends June 30.

His proposed cuts exempted Medicaid, public-safety measures and per-pupil funding for students in elementary and secondary school. However, these cuts would

Every budget proposal offered by the governor, the House and the Senate would dedicate much of the money from these cuts to the two state retirement systems used by our state employees and teachers. Both systems have seen their funding levels drop significantly because of the 2008 recession, and while there is no problem in the short-term regarding benefits, it could be catastrophic for the state in a

the governor's plan to scale back a broad section of state government by nearly 10 percent, but we think it is wrong to ask our children and college students to bear the brunt of these cuts while hundreds of millions of state dollars sit unused in a bank.

The House budget showed there is a better way. Our plan gave both retirement systems everything they say they need for the next two years and

debated. To reach me, my address is Room 329G, Capitol Annex, 702 Capitol Avenue, Frankfort, KY 40601; or you can email me at Terry.Mills@lrc.ky.gov. To leave a message for me or for any legislator by phone, please call 1-800-372-7181. For those with a hearing impairment, the number is 1-800-896-0305. I hope to hear from you soon.

As we wait to see if the House and Senate can reach a final resolution on the budget, it is worth emphasizing that both chambers did pass several

am down right angry that these people have ignored the well being of our children! Will these untrustworthy, godless teachers lose their jobs? Probably not... but that's political correctness for you!

Editor's note: Alexander Campbell is a resident of the City of Lebanon.

Campbell

Continued from A6

with a woman standing on a bridge with her legs spread while a guy knelt in front of her, giving her..." I won't post the rest of it, I'm sure reasonable adults know what is happening here. Is this really what

schools are teaching our young people?

And we wonder why our teens are getting pregnant, why our young men can't keep their pants zipped? Sex is being glorified from the big corporations to the small town school system. The Marion County Public School system should be ashamed that they have

allowed such a thing to go unnoticed.

Parents, faith leaders of Marion County, it is unacceptable that school officials have allowed sexually explicit books and materials to be allowed into the library and into the classroom. We wonder why our youth are troubled, maybe part of it is because

the schools think parents are too dumb and stupid to know what's best. My warning to you, parents, you better rise up now, you better stand up for your child now and for the others in that classroom! Do you want your daughter to be in the mind of that young boy as he is reading about these scenes? And

parents do you want your son thinking these things about that young lady sitting across the room as these things are read? Whatever we put into the heart and the mind will eventually come out. These are not things that need to be put into the hearts of our young people. I am ashamed of MCPS, and I

Independence. I'm sure when George III read it he was a bit uncomfortable. After 240 years of free speaking, free writing, and free reading, Americans have proven Jefferson right. In short, "free people read freely."

Editor's note: Kim Hardin is the media specialist at Marion County High School.

Hardin

Continued from A6

Looking for Alaska, the book in question, is a young adult novel about grief, loss, and coming of age in a difficult, confusing world. John Green, the author, describes an awkward sex scene, not to encourage our teenagers to have sex, but rather, to caution against the hollowness of physicality without emotional connection and maturity. Like Mark Twain and Harper Lee, John Green presents us with a realistic portrayal of our times. Also, like Mark Twain and Harper Lee, he presents us with characters who

are intelligent, thoughtful, brave, confused, and completely human. The teenagers in *Looking for Alaska* make bad decisions and suffer heart-breaking consequences. However, they are on a journey toward the wisdom of which Benjamin Franklin speaks so eloquently. Pudge, the main character, is challenged by his religion teacher to answer for himself "What is the nature of being a person? What is the best way to be a person? How did we come to be and what will become of us when we are no longer?" These are not the questions of vapid teenagers. These are the questions of the collective human experience we all

grapple with and that give meaning to our lives. Our teenagers, like the teenagers in *Looking for Alaska*, are capable of participating in this pursuit for a meaningful life.

