

EDITORIAL

The Oaks complex boon for this area

Scores of new housing developments have risen from the sandy soil of Lake City and Columbia County over the last decade, but none has possessed as much potential to profoundly impact the community at large as The Oaks of Lake City.

The Oaks of Lake City is the world's first O'Connor Signature equestrian community. To put that into perspective, Olympians David and Karen O'Connor are recognized internationally as among the very best equestrians in the world today. To have their involvement, much less partnership, in a development designed to attract horse lovers and riders to Columbia County is huge.

It is very conceivable that The Oaks of Lake City, which celebrated its grand opening Monday, may be just the first development in what could become a thriving equestrian community within Columbia County. One need only look at the growth and prosperity that have come to Ocala with the clustering of equestrian facilities there to get a glimpse of what might be for Lake City.

Certainly vision, hard work and perhaps some good fortune have all played a role in the surprising location of this world-class facility in Columbia County. More of each of those attributes will be necessary for The Oaks of Lake City to reach its potential and spawn the type of equestrian culture here that local leaders hope to see.

We congratulate Dicks Realty of Lake City for its leadership in this project, and thank David and Karen O'Connor for choosing Columbia County. With their accomplishments and reputation, they could have gone anywhere to develop a community like The Oaks of Lake City, but they chose to come here. It was a decision that we believe will reap benefits for the O'Connors and the community at large for many years to come.

HIGHLIGHTS IN HISTORY

Today is Thursday, March 13, the 73rd day of 2008. There are 293 days left in the year.

■ In 1781, the planet Uranus was discovered by Sir William Herschel.

■ In 1925, a law went into effect in Tennessee prohibiting the teaching of the theory of evolution.

■ In 1933, banks began to reopen after a "holiday" declared by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

■ In 1996, a gunman burst into an elementary school in Dunblane, Scotland, and opened fire, killing 16 children and one teacher before killing himself.

Lake City Reporter

serving Columbia County since 1874

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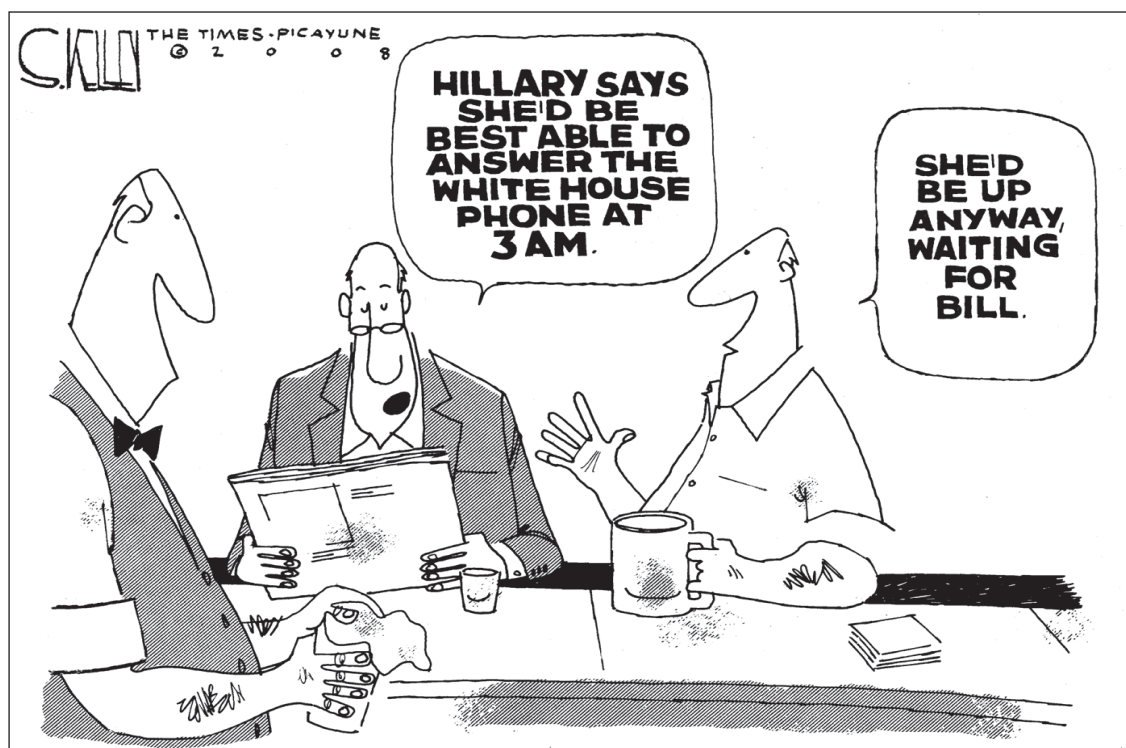
OUR POLICY

Letters to the Editor should be typed or neatly written and double spaced. Letters should not exceed 400 words and will be edited for length and libel. Letters must be signed and include the writer's name, address and telephone number for verification. Writers can have two letters per month published. Letters and guest columns are the opinion of the writers and not necessarily that of the Lake City Reporter.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Millikin's letter of resignation

As you know these have been challenging times for the district. Many disturbing issues have made it difficult for a lot of good people, including myself, to do our jobs.

