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Underwear Store Controversy Is Such a Trivial Cause

By MARIA WOEHR
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

There are so many important, brave and generous causes in the world, and no one has enough time to support them all. It's so much easier to deal with trivial causes, like what Victoria's Secret has in its window.

Now, some people are bound to get offended with my comments here, but seriously Victoria's Secret, an underwear store, should not be the most pressing issue in our lives.

Is Victoria's Secret corrupting children? Well honestly, nowadays, what isn't? Kids grow up with television and movies and the media. Passing by a Victoria's Secret window does not teach children to objectify women. Children have to be taught that through more than just seeing headless mannequins in the windows of an underwear store.

Victoria's Secret is not Frederick's of Hollywood, with sexually explicit items on display. Whips and chains obviously are not a motif that Westfield would pick up on.

Underwear is a funny word to a young child. They laugh if you say it. And they should — underwear is a trivial thing. Kids understand that mommy doesn't want to wear superman or Barbie Underoos like them. Mommy likes pretty underwear for adults.

Think about the impact great causes could have on a child. Teach them they can help the elderly; about homeless shelters and soup kitchens; about the Humane Society and animal shelters, and about children in other countries like Afghanistan.

Think about that before barging through the front door of Victoria's Secret with your four-year-old and begin screaming at the associates and manager. Put yourself on the other side of the counter and make time to do something great.

I'm signing off now from *The Westfield Leader* and *The Times*, and moving to Billings, Mont., to pursue a career with ABC-TV. I'll miss my home of Westfield. Still, I'll check back from time to time to see what Secrets and Causes are going on.



Below are four arcane words, each with four definitions — only one is correct. The others are made up. Are you sharp enough to discern this deception of diction?

If you can guess one correctly — good guess. If you get two — well-read individual. If you get three — word expert. If you get all four — You must have a lot of free time!

All words and correct definitions come from the board game Diction Deception.

Answers to last week's arcane words.

1. Expergefaction — An awakening or rousing
2. Dejeuner — A late breakfast or luncheon
3. Cardecu — Former French coin of silver
4. Halieutics — The study or art of fishing

PORCATE

1. Obese; rounded
2. Pitted or ducted
3. Inane; silly
4. Formed in ridges

PROLEGOMENON

1. Having a protruding jaw
2. An introductory remark or a foreword
3. The Cyclops who was blinded by the Greek hero or the Trojan War, Odysseus
4. One who supports a just cause

TRABECULATE

1. Marked with crossbars
2. Transporting in a dragging manner
3. Scaling a cliff or peak
4. Creeping upon from behind; to ambush

PATIBULATED

1. The act of rubbing; massaging
2. Put to death on the gallows
3. Incarcerated; arrested
4. Having walked softly; tiptoed

Answers will appear in next week's issue.

Westfield Public School Calendar Can Affect Many People In Town

The Westfield Board of Education is wrestling with the public school calendar for next year, made difficult due to the construction improvements at the high school. The construction schedule indicates that the high school won't be available until September 9.

The board is considering delaying the start of the public school calendar for all the schools in town. They desire to have all the schools in synch with the high school calendar. Thus, opening of the intermediate and elementary schools would also be delayed under this plan.

Approximately 40 percent of the residents in town have children in the public school system. This amounts to about 12,000 people. Many childcare support programs such as those offered at the Y, the Presbyterian Nursery School and others, will be impacted by the public school calendar. So, the Westfield Board of Education calendar will affect many people. When there is a change from the norm with this schedule, it must be clear to all involved and advance notice must be given such that the necessary coordination can be achieved.

In many families, both parents work. If the school

calendar for the middle and lower grades is delayed a week after Labor Day, these parents must find a way to care for their children during the day or take vacation from work. Conversely, families with children in high school may be better able to cope with the delay. High school students are more likely to be able to take care of themselves for a couple of hours at the end of the day. Most high school students are also able to care for their younger siblings a few hours at the end of the afternoon, too.

Perhaps, it may be advantageous for the Westfield Board of Education to consider uncoupling the high school calendar from that for the other schools in order to avoid compounding potential problems and to provide more options to cope with the temporary inconvenience. This may also provide more degrees of freedom in the event that the high school construction becomes delayed further than planned.

The public school calendar is very important to everyday life in Westfield. It's time to think hard, now. Let the Board of Education know your thoughts so that they can weigh all the options before making a final decision on the calendar for next year.

"Where Have You Gone, Old Man Winter?" We're Mostly Seeing Signs of Spring

The calendar tells us that we're halfway through the winter season. The Super Bowl has come and gone. Baseball's spring training begins in a few days. But, although the groundhog (depending on which one you believe) apparently saw his shadow, thus signaling six more weeks of winter, we have to ask, "Where have you gone, Old Man Winter?"