Looking for Alaska won the Printz Award for excellence in young adult literature. *Looking for Alaska* was also in the 2006 Top Ten Books for Young Adults. The book is critically acclaimed, widely read, and is in the process of being made into a major motion picture. Having said all that, a student at Marion County High School, does NOT have to read the book. Students can opt out and read a book of their choosing. We trust our young

adults and their parents to decide for themselves to read or not to read the book. Laurie Followell, MCHS English teacher of 26 years, tells her students, "There is a book for everyone. If it's not your book, put it down." Really, it's that simple.

Supreme Court Justice and wounded Civil War veteran Oliver Wendell Holmes said that, "If there is any principle of the Constitution that more imperatively calls for attachment than any other, it is the principle of free thought – not free thought for those who agree with us but freedom for the thought that we hate." Our Founders decided in 1776 that

allowing one man to think for the rest of us was a concept whose time was gone. Monarchies and dictatorships don't trust their citizens to choose what they want to read or what they don't want to read. Thomas Jefferson ended our ties with a monarchy with a piece of controversial writing, The Declaration of

Senate

Continued from A6

chemicals.

• HB 570 relates to Kentucky State Police employees and updates statutes to reflect current and correct information.

• HB 369 would add the Arc of Kentucky to the Kentucky Commission

on Services and Supports for Individuals with an Intellectual Disability and Other Developmental Disabilities.

The General Assembly will not be in session during the veto period, which concludes on April 11. During that time Senate and House leadership will continue budget negotiations in hopes of voting on a budget on April 12,

the last day of the 2016 Regular Session. By the time this is read I will be back at home. I welcome calls if you want to discuss issues before we return for our last day, which is April 12. My home phone is 270-692-6945


If you have any ques-

tions or comments about these issues or any other public policy issue, please call me toll-free at 1-800-372-7181 or email me at Jimmy.Higdon@LRC.ky.gov. You can also review the Legislature's work online at www.lrc.ky.gov.

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Auction

Sat., APR. 16TH – 10^{AM}

LOCATION: Nelson Co., KY - 151 Cardinal Drive, Bardstown, KY. From Bardstown, take 31E South approximately 1 mile, turn right on Cardinal Drive to sale site.

REASON FOR SALE: In order to settle the estate of Mary Georgia Bradley, John Bradley, Jr., Executor has commissioned BRAY AUCTION SERVICES, LLC of Bardstown, KY in conjunction with Area One Realty to sell the following described real estate and personal property at absolute auction.

REAL ESTATE: Selling a very nice 4 bedroom brick home on the outskirts of Bardstown. The one story ranch home consists of a large den, living room, eat-in kitchen, 2 full baths and 3 bedrooms on the first floor. The partial basement includes a very large den with a bar area and wood burning stove, laundry room, 1 bedroom and storage area. Electric Cable heat, window air units and hardwood floors, plus a covered patio. The level 1.45 acre lot - new survey underway - is improved with a 10x20 storage building, blacktop drive, fruit trees and grapevines.

FURNITURE & HOUSEHOLD GOODS: China cabinet, Set of chairs, Marble top table, Kitchen table & chairs (6), Hall tree, Microwave, Whirlpool side by side Refrigerator, Electric range, 2 table & chairs sets, Couch, Loveseat, Recliner, End tables, Coffee table, 2 flat screen TVs, Lamps, Pictures, Pots, Pans, Dishes, Collectibles, Hospital bed, 2 chests of drawers, Jewelry case, Bench seat, Bedroom suite 5 piece, Vacuum cleaner, 2 twin beds, Canning jars, Christmas trees, Decorations, Treadmill, Couch and chair set, Rocking chair, GE upright Freezer. **TOOLS:** 2 Poulan chain saws, Air compressor, Hand tools - vise, Push mower, 3 gas & electric weed eaters, Step ladders, Picnic table, Gas grill, Fertilizer spreader, Hand tools, Aluminum extension ladder, 2 wrought iron tables & chairs – 2 sets.

AUCTIONEERS NOTE: Great location. Would make a great starter home or investment property.

