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Educating Children – As American As Mom And Apple Pie

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SPRINGBORO, Ohio – For those of us who spend a portion of our day in front of computer, “forwards” are just a way of life. Some of them make us smile or give us a useful tip. Others we just shake our heads at and wish we could get off some people’s email lists.

That’s when the “delete” key is needed.

Every “blue moon” something will come across my laptop that will make me take notice, which happened this week. I received a forward from another educator who found an article written by a man in Gainesville, Fla.

When I did a search on Peter Rebmann, I found that he is an older gentlemen who is considered an expert on public schools, and advises Florida’s elected officials, as well as those in the state department and in businesses.

The column written by Mr. Rebmann that I received was on this subject: Why should folks that don't have kids pay for educating the kids of folks who do?

This is a question we in Springboro Community Schools tackle on a daily basis – especially during levy time. I found Mr. Rebmann’s explanation much better than the ones we typically give to people, which are 1) it keeps your property value higher, 2) keeps our community stronger so that we all have a better quality of life, and 3) somebody paid for your children’s education (or your sibling’s, grandchildren’s, etc.) and we all need to do our part.

What Mr. Rebmann made me remember is educating children is what we as Americans do. While the English are known for drinking tea and the French for making wine (Mr. Rebmann’s example), the first thing our Founding Fathers did was establish a public education system.

The reason was two-fold. First, they had just removed themselves from a tyrannical king. They decided a democracy, where the people rule one another, would best suit their needs. In order for “the people” to understand the rules and laws established, they needed to read and understand this newly created Constitution.

Since America was created for and by the people, there was no governing class. It didn't matter if you were wealthy or someone of little means, your ideas were important and you were eligible – and encouraged – to participate in the governing of the nation.

That's why a public education was so necessary for the Colonists, and why it continues to be so important today. If public education stopped, certainly the wealthy and even the middle class would find ways to educate their children.

However, without the input and the collective knowledge of our entire nation, we would quickly deteriorate into a nation that has the caste system, where if you are unlucky to be born into a poorer class, you would never be given the opportunity to improve your life or the lives of your children.

The second reason a public education was so important to the earliest Americans was they wanted their children to be able to read the Bible. Religious freedom is one of the reasons the United States of America was brought into existence. Without the ability to read the Bible, Americans would have to rely on a state "religion" with no input or interpretation of their own.

As Mr. Rebmann points out, it is pretty obvious that as Americans, our oldest tradition is educating our children. So back to the original question: Why should folks that don't have kids pay for educating the kids of folks who do?

The answer is simple. Our Founding Fathers thought it was the right thing to do because it makes a difference. It makes a difference in the lives of the children. It makes a difference in our local, state and federal governments. It makes a difference in our religious communities.

Most importantly, it makes a difference in the world. It is the legacy that the United States of America has left for other countries to emulate.

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