Besides a few days of daytime temperatures in the 20s early in January and a few inches of snow a few Saturdays back, winter has barely been in evidence.

We recently experienced a day when the mercury topped 70 degrees, and kids were spotted in the evening riding bikes and skateboarding in shorts and tee shirts. There haven't been any days of treacherous driving. Sadly, for the kids, there hasn't been one snow day. Maybe you've been able to leave the windows in your house at least cracked at night. All the cold weather gear we bought for our kids — boots, hats, gloves, scarves, earmuffs, snow pants — may be gathering dust in closets as we hope that somehow,

some way, they'll still fit in 12 months.

This mild winter, really the continuation of a trend that dates back several years, has at least allowed many of us to avoid the "cabin fever" feel of normal winters, when it's been too cold to go outdoors — sometimes too cold to even run out to warm up the car in order to get the family out of the house.

Instead, downtowns are bustling with shoppers and browsers. People can go for walks in the park. Kids can even ride their bikes without risking frost-bite. We can park our cars alongside the curb rather than up on a mound of plowed and dirty snow.

For those lovers of traditional winters, well, the mountains and the ski slopes are just a short drive away. For those of us who are already counting the days until the beaches open, we're grateful for the lack of shivers — at least so far. February and March have shown their knack in past years for surprising everyone with a last blast of wintry weather, just as all of us are packing away our snow shovels and boots.

Human Services Director Extends A Valentine's Day Thank You

Since today we celebrate Valentine's Day, I find it the most perfect opportunity to say "thank you" to all those wonderful caring hearts out there in the Westfield community who gave so generously over the past holiday season. Thanks to your kind efforts, hundreds of Westfield men, women, and children were assisted in helping to make their holidays so very bright and by restoring their faith in our community through this caring and sharing program.

So to all the service groups, schools, churches and religious organizations, social and civic groups, a big thank you. And to the private individuals and families who donated to The Caring Neighbor Fund, your donations will enable The Department of Human Services to provide emergency assistance throughout the year.

I would like to share with you a thank you message that was sent by a senior citizen to the school class that remembered her in a special way during the holidays. She wrote: Yes, there is a Santa Claus! Having always thought he was for children only, I now find out he is for grown-ups too. I am in my 80s and was feeling sorry for myself having to face the holidays alone. But, thanks to you caring students, I was able to open presents and be surprised and grateful for your thoughtfulness. Thank you so much. You have renewed my faith in the future. Love to you all.

Again, a great big "thank you" from my heart to yours! Happy Valentine's Day!

Lillian W. Corsini
Westfield Director of Human Services
Westfield

Ward Suit Is Criticized as Waste Of Westfield Taxpayers' Dollars

At issue: The Democratic Party controlled Town Council's decision to join in the Ward Commission redistricting lawsuit.

This is a Democratic Party disgrace! I am outraged that the Democratic Party members of the Town Council have voted to spend town tax dollars, my tax dollars, on such a blatantly political fight. The Democrats argue that their motivation is purely based on moral and voter disenfranchisement grounds — not at all on political grounds. Yeah, right! That's what I would say if I were in their shoes. What else could they say?

I would hardly expect them to admit that this is primarily a political fight, but given the choice (and the power), we would rather finance this lawsuit with Westfield taxpayer dollars than Democratic Party dollars.

Letters to the Editor

Reader Believes Progressive Thinking Is Required For Victoria's Secret

I am a resident and parent in Westfield. My family has enjoyed living here for the last 22 years and we, too, were and still are attracted to the feeling of having a town center that we can enjoy.

Unfortunately, over the past several months, Victoria's Secret has come under fire by some residents. I say this is unfortunate because this does not display the sort of progressive thinking that all of us as Westfielders believe separate us from other towns. Frankly, it was disturbing that the *New York Times* displayed an article concerning opposition to the store. The amount of time and energy some individuals have expended could have been used for worthy causes rather than objecting to this company's displays. This entire matter does not show Westfield's best side.

To shop in the same store at a mall, buy its merchandise and yet rebuke its presence in town is hypocritical. It is time for those people to give up this "not in my back yard" attitude and address this issue with your children in the proper manner. The walls around our town have long since disappeared and we must prepare them for their place in a global society. Your conversation with them will have more of a positive effect than your attempt to keep them in a cocoon.

At what point do you stop protection by seclusion or arm them with information. You might try now. They await your objective opinion.

Gary Farishian
Westfield

Parking Lot Project Seen as Element In Eventual Urbanization of Westfield

Last Sunday's public meeting with representatives of Temple Emanu-El to discuss their parking lot development plan at 750 East Broad Street is merely one more example of the impending urbanization of Westfield.