TERMS: Real Estate - 20% down day of sale - balance on or before 30 days with delivery of deed. Personal property - cash or personal check w/proper identification. A 10% buyer's premium will be added to all winning bids to determine the final selling price.

NOTE: This home was built prior to 1978. Anyone wishing to do lead-base paint testing must do so 10 days prior to sale date.

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OR CALL MIKE BALLARD 502-510-0515 OR DAVID BRAY 502-349-8979

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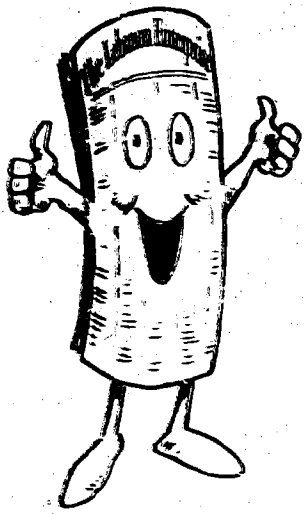
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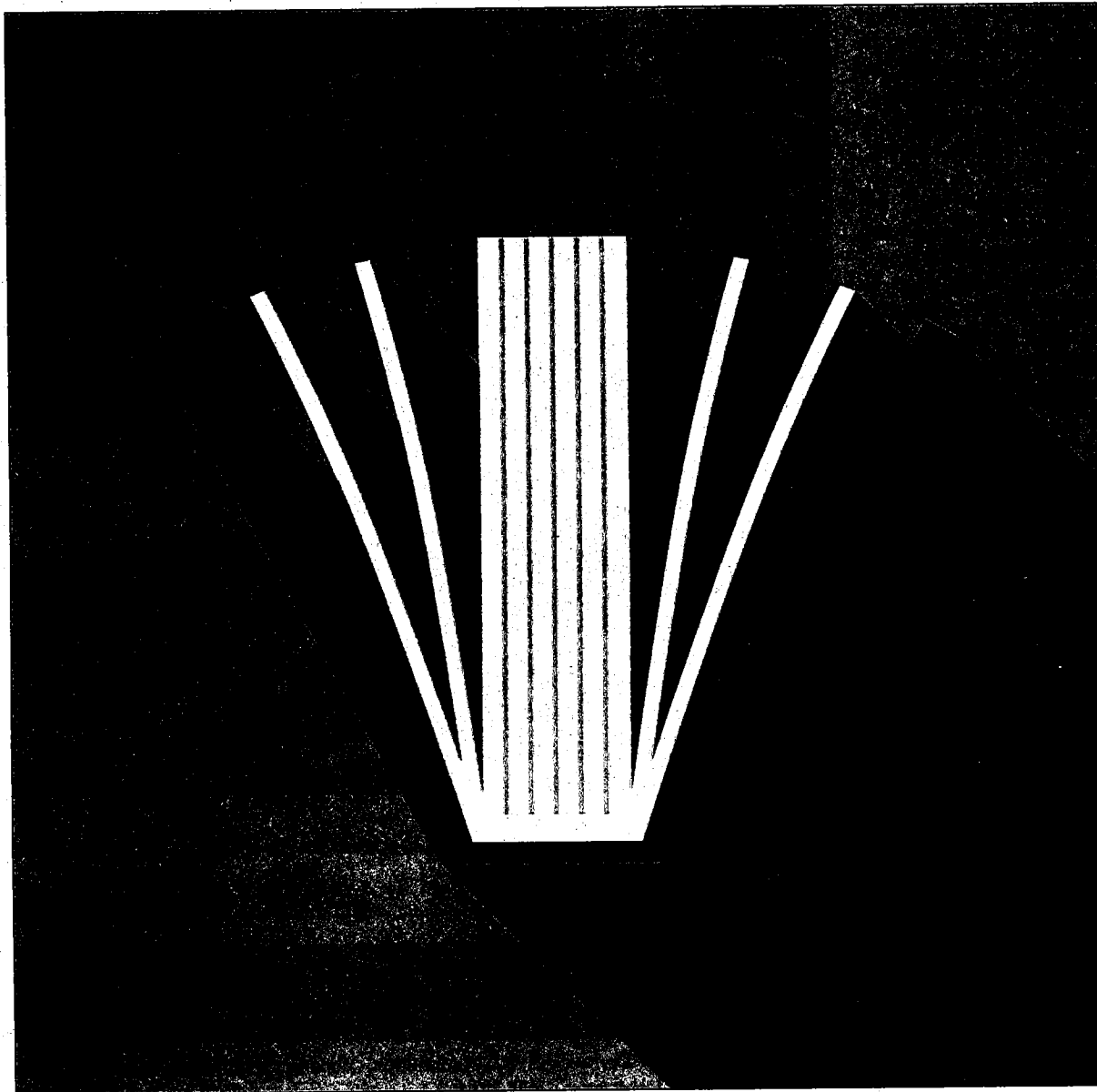
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

