



Superintendent's Column

September 1, 2015

The summer seems to have gone by rather quickly since I last wrote to you in June, concluding with the statement “To all our Manhasset families, best wishes for a summer of good health, and plenty of rest and relaxation.” While I realize that for many of you this statement was true, there were some families who experienced the loss of a loved one, thus our most sincere thoughts and condolences are with them as we begin this school year.

As the 2015-16 school year commences, I reflect and recall that over twenty years ago, when my wife Debbie and I had six boys all ten years old and under, we scrambled around the house as we prepared for the first week of school. I’m not sure you even want to imagine how the Cardillo household looked during those hectic days! I do know, however, I was the fortunate one because I was out of the house before the kids were up and before the madness really began. In the end, it was my wife who was left to getting the kids ready for school each day and seeing the boys off on the bus. (Hint, hint – they took the bus to school!)

Nonetheless, over the past twenty years, and even more so in recent years, I have noticed an alarming trend impacting the lives of children that, at times, is taking the joy out of being a child. The trend seems to be carrying over to our students into their teenage years. This alarming trend is the growing number of youngsters who are under greater and greater pressure and stress, resulting in their feeling increasingly more insecure. As a result, this contributes to considerable apprehension as they attempt to cope simultaneously with everyday life, as well as these burdens.

I realized recently that I wasn’t the only one noticing this, as there have been a number of well-written, recently published articles and books on this same topic. Frank Bruni, author of, “Where You Go Is Not Who You’ll Be: An Antidote to the College Admissions Mania,” wrote an op-ed column in the NY Times entitled, “Best, Brightest—and Saddest?” which reveals the debate taking place among mental health professionals regarding the kinds of pressures felt by high school students in the epicenters of overachievement.

Julie Lythcott-Haims, author of “How to Raise an Adult: Break Free of the Overparenting Trap and Prepare Your Kid for Success,” identifies overparenting as a serious concern. In doing so, her message is that kids need to “move forth independently without constant supervision. They need to try independently—and sometimes even fail. And when they fail and look around for a parent to bail them out, they need to hear the words, ‘You must figure this out for yourself.’”

So, as we begin the school year, I raise a caution flag to all of us regarding the issue of the growing number of children experiencing high levels of stress and pressure. Let's all re-examine our current practices to see if we can help in making in-roads on this serious issue.

As we know, each of our schools has a wonderful environment that is very supportive and nurturing and allows everyone to learn and grow. Incoming seventh grade student, Aidan Mulholland, shared his thoughts about his experience at Munsey Park when he said, "I really enjoyed coming to school everyday knowing it would be a great time with friends and teachers. It's a great feeling knowing that it will always be a great day!" Incoming seventh grader, Sanjna Kedia, who attended Shelter Rock said, "I will miss all the memories I'm leaving behind; I really treasure that. It will be hard to let go." Finally, Cael Clinton, a graduate of the Class of 2015 and who will be attending Amherst College, said, "We are one big family." Let's all take heed of the concluding words in a beautiful song entitled, "Raise 'em Up," sung by Keith Urban and Eric Church:

"Raise em' up
Trophy High
Raise em' up
To the Sky
Raise em' up
Show everybody that new born smile.
Raise em' up
Tall and strong
Raise em' up
Right from wrong
Raise em' up so damn high they can hear God singing along."

My sincere wish is that all the students who attend our schools also feel a part of our one big family, and that our parents experience a great deal of pride as we "Raise 'em Up." We too, the teachers, guidance counselors, social workers, psychologists, teacher assistants, supervisory aides, monitors, nurses, clerical staff, custodians, security, central office staff, administrators and the board of education—also proudly a part of the family—share collectively in Manhasset pride.

Charlie Cardillo