



RACE TO THE FINISH... Cub Pack 270 from Washington Elementary School in Westfield met March 5 for the annual Pinewood Derby. The event consisted of building a racecar from a block of wood, to specific size and weight, then racing it down the track. Pictured, left to right, are: Tim Norris, best design; Devin Anderson, third place; Michael Masciale, first place; Alex Grom, second place; and Ben Cook, most original, and, in back, Cub Master David Maran.

Councilman Foerst Should Step Up To Plate on Codding Rd. Safety Issue

Editor's Note: The following letter was sent to Westfield Councilman James Foerst.

I write to express my deep disappointment in how you have responded to the concerns of the residents of Codding Road. We reached out to you last year in good faith and asked you to address a very serious issue—the safety of our children. I know that lots of people bring their concerns to you, but I can't imagine anything taking a higher priority for an elected official than protecting the safety of his constituents, especially the youngest and most vulnerable of them.

You came to Codding Road and assured us that you understood our concerns and would do the best you could to address them. Simply stated, you have failed us. Months and months have gone by and nothing has changed except the extent of the problem, which is getting worse by the day.

Jim, you and I both know that if a child, God forbid, were to be hurt in an accident

caused by reckless teenage driving, the parking rules on Codding Road would change overnight. We would not be told to go talk to the school board—which, by the way, we've already done. We would not be told to go talk to the town council's Public Safety Committee, which we've also done. We would not be told that this issue needs to be "dealt with as a whole." The rules would change and that would be the end of it.

So on behalf of my four-year-old daughter Madeleine—who loves to ride her bike on Codding Road and play with her friends on Codding Road and take walks with her mom and dad on Codding Road—I ask that you step up to the plate and get this done. Every day that you fail to take action is one more day that my child is in danger. That may somehow be acceptable to you, but I assure you that it is absolutely unacceptable to me.

Tom Sanford
Westfield

Process to Select Audience to Hear President Bush Was 'One-Sided'

Editor's Note: The following letter was sent to Westfield Councilman Larry Goldman.

I am a resident of the 4th Ward. It was heartening to read your recent criticism of the one-sided process used to select audience members for the President's Friday appearance at the Armory.

A lifelong registered Democrat, I follow national politics closely and have no problem admitting that I object to most of President Bush's policies, both domestic and foreign. I am often most frustrated, however, with the administration's approach to communicating with the American people.

Just one of many examples I can provide is the President's "plan" for Social Security. In 2000 there was talk of "privatization," which died down as foreign policy emerged to dominate the presidential agenda and, it should be noted, as the Enron scandal shook the confidence of many middle class investors. By this year's State of the Union Address, the term "personal" had replaced "private" and the President's outline had become even fuzzier.

Suddenly, Social Security was going "bankrupt," instead of just being in need of some careful attention. "Up to four percentage points" was the phrase used to describe the amount workers could choose to divert to their personal accounts, which was no doubt intended to sound "smaller" than the more accurate "65 percent of each worker's current contribution."

While not technically a lie, diverting mere percentage points of payroll taxes sounds less risky than what this actually represents: up to one-third of the tax paid by a worker and his or her employer for Social Security. Then President Bush promised he wouldn't raise taxes to accomplish his goal. But during the State of the Union he never mentioned the \$88,000 cap after which income is no longer taxed under the existing program.

The pundits quickly exploited the situation by equating the idea of raising the cap to a tax increase, which the President said he wouldn't do. This is misleading, since most Americans don't make more than \$88,000 and therefore

would not pay more tax if the cap were raised.

A more open and honest discussion would lead to a more informed solution to the Social Security challenges that lie ahead of us. Many people I know are not even aware that a cap on the amount of income that can be taxed for Social Security even exists. But President Bush and his most astute (or should I say affluent) followers are not interested in an open discussion of the issues. They are interested only in setting Social Security on a path to extinction while handing trillions of dollars over to Wall Street in the process.

This strategy goes hand in hand with rallying cries from organizations such as the Club for Growth and the opinion pages of *The Wall Street Journal*. I believe that this Republican Party, if unchecked, will do irreparable damage not only to Social Security, but also to public education, entitlements, and perhaps the planet itself.

Maybe I'm wrong. But if I am, I want my President to tell me, not travel around the country using folksy sounding but misleading language to sell an agenda that, with a little sunlight on it, might not sit so well with a lot of Americans. This week the problem, for me, hits close to home. I am appalled that I have a better chance of contracting polio than I had of getting anywhere near the Armory to ask my questions. Representative Ferguson called Friday's gathering a "conversation."