Readers share opinions on recent book controversy at MCHS

First and foremost, I believe that the people of Lebanon are only hearing one side of the story when it comes to the actions that are currently being discussed in the English department at Marion County High School. I believe it's time to hear from a student. As a Marion County High School graduate and valedictorian of the 2013 class, I am blown away by the backlash towards the English department by some in our community. Every college student is busy, but I believe it is more important for me to address these concerns.

From walking into a seminar class my first semester at the

become adults in the community.

It is easy to pick out things to support one's own argument and ignore those that refute it. However, to clearly only provide one side of the story does the community injustice. Just recently in my developmental psychology course we learned that research actually also shows that teens who are the most susceptible to contract a sexually transmitted disease have parents who tell their children about sex but tell them to avoid it! There are many facts and misconceptions when it comes to sexual education. To attempt to hide a subject or to pretend like it does not exist is something that

that students actually will read are challenges in themselves. To a high school student choosing between the difficult language and syntax of Hamlet or a novel like Looking for Alaska written by the author who also authored The Fault in Our Stars is an easy choice.

Parents, do not think that we are incapable of understanding the meaning behind a book such as Looking for Alaska. To pick out scenes that do not capture the true essence of a novel is to take things out of context. The real political correctness is not censoring our students from subjects on the basis that we are offended but instead is to offer environments that foster crit-

YOUR OPINION

Clearing up confusion about The Caring Place

It has come to our attention that some clients of The Caring Place are getting the churches, restaurants, and private businesses to give them items and food. They are saying that we won't help them and that we are kicking them out of the shelter. (We never use language like that.) It has also been stated that they say we are closing our facility. This is a complete untruth.

If women or clients from The Caring Place approach your church or business asking for money or assistance in any way, please call us at 270-692-9300.

We provide assistance for our present and former clients. We are extremely sorry for any confusion that has been brought to you misrepresenting concerning The Caring Place.

If you would like to donate to battered women and children or specifically to The Caring Place, please call us. We have never and will never send a client out into the public to ask for donations. This is unsafe and very unprofessional.

To clear up any gossip or rumors, please call the shelter during office hours from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday.

*Delena Trent
Executive Director
The Caring Place
Lebanon*

Respect motorcyclists

Here are a few safety reminders: If you have road frontage, remember that roads are made of a good surface for traction. Grass clippings, especially when wet, and gravel compromise the safety of the road surface. Please, when mowing roadsides, make sure you throw the grass clippings away from the road surface. Don't throw grass clippings on the road!

Also, if you have gravel washing onto the roads, please take a moment to sweep it off and make the road safe. You may save a life by doing this kind service.

If you or your family member is considering getting a bike, even if you already have experience, consider this for safety:

The Kentucky Motorcycle Rider Education Program is offered at all the colleges and community colleges. Elizabethtown and Bowling Green are closest to our area. The Basic Rider Course is for the beginning rider. The rider can practice on new motorcycles of different styles to determine which is most comfortable. There are only 12 people in the class.

