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In wake of tragedy, support for all ages

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In wake of tragedy, support for all ages

Rockland County's youngest and most senior have long benefited from a comprehensive menu of services offered through the county's education and social services systems.

Recently, because of a most unfortunate circumstance, several social services agencies and Rockland BOCES came together in support of our special needs children, the staff who teach them, and the senior citizens who provide that extra love and unconditional affection.

The support provided to all those who worked alongside of Foster Grandparent Pat McDonnell, who died as the result of a tragic accident last month, is an poignant example of the collaboration and longstanding relationship between the county's Foster Grandparents Program, local school districts, and mental health agencies.

The Foster Grandparents who worked with Pat McDonnell were counseled and supported by an outstanding team of counselors from the Mental Health Association and BOCES professional staff. Kaplan School staff was also counseled by these professionals and BOCES' own psychologists.

I was so impressed to hear the Foster Grandparents at the Kaplan School relating stories about Mrs. McDonnell. As the mental health professionals and BOCES administrators offered their last words of encouragement, the Foster Grandparents rose spontaneously, ready to return to their classrooms, to "take care of their children."

While it is typical for groups to come together in difficult times, seeing the wonderful level of collaboration and support shown among the Foster Grandparents Program, the Mental Health Association of Rockland County and Rockland BOCES has been a special experience worth noting.

James M. Ryan

West Nyack

The writer is district superintendent of Rockland Board of Cooperative Educational Services.

Huge public employee salaries hurt local and state taxpayers. The future public pension costs are a fiscal time bomb. Yet elected officials seem afraid to say "no" to the police chiefs.

Since 2003, I have urged that police chief salaries be set by local law, not the "chief we love you" back-room deals commonly used countywide (a notable exception being Spring Valley, to its credit). Individual contracts with chiefs are an invitation for corruption. Yet the courts have refused to examine this violation of the state Home Rule Law, holding that a mere citizen has no "standing" to challenge this taxpayer abuse. Last month, I petitioned the U.S. Supreme Court to review this.

Much more fiscal restraint is needed, throughout the county. The public must pay police chiefs what is fair, but refrain offering salary and benefits packages that are exorbitant. Both public integrity and affordable government are at stake.

Mike Diederich Jr.

Stony Point

The writer, a Democrat, is a candidate for Rockland County Legislature, District 1.

U.S. must get troops out of Iraq, now

Bob Woodward's "State of Denial" and Michael Moore's "Fahrenheit 911" have documented instances of illegal actions by the executive office. Had these accusations not been true, these men would surely have been brought to bear. Why won't Congress act on these matters? There has never been a nation which didn't work out their own oppression, even though it was with casualties. Those were no more than what our American troops have sustained in protecting Hallibuton's interests in Iraq. We must get our armed forces out, without any further unnecessary casualties, now.

Alan Schwartz

Nanuet

Rockland letters to the editor