The residents of our community and all Americans deserve more than just a conversation between President Bush and 2,000 of his followers when it comes to the future of Social Security. They deserve debate. And Mr. Ferguson disgraces the "Rep." that precedes his name as a public servant to suggest that honest, informed critics of the President, if admitted, would demonstrate only "disruptive behavior" and "obnoxiousness." What a presumptuous, elitist insult to our democratic tradition.

Thank you for speaking up on behalf of those of us who still believe we live in a representative democracy.

Robert Puglisi
Westfield

Letters to the Editor

Social Security Is Not a 401K Plan; It Is a Social Insurance Program

Editor's Note: The following letter was sent to Rep. Mike Ferguson (R-7th).

When you were running for re-election, I received a letter from your wife telling me about your family. Now, I'd like to tell you about mine and how this relates to President Bush's plan to privatize Social Security.

In that letter, your wife told of your love and devotion to your family. Like you, my father was a loving, devoted father whose family was the center of his life. Our world was shattered when my father died suddenly at age 49 leaving behind my mother and eight children. My youngest brothers were only six and nine years old and four of us were in college at the time. In addition to the unbearable loss of my father, my mother was faced with a tremendous financial burden. Although my father had spent nearly his entire life working for the State of New Jersey, my mother was not eligible for a pension death benefit.

My mother, my siblings and I received Social Security benefits after my father's death. I don't know what we would have done without this money. Please stop for a moment, put political partisanship aside, and try to imagine what it would be like for your wife and children if this had happened to you. Please remember that Social Security is not just for retired people. It is there to help families survive when faced with tragedies such as ours. Social Security is not a 401k plan or a pension plan. It is a social insurance program. It is there to protect the American people from financial hardship.

In the same way that I am willing to invest money in life insurance so that my family is protected, I am willing to invest in Social Security. But I would never consider taking my life insurance premiums and investing them in the stock market with the hope that the return would be great enough to support my family should

I die. This would be irresponsible, reckless and very bad for my family. In the same manner, it would be irresponsible, reckless, and very bad for the American people to risk the future of Social Security by allowing individual investments in private accounts.

We all need to work to find the best way to preserve this vital program without risking its future. While I urge you to work at obtaining an honest assessment of the current and future state of Social Security, please do not put Social Security at risk by supporting the privatization of this important social program. As one whose family has benefited from Social Security and as one who currently pays the maximum amount of Social Security taxes each year, I would support other solutions to preserving Social Security (e.g., raise the income cap) to help this program remain solvent. Social Security is too important to millions of families such as my own and I urge you not to risk its future by supporting President Bush's plan for private accounts.

Margaret Maloney
Westfield

Perhaps the President Should Address Skeptics

President Bush visited our fair town last Friday to kick off a 60 day-60 city campaign to promote his proposals to re-vamp Social Security. As we witnessed during the 2004 election season, the audience that the President addressed was a carefully screened group of supporters. If President Bush is going to spend two months of time and taxpayer dollars to fly around the country on this whirlwind tour, perhaps that time and money would be better spent addressing those of us who are skeptics, rather than preaching to the converted?

Chris Sdao
Westfield



ROOFTOP GUARDS... Intense security was in place last Friday to guard the President at the Westfield Armory. Even the rooftops were secured.

WF Arts Head Invites Downtown Public To View Students' Work

During your next trip to downtown Westfield, be sure to notice the student artwork including paintings, drawings, sculpture, and painted furniture.

Designed by approximately 600 students from Westfield's nine public schools, these projects are displayed by 56 downtown merchants, who offered their window space for the month of March.

For the 10th consecutive year, Westfield is celebrating the nationally acclaimed Youth Art Month. Youth Art Month is traditionally designated to showcase the diversity of artistic talent of students nationally. It is not a competition, but a time to celebrate the creative work of our children.

The artwork in the Westfield Public Schools represents children of all levels of age and ability. It is chosen for various

reasons: work ethic, commitment to the project at hand, proficiency, emotional uplifting, and appropriate medium for the chosen store. It is to be admired and appreciated as a month to celebrate the arts and the wonderful creations of our many talented students.

I am honored and pleased with the work of our dedicated educators, the children whose work is displayed, and the many supporting community members who give of their valuable time to make this event occur every year.

Please join in recognizing and celebrating this wonderful month by strolling downtown and enjoying the many exhibits.

Dr. Linda King
Supervisor, Fine Arts,
Westfield Public Schools

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