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address and a phone number.
And remember, letters should
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YOUR OPINION

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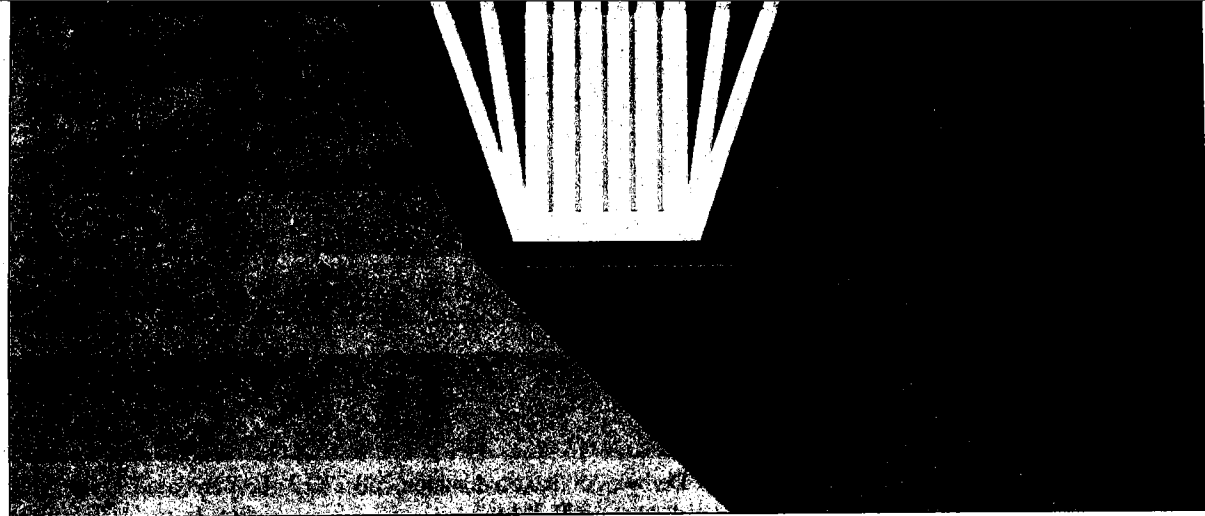
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From walking into a seminar class my first semester at the University of Louisville, I was shocked by how many students were not prepared for a writing intensive and analytical course. The skills that were instilled in me by the English department prepared me to succeed. Every teacher at MCHS cares about his or her students and the community's future. The audacity to question whether or not the school had the best interest of the students is absurd. We are not children, nor are we naïve in what is constantly portrayed around us in media. To simply try to hide us from reality is to deprive us of the ability to mature and

become adults in the community.

It is easy to pick out things to support one's own argument and ignore those that refute it. However, to clearly only provide one side of the story does the community injustice. Just recently in my developmental psychology course we learned that research actually also shows that teens who are the most susceptible to contract a sexually transmitted disease have parents who tell their children about sex but tell them to avoid it! There are many facts and misconceptions when it comes to sexual education. To attempt to hide a subject or to pretend like it does not exist is something that would only promote fascination.

However, the true essence of this argument is based on censorship. To simply avoid reading a book that has language that society has deemed inappropriate is equivalent to having students walk down the hallway of the school with earplugs to avoid hearing these words. Some of the greatest novels ever to be written were controversial and spoke about contentious subjects. These books did not encourage behavior instead teaches students about human emotions, motivations, and consequences. Finding novels

that students actually will read are challenges in themselves. To a high-school student choosing between the difficult language and syntax of Hamlet or a novel like Looking for Alaska written by the author who also authored The Fault in Our Stars is an easy choice.

Parents, do not think that we are incapable of understanding the meaning behind a book such as Looking for Alaska. To pick out scenes that do not capture the true essence of a novel is to take things out of context. The real political correctness is not censoring our students from subjects on the basis that we are offended but instead is to offer environments that foster critical thinking, discussion, and creativity. I stand with MCPS and the choices that they make for their students!

