

# TALK AROUND TOWN

## Which course will Mellen take?

It's not an easy thing to confess, but I was raised in a racist household.

Sure, times were different. But that's hardly an excuse. Growing up, I heard the N word and more uttered in contempt and ridicule, as slang and in jokes.

And when you hear that as a kid, from people you look to as models for your own behavior, it's pretty near impossible not to adopt the same attitudes.

It wasn't until I was older and began meeting different people from all walks of life that my attitudes began to change. The more I was exposed to people of different races and ethnicities and religions and beliefs, the more I came to see that most everyone is the same. We're all trying to make it through a difficult world, doing the best we can with what we have to work with.

That's why what's going on in Mellen is so dangerous.

You likely read in Friday's edition about the state's findings that the Mellen School District — which last year forbade any teachings based on race — is failing to properly educate students about the diversity that defines America. The almost complete absence of teaching about Native Americans is perhaps most egregious.

Why? Because all racism is borne in ignorance. And kids learn what is modeled for them.

As I said, I speak from personal experience. I credit a firm liberal arts education with helping remove my blinders.

In college, I learned about the rest of the world, its history and the people in it. All the great religions in the world — Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism — originated with people of color. Modern mathematics? That started in the Middle East. Ditto for science. The greatest accumulation of ancient knowledge was the Library of Alexandria, in modern-day Egypt. Democracy itself, depending upon how you define it, was created with the republics of India, the assemblies of Phoenicia or the states of

Sparta and Greece.

When I moved to Wisconsin almost 30 years ago, I learned some — admittedly not a lot — about Native Americans. It wasn't until I met a Stockbridge-Munsee woman named Barb Munson that I really began my education, which has continued during my five years in Ashland, learning about the Anishinaabe people.

And this might come as a surprise: I also credit my alcoholism for helping to open my eyes. Anyone who has recovered from the disease of addiction quickly comes to realize they need to be willing to accept help from anyone, and that the disease doesn't discriminate. It afflicts everyone, from the richest celebrity, business leader or politician to the lowliest gutter drunk, exactly the same.

There's no better lesson that we're all alike.

Mellen kids should learn that — and not the hard way, like I did.

I agree with Nick Vander Puy, the Mellen resident who filed the complaint against the district. Mellen has two choices before it now.

It can choose to learn. It can welcome guidance from the Department of Public Instruction and take real, concrete steps — not empty gestures — toward addressing deficiencies in its curriculum, training and library. It can help its teachers do their jobs.

Or it can dig in its toes, resist, do the absolute minimum to meet state requirements and pretty much continue on the path it's already on.

It's the kids who will either reap the rewards or pay the price for the School Board's decision.

I sincerely hope they choose the right course. Their kids should see the world in all its hues.



PETER J. WASSON

Peter J. Wasson is managing editor of the Ashland Daily Press.



### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

#### Keillor isn't welcome here

EDITOR: Concerning the Lake Superior Big Top Chautauqua's announcement for the Aug. 27 performance: "A summer's night. A beautiful setting at the base of Mt. Ashwabay just outside Bayfield, Wisconsin. Stories, poetry, blue-ribbon musicians, sing-alongs, humorous sketches, and the News from Lake Wobegon. This is gonna be good!"



Magi Malone, Ashland

Or not.

To the readers of this paper, believe the girls and women in your life — they have been through enough. Stop enabling and endorsing the Garrison Keillors, Donald Trumps, Harvey Weinstens and Jeffrey Epsteins in this world, day after day after day. Boycott and protest on Aug. 27 evening on Ski Hill Road.

#### OLL teachers differently

EDITOR: Education seeks to reveal both material and immaterial realities. Current

demands of a society invested almost entirely in the practical application of knowledge is forcing teachers to be instructors rather than educators, concerned more with "how" things work rather than with "why" they are.

Although applied knowledge is desirable, it remains a means to an end. For all human history, we have been devoted to our goals, refining our means to more efficiently reach them. In other words, we are more enthralled by the beauty of a place we visit rather than how we got there.

At Our Lady of the Lake Catholic School, we deal not only with the truth of our material reality, but also with a self-revealed God who is the ultimate truth. We understand that, whereas it may be easier to replace an instructor with an instructional video, it is more difficult to replace an educator that leads each student to their own conclusions as a learning process, providing encouraging words in the face of struggle or correction pursuing integrity and accountability. In a world where praxis is preferred over reason, beholding the awe and wonder of students grasping that there is order, meaning and undeserved love behind every facet of reality, becomes a revolutionary experience.

Paula Sherck, Fourth-grade teacher OLL Catholic School

### What do you think?

Email Letters to the Editor to [pwasson@ashlanddailypress.net](mailto:pwasson@ashlanddailypress.net)



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Established 1888  
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Obituaries: Wednesday at Noon

Classifieds: Wednesday at Noon

The Daily Press is published biweekly on Tuesday and Friday by APG Media of Wisconsin, LLC.

#### RATES

EZpay Monthly: \$14.73

13 weeks: \$46.80

26 weeks: \$93.60

52 weeks: \$187.20

Online Only EZpay monthly: \$14.30

Periodicals postage paid at Ashland, Wisconsin 54806 and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE DAILY PRESS, 122 W. 3rd St., Ashland WI 54806. (USPS 144 880) | (ISSN: 1050-4095)

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