Hopefully, you'll agree that I stayed, worked hard for you and continued to implement our countywide construction program, oversaw the plans for our new school and its final price, dealt with state budget cuts and lawsuits, and completed contract negotiations for all of our employees. Much of this was accomplished with two less district administrators. For some time I have questioned if I could continue in this administration and I simply can't remain silent any longer.

I've watched a growing trend of personal conduct issues, and other questionable decisions that disturb me to the point I fear we may be doing long-term damage to the district if things don't change.

I've been torn between leaving or staying and continuing to serve the people the best I could and I simply cannot continue any more to work under what has become an unprofessional administration despite the best efforts by many great people.

We now have another assistant superintendent who has helped stabilize the situation and hopefully my leaving won't put too much extra work on the many excellent and appreciated district employees whom I love.

I have been part of this community my entire life, served on volunteer boards, and worked with charitable organizations and I stand on my integrity and reputation. You've heard the full explanation, but the simple and short one is that eventually every man has to be able to look his children in the eye and feel good about his job. I can no longer do that.

I respectfully submit my resignation effective today at the end of the March 11th workday. I truly wish the district the best and my wife and I will continue to be involved with our daughter's education.

Hopefully, the future will bring a positive change, a better way, and a refocus on what's really important, providing the best education possible for our children.

Michael F. Millikin
Lake City

Reader upset with Markham's comments

To the Editor:
Shocked, disappointed and furious. These words describe my feelings regarding School Superintendent Grady Markham's distasteful comments following the resignation of Assistant Superintendent Mike Millikin.

First of all, as a parent of a child in this school system,

I am sick and tired of Mr. Markham's foul language. To use profanity, especially in a public meeting, is a very poor example of how to conduct yourself. Many times students are present at these meetings. Does Mr. Markham check to see if school children are in attendance before he speaks in a manner that would offend a sailor?

Mr. Markham called Mr. Millikin's resignation "unprofessional." I could not disagree more. I am sure this was a difficult decision for Mr. Millikin and I think he handled it VERY professionally. It was Markham himself who displayed childlike leadership and acted unprofessional! Mr. Markham is quoted as saying "good riddance" and "I'm glad he's gone; we're better off for it."

Those comments are not only distasteful, but quite frankly stupid. If Mr. Markham is looking for ways for the district to be "better off," he should start acting like a professional administrator and fulfilling his duties in a more admirable way. It's obvious that Mr. Millikin could no longer represent this superintendent due to his unprofessional behavior that is demonstrated regularly. Look around Mr. Markham, all of your assistants are leaving.

Mr. Markham owes this community and Mr. Millikin a public apology. Resign or announce you'll retire after your term. Then we'll be "better off."

Greg Beckman
Lake City

Millikin's resignation will hurt district

To the Editor:
I find it a big blow to the Columbia County School system that Mr. Mike Millikin resigned. His comment, "Many disturbing issues have made it difficult for a lot of good people including myself to do our jobs" is something that needs to be addressed.

Do others on the school board feel this way? Should these issues be made public and addressed? Or, do we already know them and just have failed to respond?

Mr. Sam Markham's response that his resignation as being "unprofessional" I believe to be untrue. Who better to submit your resignation to than the School Board? The fact that Mr. Markham believes that he is making a "jab at him and the entire district," makes me believe that if his resignation were done any other way, it would have been swept under the rug and quietly dealt with. What does Mr. Markham have to hide?

I would like for Mr. Markham to explain how professional it was to take a picture of him off the wall and cut it up with a knife. Perhaps the professional thing to do was make a formal request to have the picture removed. And the firing of several members, in my view, was

never really explained fully. I find it unprofessional that Mr. Markham swore, albeit mildly, about rehiring Mr. Millikin. Mr. Markham is hardly the positive role model I consider to be for the students of the county.

I wish to thank Mr. Millikin for his service in the community and only wish him the best. I personally hate to see you leave the Columbia County School Board and hope that the school board looks into these "disturbing issues." We are losing a good man. Thank you Mr. Millikin. God Bless.

Dawn Madden
Lake City

City and county must work together

To the Editor:
Citizens, I tip my hat to Michael Leonard the publisher of the Lake City Reporter. This is in response to his commentary dated Sunday, Feb. 24. He told it just how it is, representing most citizens of the city and county in Lake City. I grew up in this area and never thought I would see the problems that go on between the city and county. I, too, believe it is past time that the voters, the ones who voted these individuals into office, be heard. It is time the local government be given back to the people. It bothers me deeply that when a citizen asks questions that they are given a runaround or are told "I don't recall."