*Charles Shofner
Lebanon*

Editor's note: Charles Shofner is a graduate of MCHS and currently attends the University of Louisville. He is a resident of Marion County.

Books should broaden minds intellectually, not pornographically

As a parent/grandparent I am grateful for people who will stand in opposition of books in the school systems that

See Letters, page A7

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The Experienced Rider Course can be taken each year with your own bike, and lasts six hours. It is practice again, in all basic and emergency maneuvers. Both of these courses are very valuable to riders and I highly recommend them. For more information, call 1-800-396-3234. The Motorcycle Safety Foundation Web site is www.msf-usa.org. Sign up early as these classes fill up fast!

*Mary Ann Ohsol
Lebanon*

It's a rare job that would pay someone to work extra days if they failed to meet a deadline that was agreed upon well in advance. But that's the deal for members of the Kentucky General Assembly if they don't reach an agreement soon on the state's 2016-18 budget. They would come back for a special session called by the governor to finish their work — and do it at the expense of taxpayers.

This is ludicrous. Lawmakers shouldn't ever be surprised by the challenges of reaching a budget agreement. It must be done, and politicians agree to do the work when they run for office. They — along with the governor — know going into a session in January of even-numbered years that they must pass a two-year spending plan. Sincere differences of opinion and political jockeying are all part of the process. But so is compromise.

Running a legislative session costs about \$70,000 a day. That's not enough to break state coffers, but it's nothing to blink at either. What it costs to run a session for a single day is more money than most Kentuckians earn for an entire year.

Conveniently, each side of a budget debate can blame the other for refusing to make the concessions required to reach some agreement.

But it's not just budget work that the General Assembly fails to tackle in a timely manner. Lawmakers have squandered time on other issues as well. The alarm sounded over the pension crisis years ago without a timely response. The need for a tax code overhaul was evident long ago, but that also didn't stir much urgency.

If the General Assembly has any special skill, it might be in the area of kicking. We mean, of course, kicking problems into the next session, the next year and even the next

decade. The compromise needed to reach a budget agreement before the last day of this legislative session — which will probably be Tuesday — hinges on education funding and the pension crisis.

Gov. Matt Bevin and Senate Republicans say cuts to education are necessary to begin paying down the pension shortfall. House Democrats want to roll back Bevin's proposed cuts for K-12 schools and universities.

After a meeting Wednesday with Bevin, eight university presidents said they would accept a 2 percent cut in the current budget (if that survives a court challenge) and 4.5 percent next year and the year after. Bevin originally proposed reductions of 4.5 percent this year and 9 percent in both of the next two years.

In the House, Democrats want no cuts this year to universities and just 2 percent next year. They also want to eliminate cuts to

secondary education. Some progress has been made between legislative leaders over the last few days. Senate President Roberts

and House Majority Leader Greg Stumbo need to deliver a compromise. Failing to do so will be an insult to hard-working Kentuckians who rarely have the option

of extra pay for failing to get a job done on time. *Editor's note: Reprinted with permission through the Kentucky Press News Service.*



■ GUEST COLUMN

Our work is not complete until a budget is signed into law

This week, the General Assembly returns to the Capitol for a single day to wrap up the 2016 legislative session.



Terry Mills
State Representative

While this time traditionally has been set aside just to consider whether the House and Senate should override any vetoes a governor might issue, we have begun in recent years to also use this time to vote on other bills that were unresolved before the veto recess. This year, the biggest of those is the state's two-year budget.

As you may recall, negotiations between legislative leaders stalled over a fundamental disagreement. In the House, we believe education — from preschool to postsecondary — should be protected if state revenues are growing and our sizable public pension costs can be met. The Senate and Governor Bevin disagree when it comes to higher education, even as their own budget proposals call for hundreds of millions of dollars to be set aside in reserves that extend beyond what the state needs for emergencies.