A lengthy list of large-scale development projects, including the proposed mixed use parking decks, will dramatically alter the suburban character of Westfield in the next three to five years if allowed to proceed as envisioned.

The temple raised important and compelling public safety arguments in support of a parking lot for their congregation. But is it in the best long-term interests of Westfield, and the north side of town in particular, to essentially gouge a hole in the center of a residential community?

At Sunday's meeting, several partici-

pants made suggestions about providing shuttle service from existing parking facilities, including the library, located less than one-third of a mile from the temple. The library closes at 5 p.m. each Friday and could easily accommodate 50 cars for evening services.

Temple officials discounted the suggestion, even though they already provide shuttle service for elderly members, and a 10-seat van would be available for library shuttle service.

Late night and early morning truck traffic is up considerably along East Broad Street due to the recent Garwood Shop Rite (development). Impending development along North Avenue in Garwood, at the former Thomas & Betts site at North Avenue and Chestnut Street; the proposed massive development site at North Avenue and Central Avenue, and parking deck proposals, will add significant traffic to already crowded major corridors.

The temple's proposed parking lot, while it may resolve their short-term parking needs, will dramatically alter the nature of the surrounding community replacing a large, tree-lined, 1.1 acre site with parking for up to 100 cars. The resulting facility will significantly increase air pollution, as the extensive woodlands would no longer absorb and diffuse the noxious fumes.

Woodlands also provide significant sound and light barriers that will be lost with the parking development, resulting in increased noise and intruding light on the adjoining homes.

The economic tradeoffs should not be quickly discounted either. While the temple's contract for the land is only valid if the parking lot is approved, two or three \$750,000 homes could be built on that site. The resulting tax revenues from those homes, as well as the loss of revenue from residents of surrounding homes who successfully argue that their property valuations have fallen due to the parking deck, should not be dismissed.

In this new age of region and state-wide austerity, can the Town of Westfield afford to lose this long-term revenue source?

As a 10-year Wells Street resident, I am sympathetic and cognizant of the issues raised by the temple. The town must look at this parking lot in the larger context of over-development throughout the town.

How do we decide what is no longer appropriate? How do we decide what should be built and what should not be built in our town? This is not about a religious institution's right to build a parking lot. This is about what is the future of Westfield.

Michael Snizek
Westfield

Victoria's Secret Defender Cautions Against Old Fashion Ignorance

I have lived in Westfield my whole life. I was brought up through the Westfield school system and have been active in many programs supported by the town.

Being a young woman and a native Westfielder I can tell you that Westfield is a wholesome and wonderful place to grow up in and live. Our family values are strong but also reasonable.

Westfield is a progressive community that thrives on the open and intelligent minds of its citizens. The heart of this town is still the same.

Westfielders respect and care for others; we help in times of need and we encourage each other to expand and grow. The same respect and growth was seen when my 99-year-old great-grandmother was a young woman living in Westfield. It seems that in an attempt to bring back "old fashion" values, opponents of the windows at Victoria's Secret have brought back old fashion ignorance.

I have been to Victoria's Secret downtown and I know the shopkeepers by name and they are always willing to help me find anything that I am looking for. Labeling a store "money-grabbing" is hasty and just plain mean.

Arguments that plastic mannequins in bras are vulgar imply that a woman's

body (even the plastic anatomically incorrect form of one) is something so lewd that it should be shrouded from the eyes of women and children.

A woman's body should not be thought of as proactive; it should be thought of as natural and beautiful.

Underwear in a store window cannot cause any harm to a child. Explain to children that women are beautiful and are to be respected by humans. A parent's guidance is immeasurable. In times like these there are more important efforts to focus on.

Women are being oppressed in other countries; not by bras and panties, but by laws. Energy focused on these windows is misdirected.

I am not the only one who feels this controversy is outdated. I have many friends who want Victoria's Secret in town. When I look at the windows downtown I see beauty, not sex. I do not think it should be up to a minority to decide what 40,000 people are allowed to look at.

Victoria's Secret does not promote sexuality; it promotes lingerie. Of course, if some residents can't understand this, how can their children?

Meredith DeMarco
Westfield



More Letters on Page 5

Jefferson PTO Thanks Local Contributors

The Elementary School PTO would like to give a heartfelt thanks to all the local merchants, shop owners, and restaurateurs who gave so generously to support our "Annual Parents Social Fund-raiser." So many worthy causes have asked for donations this year, but these dedicated entrepreneurs reached again into their pockets to show tremendous support for a school in our community and most of all for our children. We in turn shall show our support for you.

The Jefferson Elementary School PTO

www.goleader.com