This is not to say that we do not have good people serving in the city and county. We do. But, again, getting a runaround every time a logical questions is asked ... there is no reason why the city and county should not work collectively together.

Every time they turn around more and more money has been spent out of the taxpayers' pocket when the city and county resolve the issues just by working together instead of disagreeing over them.

I believe as well as I believe others believe, that it is time that the city and county quit their squabbling and work to the betterment of all citizens of Columbia County and the City of Lake City. I could quote examples of hundreds of thousands of dollars that have been spent just to come back to slap us in the face where if only the city and county would work together as one body, the majority of these monies which come out off the taxpayers' pocket could be saving.

I don't intend to point fingers at anyone, but when you are spending in excess of \$200,00 there surely has to be a better way in order to make the best of each taxpayer dollar that is spent.

In my opinion it is up to our elected officials, city and county, to go out of their way to find the best means possible to effectively save the taxpayers money.

Wayne Sapp, Sr.
Lake City

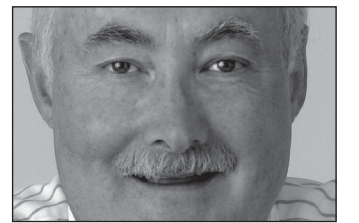
COMMENTARY

Naked truth of political life in U.S.

The other day an unpaid foreign policy adviser for Barack Obama called Hillary Clinton a "monster." In a political age when every word is automatically taken literally, this caused a monstrous stir. It has calmed down a bit since the pants fell off New York Gov. Eliot Spitzer's dignity, but I think this bears more examination.

Apologists might say that the loose-tongued Samantha Power, who resigned over her comment, was not suggesting that Hillary was a real monster. It was merely a figure of speech. It was, however, very rude of her.

Good form insists even as the knives go in that all political critiques from opposing camps these days must suggest that the



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candidates are great chums and would send each other Valentines if only it didn't disturb the bluebirds nesting in their mailboxes. Frankness is forbidden.

As one who normally likes a figure of speech as much as the next person, I think the more interesting question is whether Power was literally correct.

Sure, Hillary looks more like a chipmunk who has nuts in her cheeks than an actual monster, but looks can be deceiving. The question is whether Hillary is the last remaining *Pantsuitosaurus*, which roamed America during the age when conservative dinosaurs controlled Congress.

The *Pantsuitosaurus* was a striving beast that fed on wonky details as it sought to stake out its turf. It usually traveled in a herd, sometimes independently of its mate (Bill, in this context).

While they are at it, experts should also determine whether John McCain is really an ancient iguana and whether Barack Obama's outstanding ears are the vestigial relics of the distinctive armored plates that ran down the back of the *Stegosaurus*.

When this has been investigated, only then can we say that this silly issue has been taken to its silliest literal conclusion, which, after all, is what we do here in America.

We are not yet at that happy place in the matter of Spitzer, the caped crusader against corruption who tripped over his cape.

While I cannot claim to be an expert in all the deadly sins — except, of course, sloth and gluttony — I do want to say something about lust, the downfall of Spitzer. He has been linked to a prostitution ring called the Emperors Club VIP. It turns out that too many emperors had no clothes.

Whatever his moral failing, he certainly showed very poor judgment in picking this sin from the range of sinful options. If he had committed the deadly sin of anger, for example, it would not be all that deadly. He could have become a celebrated talk-show host.

If he had been swelled with pride, he would have been lost in the crowd of people blowing their own horns. If he had been possessed of envy, he could have claimed it was his duty as a Democrat.

If he had been full of greed, he could have said he was a consumer giving a boost to the economy. If he had been guilty of sloth, he would have stayed in bed rather than gotten frisky.

And if he had fallen prey to gluttony, no jury of obese Americans would ever convict him, even if he ordered several super sized sandwiches and had fries with that.

But, oh no, Mr. Smarty Pants Prosecutor-Turned-Governor had to commit lust, or at least get himself into a situation in which lust was the business model. That is the one deadly sin in America that is super deadly.

As outrages go, the vice of lust has the virtue of being simple for people to understand. You have a snake, you have an apple, you have a Client No. 9 (hard to tell him from the snake), you have hypocrisy, you have incredible male stupidity. This sordid situation is as old as the human race.

The trouble with most sins is that they are too complicated for public comprehension. They involve nefarious deals, machinations of special interests and the oppression of the poor in a fog of bewildering detail.

Yet you can take several deadly sins — say pride, sloth and anger — mix them up into a lethal cocktail and pour out the Iraq occupation that some hail as a virtue, not a vice.

But let just one hypocritical public figure be caught in Room 871 with someone called Kristen and the very foundations of the state are thought to crack in a way that huge acts of state-sponsored folly and bloodletting could never do. That does not make lust right; it just makes it clear that the banality of evil is the real monster in our midst.

■ Reg Henry is a columnist for the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.