House and Senate leaders met last week with the governor and our public postsecondary presidents to see if a compromise

was possible, and House leaders offered a plan that attempts to protect higher education from severe cuts while trying to get a budget enacted. My hope remains that a deal can still be reached.

Our work is not complete until a budget is signed into law, but as we wait on its outcome, the legislative session was a success in many other ways.

One new law, for example, will put Kentucky in line with more than 30 other states that already have public-private partnerships. Like it sounds, P3 is designed to make it easier for state and local governments to work with the private sector to build projects the government cannot realistically take on alone or to run services like a utility.

Some of this can already be done, but this law will standardize the process statewide while making it more transparent and accountable to the

public. With the federal government providing less resources than it has in the past, states are turning to P3 to boost their infrastructure. The Kentucky Chamber of Commerce is among the concept's leading advocates.

Another new law will crack down on repeat DUI offenders by doubling the look-back period from five years to 10. Because each successive DUI leads to additional penalties, this law should make it easier to take repeat offenders off the road and hopefully lead many to treatment.

According to law enforcement, there were more than 15,000 first-time DUI offenders last year and 3,300 who were convicted for a second offense. The numbers for a third offense topped 700, and for a fourth DUI, which is a Class D felony, the total was 82. With a longer look-back period, the numbers of repeat offenders will undoubtedly rise.

Under another new law, the goal is to make a second set of numbers go down. In this case, the General Assembly is establishing a framework to reduce the estimated 3,100 rape kits that the state auditor's office said last year had not been tested. This law will

reduce that backlog and ultimately ensure that kits in the future will undergo forensic testing within 60 days. Other states have faced similar issues and have shown it is possible to make this work.

In another criminal-justice matter, many Class D felons will have a chance to expunge their record, making it easier for them to apply for jobs or volunteer in school. The House has supported this concept for years, because thousands of Kentuckians are still paying for a crime that may have occurred decades earlier.

This legislation will apply to about 70 percent of Class D felony convictions, with violent or sex-related offenses not included. For those who do qualify, the process cannot begin until at least five years have passed since the end of their punishment, and they cannot have been charged with another crime. Prosecutors and, if possible, victims will be notified as part of the expungement process.

Some of the other bills the General Assembly approved this year will:

- Re-align 9-1-1 fees on mobile/internet-based phones so local governments are less burdened with the cost of providing this emergency service;

- Help our fast-growing distilleries, breweries and wineries by increasing production limits and making it easier for them to serve their customers;

- Add emergency medical workers to the professions eligible for lump-sum death benefits from the state if they are killed in the line of duty. Law enforcement and firefighters are those already covered;

- Make it possible for the judiciary to start a pilot program to open up most juvenile hearings; and

- Establish a disabled veteran-owned business program, so the public will be more aware of these companies. Another new law calls on profes-

sional organizations to consider qualified military training when granting licenses or certificates.

Although the legislative session is over this week, it is never too late to let me know your views on issues affecting the state. You can always reach me by writing to Room 329G, Capitol Annex, 702 Capitol Avenue, Frankfort, KY 40601; or you can email me at Terry.Mills@lrc.ky.gov. To leave a message for me or for any legislator by phone, please call 1-800-372-7181. For those with a hearing impairment, the number is 1-800-896-0305. I hope to hear from you soon.

Letters

Continued from A6

subject our youth to profanity and pornography. I am appalled to learn this type of literature is being read aloud, discussed, and treated as normal classroom activity. These same behaviors,

profanity, sexually explicit language and gestures are not allowed in the hallways and lunchroom, why are they allowed in the classroom? Parents need to trust that our youth are being exposed to books that broaden their minds intellectually, not pornographically.

Sherry Brady
Lebanon

Support local teacher's choice

I thought Kim Hardin did a good job responding to the guest columnist re: choice of books students can read. I am not familiar with the book in question, but if Laurie Followell (whose name was in the article) is the teacher in question, I support her choice. I have known

Laurie since she was a teenager and I trust her integrity and dedication as a teacher to reach her students. It doesn't sound like students were forced to read the book and that parents were given a choice to opt out for their child.

