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## Letters to the editor

### Ranch's agriscience deterring students

In February of this year, I contacted Mr. Mike Wilder, principal of Lakewood Ranch High School, addressing my concerns regarding the LRHS agriscience program.

My main concern was that there were six to eight students who had accomplished enough through their involvement in FFA to apply for the state FFA degree.

They were not receiving any encouragement or assistance in completing the appropriate application. They were instead being made to do extra paperwork in order to qualify for this award.

I wrote a letter to Mr. Wilder addressing my concerns and was granted a meeting with him and the agriscience instructor.

During this meeting I voiced my concerns regarding the lack of proper agriculture instruction in the classroom. I also asked why were we not using the land for an agriculture garden, or planting the 80 earthboxes that had been donated to the program.

I am not the only person concerned about this. Numerous agriscience students and their parents have come to me with reports of poor motivation, not being taught anything in the classroom or land laboratory.

I do not feel that enough has been done to resolve this situation. Students are leaving the program after two years of not learning anything about agriculture.

Why do we want to put the remaining students through another year of this?

Why are we not putting teachers with agriculture education degrees in programs such as this?

I am asking students and parents who have concerns about the LRHS agriscience program to contact Mr. Wilder; Mr. Doug Wagner, supervisor of adult, career and technical education; and Dr. Roger Dearing, superintendent of schools.

I thought that our students were our first priority. After dealing with all of this, I am unsure that the agriscience students at LRHS really are our top priority.

*Carol Jackson  
Sarasota*

### Cut week of school

It seems a broad-brush approach to the Manatee County school district budget cuts would be to cut off one week of the school year. With 53 schools in the county (34 elementary, 10 middle, nine high), this translates to 265 days. \$5.4 million divided by 265 is slightly more than \$20,000. I do not know what the actual daily operating costs are, but among school overhead, staff and transportation, it might be close.

The benefits are, 1) reduce the tension and worry of all involved in the budget cutting; 2) expedient (broad-stroke reduction); 3) no further reduction of the reserve; and 4) most important, less raiding of our teacher resources by other states. That's my 2 cent worth.

*Dick Wasylowski  
Bradenton*

### Trailer Estates issues

I guess the saying "Ignorance is Bliss" certainly fits the situation in TE. It is very disconcerting when the government controls all of the information given to the community.

For instance, do residents know that in a 2005 survey that more than 25 percent of property owners favored a library in Trailer Estates? I seriously doubt it because what was reported in the Tribune (TE newspaper) was that six people thought a library was unnecessary (1 percent of resident property owner respondents), and the board "totally agreed" with these six people. The board members themselves may have been the six people. I don't know.

I know these numbers are accurate because I took the individual surveys and tallied them. I gave a summary report to the board and put a copy in the office. I urge residents to go to the office, look at the survey results and compare the results with the priorities of this board. I also strongly support a more current survey.

If residents do not become involved in the decision-making on how monies are assessed and are spent and how priorities are established, the park could become a casualty of the times. Decisions made now have a large impact on who will be purchasing property in the park and becoming future residents. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to look around and see the shifting of desires of upcoming retirees. The park must compete with more modern and spacious living options, and amenities for a more active lifestyle. Although we have world-class shuffleboard courts, those courts will not attract younger retirees. Younger people want basketball and tennis courts to support their more active lifestyle. We must strike a delicate balance between supporting our long-time residents and attracting the next generation.

If we can't sell our properties, what will happen? We need open and responsive government, in touch with the times.

*Mary Lou Smith*  
Bradenton

#### **Reduce oil demand**

I've had enough of political grandstanding regarding the price of gasoline. Yes, it's hurting us all in the wallet, hard.

Will a "gas tax holiday" do anything? NO! That just keeps us more dependent on oil by making it cheaper to fill the car while depleting tax revenues at the same time we're running a huge budgetary deficit.

Will increasing drilling anywhere/everywhere in the U.S. do anything? NO! At least not for several years.

Even if we follow that path, the best it will do is maybe maintain the current ratio of domestic supply to foreign supply.

I would not expect such drilling to have any effect on the price of gasoline. The supply/demand ratio is not going to improve regardless of the source of supply.

Will ethanol help? NO! Not as long as we use a basic foodstuff (corn) to feed the car rather than feeding people.

We could, of course, drop the tariff on imported ethanol and bring it in from Brazil at a much cheaper price than domestic ethanol, but that would irritate the Iowa corn farmers, and no presidential candidate can take that risk.

Even if we did that, it would be detrimental to the planet as it would simply encourage further and more rapid destruction of the Amazon basin to produce sugar cane as the ethanol source.

In the longer run, we will develop alternate energy resources to supplant/reduce dependence on oil but that will be a long time coming. We might even eventually become accustomed to mass transit.

In the immediate term, all that we can do is reduce oil demand wherever possible. It would be nice if we all went out and bought hybrids, but there aren't enough of them.

One thing that can be done immediately, with immediate impact, is to encourage tele-commuting whenever/wherever/as often as possible. The country could eliminate a huge number of miles driven.

*John Daugherty*  
Bradenton

#### **Quit Saturday mail**

U.S. Postal Service problems: Articles have been printed over the past year regarding fuel costs. A survey was sent to approximately 300,000 residents. Stop Saturday deliveries. Not much is included anyway.

*Ralph R. Hager*  
Bradenton

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