

## Learning to Handle Challenge Helps Youngsters Succeed

By REVEREND DR. DARLA DEE TURLINGTON

I am concerned about the behavior of parents of teens in Westfield. I am one, so I can speak to us with impunity. I understand the pressures on parents to help their child succeed in an era when success is not easy. Unlike when we parents graduated from high school, children today must compete for a college opening and are not guaranteed a job even if they earn a degree. We take this more seriously than they do, so we assume the responsibility for seeing that they take all the steps we can think of to make them competitive.

Thus the push to score well on the PSAT, take courses in preparation for the SAT (which they take two or three times to improve their score), enroll in College Prep classes and excel in a sport or the arts. We thereby add to the awesome amount of pressure our young people feel and increase their anxiety level in ways that undermine their performance on these very things. What are we doing?!

There seems to be an unwritten agreement that if a teenager jumps through the hoops, as mom and dad wish, then parents stay closed-mouthed about the social activities that let kids blow off steam. Parental denial of teen drinking is widespread in Westfield; and yes, teen drinking is widespread in Westfield. Our cherished open lunch policy for juniors and seniors (a good idea because it lets them practice providing for their daily needs) is often abused by the students, who raid the liquor cabinets of their empty houses.

Convinced that their child will drink somewhere, and they would rather be "safely" at home, many parents provide alcohol at teen parties in their homes. This, in spite of the fact that it is illegal, that alcohol in a teenage body is never "safe," and that the parents are liable if a guest given alcohol in their home is harmed or

harms another after leaving.

Just look at the unspoken messages: "We know you don't have the character to say no to drinking....", and "it's okay to break the law if it serves your self-interest..." What are we thinking?!

Further, parents become so focused on our own child's accomplishments that we inappropriately advocate for them, blind to the impact on other children and on the teachers, coaches and other adults working with them. If our child tries out for the school musical and is not selected, we don't encourage the child to work hard, improve, and try again (as our parents would have done for us); we complain to the director and the principal in an attempt to have our child accepted even if they don't qualify.

This frustrates the teachers, is unfair to all the other children who tried out, and is not good for our own child, who knows they are not as qualified as the rest of the cast. The same goes for sports teams and opportunities to play in games. Come on, parents! Teachers and coaches know their stuff and are committed to providing appropriate opportunities for all levels of competency. Let them manage the teams. And let your child learn how to deal with disappointment; they will certainly have to later in life.

Parents, loosen up. Your child is moving through one of the best educational systems in one of the most wholesome communities in New Jersey. Just help them navigate the demands sanely, with a clear awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses and a concern for the common good and not just their own advancement. I guarantee you, this approach will make them more successful in life, and make you a better parent.

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Reverend Turlington is Senior Pastor at the First Baptist Church of Westfield, located at 170 Elm Street in Westfield.



HELPING OTHERS...The American Girl class from the Beyond Explorers after-school enrichment program at School One Elementary in Scotch Plains organized a lemonade stand after their class to raise money for tsunami relief. The class, under direction of Robin Musso, raised \$80, which was donated to the American Red Cross Tsunami Relief Fund.

## Children's 'Tales' Slated For May at Willow Grove

SCOTCH PLAINS - The Willow Grove Presbyterian Church in Scotch Plains will hold its "Tales in the Grove" story time program on Sundays, May 1 and 15, starting at 7 p.m. at the church.

Youngsters are invited to wear their pajamas, bring a pillow, blanket or favorite book, and a snack and beverage. Sessions last between 45 minutes and an hour.

"Tales in the Grove" is geared towards children age two to five, but older or younger siblings also may attend. All are welcome and there is no charge.

This program will continue the first and third Sundays of every month. Two congregation volunteers will run each story time - one reader and one greeter. Parents will be asked to stay for the duration of the story time to help redirect any "wanderers" to the story circle.

For more information about Willow Grove, please call the church office,

Monday through Friday, at (908) 232-5678, e-mail wilgrv@netzero.com or visit [www.scotchplains.com/wgpe](http://www.scotchplains.com/wgpe). The church is located at 1961 Raritan Road.

## St. Paul's Spring Concert To Take Place on Sunday

WESTFIELD - The Friends of Music at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Westfield will present its 13th Anniversary Spring Concert this Sunday, May 1, at 7 p.m. at the church.

The St. Paul's Choir will perform Maurice Durufle's *Requiem* and *Messe Cum Jubilo*. Both works contain substantial organ parts and will feature St. Paul's new organ consisting of four manuals and nine divisions.

Completed in 1947, Durufle's *Requiem* is based completely on Gregorian chant enhanced with rich French harmonies and is scored for choir, soloists, organ and orchestra. His *Messe Cum Jubilo*, composed 20 years later, also is chant based. It is scored for unison baritone chorus, baritone soloist, organ and orchestra.

For this performance, the choir will be joined by members of the Grammy Award-winning New Jersey Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Charles Banks.

Featured soloists for the concert will be Barbara Rearick, mezzo-soprano; Kurt Willett, baritone, and

Andrew Henderson, organist. The public is invited to attend. Donations of \$10 will be accepted at the door. For more information, please call Mr. Banks at (908) 232-8506, extension no. 17. St. Paul's Church is located at 414 East Broad Street.



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