Angie Mattingly
Loretto

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■ GUEST COLUMN

Censorship infringes on our freedom

As Americans, we champion the idea of freedom, yet we must ask ourselves, to what extent are we actually free? I am writing this article in response to two articles published in *The Lebanon Enterprise* last week concerned with banning the book *Looking for Alaska* from MCHS because I believe the perspective of a student is crucial to the complete understanding of this controversy. As a dual-credit early college program student who has attended Washington County High School and Saint Catharine College, I have recently explored the very subject of literary censorship in one of my college-level English courses, and it is an issue that is very close to my heart, because not only am I a frequent reader, I have aspirations to pursue a career in law. To return to my previous question, I would like to state that any people who are restricted from knowledge are inherently



Brittany S. Greenwell
Guest columnist

un-free and restricting access to texts does not adhere to democratic principles. Therefore, literary censorship and the banning of books is an infringement upon our freedom. An attempt to restrict knowledge from students is unjust and assumes that those students are not capable of independent thinking or forming their own opinions. The explicit content discussed in *Looking for Alaska* is not a factor that should determine its literary merit, yet the explicit content is relevant to the outstanding thematic idea of the book, and that is why it has been included. However, one who has

never read this book may fail to realize the explicit content's relevance. The point has been made that students' exposure to the sexual content within *Looking for Alaska* could influence them to partake in similar sexual activities; however, there exists no proof of this correlation. Just because a student is exposed to information about an activity does not mean that they are more likely to participate in that activity. It is actually the case that once an individual is exposed to such an idea, that they will further educate themselves upon it, meaning that exposure to sex may actually increase the amount of students who are knowledgeable about a very natural facet of many teen and adult relationships, while parents and other adults are sending the message that sex is unmentionable. This ignorance of sex is unhealthy. According to the Center for Disease Control, 44 percent of young women and 47 percent of young

men ages 15-19 were sexually active last year. Such a high percentage of an age group is participating in an activity that parents believe should not be discussed in school. When information about sex is banned, students will learn misleading, inaccurate information about sex in informal ways. We should be educating students rather than shielding them because ignorance is not an effective deterrent. *Looking for Alaska*, or any other book for that matter, is not responsible for any of our society's issues concerning sex, but lack of education is at the root of this problem, a problem that will only be furthered by the banning of *Looking for Alaska*.

We expect students to know exactly what they want to do with their lives when they graduate from high school, yet we do not see them as mature enough to be exposed to explicit literary content, so we attempt to censor what they can and cannot read based upon the beliefs

of only certain individuals. Although it is human nature to try to attempt to make others conform to your own beliefs, we cannot allow conformity of ideas in a place of academic endeavor. It would be impossible to completely censor all books that include explicit content from students; therefore, it is of utmost importance that we allow students the freedom to read, explore, and think for themselves. The publisher of the poem *Howl*, by Allen Ginsburg was tried in court on the basis of obscenity for its inclusion of explicit sexual content. The defense attorney in the film about this censorship trial states that by opposing censorship, "you can add to educated thinking, or you can add fuel to the fire of ignorance... let there be light. Let there be honest understanding." The fact of the matter is that the teacher who decided to teach *Looking for Alaska* in her classroom sent home permission slips to the parents of the

students in her class to ensure mutual understanding of the book's content. Therefore, this controversy exists not because a parent believes that their child should not read this book, but because an outside individual believes that no student in Marion County should be able to read this book, which is a clear infringement upon the freedom of others. The students reading *Looking for Alaska* have been granted permission by their guardians, and no other outside source should be capable of restricting what another person's child can/cannot read. In banning *Looking for Alaska*, we can choose to impede students in their pursuit of further knowledge, or we can allow them the freedom of thinking for themselves.

Editor's note: Brittany Greenwell is a sophomore at St. Catharine College.