

letters

to the Editor

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Final pass through town is too early

I have been reading with interest on the "final" cleanup of the storm. I am confused and amazed that the town is under the impression that this current round of cleanup will be the last one. Just recently, the weather has been nice enough to get outside and start taking down the rest of the branches and other damage (not considering

we are about to have a very cold week again and snow). There have not been enough days to complete this phase. I know that my neighbors, friends and the houses I see when I pass them still have a lot of damage to the trees.

Not everyone can afford to hire crews for hundreds or thousands of dollars to complete all the work required and are doing it themselves when time allows. Many of us, as well, are helping  
*(Please turn to page six)*

Correction

In The Bee's Spring special section, an incorrect Web site was published for Spruce Meadow Farm. The correct Web site is www.sprucemeadowfarm.net.

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Last week's question:  
**Do you agree with Al Gore on global warming?**

You said:  
**52% YES 48% NO**

How to reach The Bee

The Amherst Bee publishes community news free of charge. Mail items to The Amherst Bee, P.O. Box 150, Buffalo, NY, 14231-0150. Our telephone number is 632-4700. Our fax number is 633-8601. Our Web sites are www.BeeNews.com and www.AmherstBee.com. Amherst Managing Editor David Sherman's e-mail address is dsherman@BeeNews.com. Amherst Associate Editor Jessica Finch's e-mail address is jfinch@BeeNews.com. Senders should state on their contributions whether their e-mail address can be published.

Letters to the editor must be typed, double-spaced and are limited to a maximum of 300 words. Names will not be withheld unless the author demonstrates a clear reason for anonymity. No unsigned letters will be printed. You must supply your name, address and telephone number for verification. Authors are limited to one letter every four weeks. Letters are subject to editing.

Our deadline is 5 p.m. on the Friday prior to publication. For engagement and wedding announcements, The Bee offers a form to list names and details. Call for a copy. There is no charge to publish engagements, weddings or anniversaries.

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Politicians find out parenting is demanding, rewarding

There are three roles in life I never wished to fulfill: restaurant waiter, apartment landlord and parent.

The first always seem to be subjected to far too much grief, for too little reward, over things largely out of their control. The second has something to do with the fact I'm the anti Bob Vila and the fact that while those who do have rental properties appreciate the extra income, I don't know any that really are happy about the constant life interruptions of a failed furnace or leaky water line, which always seem to come at inopportune times.

The third just simply scared the heck out of me, or at least the consequences did if by chance, even the smallest chance, that I turned out to be lousy at it.

I don't think Byron Brown is a lousy parent. Nor do I think Joel Giambra is either, despite the fact that on the same day Byron III finally came clean on his role in stealing the family SUV, word surfaced that the county executive's 17-year-old son had just pleaded guilty to driving under the influence after earlier being stopped by Tonawanda town police.

And as proof, I offer up another set of parents who have been in the news just a bit recently, Anthony and Mary Capozzi, perhaps the quintessential representation of the almost unearthly bond between a parent and their child. How else do you describe a mother who attends church every day, for 22 straight years, to pray for her son and his exoneration? Not once was a family portrait ever snapped in that time, because in mom's and dad's way of thinking, there wasn't a full family to be photographed. Explain a father who never lost his faith in his son's innocence either, despite a society and a system that repeatedly told them he was not.

Our two most visible political leaders deserve much of the public questioning and criticism they receive. The jury is still a long way from returning a verdict on Brown; Giambra's indefensible performance in his second term has unnecessarily kept handcuffs on any number of possible initiatives, so polluted is his public presence. For the good of the county, he should have resigned two years ago.

But it is true that choosing to be a public figure

often comes at the expense of being a father figure.

We want them to attend our dinners, cut our ribbons, march in our parades and often they oblige, five, six nights a week. The higher the office they hold, the more we want them at our event; and oh by the way, could you figure out a way to save an entire region while you're at it.

(Even though those that preceded you couldn't.) There's someone else, however, who needs help on his homework, wants to toss a Frisbee in the back yard, drop a worm in the water together on a warm Wednesday evening after work. It's a tradeoff of which I'm sure many office-holders often think, and I believe the answer is just as often uneasy, if not unavoidable.

I'm not one, but I have no doubt parenting is the most difficult, terrifying and rewarding job any person will ever imagine or accept. There isn't one

among us who as a teen either directly made, or were at least peripherally involved in, not just one, but a whole slew of stupid decisions. Only the wisdom of the years illuminates just how dumb they really were. Some were criminal; thankfully many were not, in some case only because we didn't get caught.

To suggest Brown should step down for SUV-gate is ludicrous. Public suspicions born by covering up for others are rooted in politics. To defend a son, even in the face of seemingly overwhelming evidence, is rooted in parenthood.

It's not unusual to hear parents say how blessed they are to have good children. I'd bet Brown and Giambra have said as much themselves, and more than once.

As their sons will come to realize, if not now, then later on, and as many of us already have discovered time and again, that's backwards. We are the ones blessed to have such good parents.

*(Brian Ackley is a columnist for the Weekly Independent Newspapers of Western New York. For more information on WIN, or to provide feedback on this column, visit our Web site at www.wnynewspapers.com. Opinions expressed here are those of the author.)*



BRIAN ACKLEY

Political Columnist

Increase in state aid helps Sweet Home budget picture

Each April, the Sweet Home School Board adopts the proposed budget for the next school year, which is voted on by the community one month later.

School budget adoption is one of the most demanding jobs a board faces. The choices are difficult, and in the end it boils down to maintaining a balance between protecting the core programs of a school district and respecting the impact of local property tax increases on the community. The balance is a delicate one, requiring the board and administration to see the big picture, to have a vision for the future and to keep priorities straight.

The Sweet Home Board of Education has spent many hours analyzing reports, asking questions about efficiency and listening to short-term and long-term financial scenarios.

After much deliberation and debate, the board approved a budget increase of \$3.3 million, which translates to a 5.83 percent increase over the current year's spending. The most significant factor affecting the budget-to-budget increase in Sweet Home was the increase in debt as a result of the middle school building project. The increased capital expense in the 2007-08 budget accounts for more than 40 percent of the overall increase in spending. The district will receive state building aid to offset much of that expense.

This year, there was good news in the budget creation process. Our local state legislators, Sen. Mary Lou Rath, Assemblyman Jim Hayes and Assemblyman Robin Schimminger, helped to

pass an on-time state budget that allocates a significant state aid increase to Sweet Home and provides property tax rebates that will reduce the overall tax burden on our community.

The tax rebate checks should be between \$240 and \$275 for the average home in the district, guaranteeing that taxes will be lower in 2007-08. I'd like to use this space to publicly thank our state legislators for their continued and unwavering support of funding for schools.

There are two basic means for using the extra state aid: applying it to fund new or existing programs or using it to decrease the tax levy. Sweet Home plans on doing both things.

We want to expand our prekindergarten program, improve academic intervention services and work to hire a school resource officer for the high school.

The board also decided to apply a large sum of state aid to reducing the tax levy, which will increase approximately 1.8 percent over the current year.

The tax levy increase translates to an additional \$19 on the school tax bill for the average home in the district, maintaining Sweet Home's status as the lowest full-value tax rate for Erie County homeowners.

Sweet Home's budget vote will move to the Norman Vergils Community Center at the high school this year because of construction at the middle school.

In addition to the budget, there will be propositions on buses, an Excel aid capital project and three seats for the Board of Education.



GEOFFREY M. HICKS

Superintendent Sweet Home Schools