

The importance of child care and early education

This Friday is National Provider Appreciation Day, a day to recognize the people who provide child care in the community. Child care, as I've written about in spots in the past, is a critical piece of any area's workforce, but it's one that I think is often overlooked by both employers and economic developers.

That's a mistake, though, one that some organizations are working hard to try to correct.

Noble County launched its early childhood education coalition — now called Noble Thrive By 5 — within the last few years, one of those groups with a mission to not only work on making people aware of the importance of early childhood education to a child's development, but to work to try to foster more capacity, higher quality and stress the importance of child care to the economy.

When that organization was getting rolling and they were forming some startup committees, they sent out a press release that they were looking for volunteers to fill some boards. One of those boards was their marketing committee and, being in the business of media, I decided to offer my services to that group.

I don't live in Noble County, but as a father with a 3-year-old who is in full-time day care during the work week, I'm intimately familiar with both the benefits, pitfalls and challenges of child care.

Because, simply put, without daycare for Luke, my wife and I both couldn't work. Period.

The pandemic opened a lot of eyes to how critical of a service this is. My own company got a taste of it too as I suffered three two-week quarantine periods at home in late 2020 and early 2021 — once

because my wife had COVID and exposed our entire family and twice because people came to daycare sick and exposed Luke's entire class, triggering a quarantine.

Since my wife's job is one that requires her to be physically present in her office, she avoided us and continued going to work. Me, having the flexibility to do this job from home on any given day with a few caveats (I obviously can't attend meetings in Noble County when I'm stuck at home due to the county's extreme lack of virtual attendance or live-streaming with the exception of Rome City) was the one who had to stay home.

This wasn't a situation like Luke feeling a little sick. COVID was one of those situations where you couldn't reasonably find alternative care in a pinch. "Hey, aged family member, can you come spend two weeks at my house watching my kid who might have COVID that is significantly more dangerous to someone your age?" Yeah, that pitch doesn't work well.

Even beyond COVID, there are still days when the impact of child care can be felt. If Luke wakes up sick with a fever, our center has a policy that he has to stay home for 48 hours after his symptoms subside in order to not infect more kids.

That's inconvenient but important, because I recognize my kid can have an impact on others, same as other kids can have an impact on me. Case in point, the two times when Luke was exposed to COVID at school because someone came in sick, the string of words I used at the recognition that I'd be stuck at home for another two weeks were far from appropriate for print.

So it's so important for me for that day care center to be available five days a week, where I can drop off Luke and know that he's having fun, learning and being kept safe. I can go to the office and work eight hours without having to worry about whether he's OK. I know and trust he is, because his providers are excellent and take good care of him.

But beyond the impact to me personally, child care has a much wider impact on the local workforce. Young children need supervision during the day and you can't give that if both parents are working.

"Well Steve, one parent can always stay home and watch them. That's better anyway, just like they did in the '50s!"

OK, sure, having a parent stay home is all fine and good. But how many people nowadays can realistically support a three-or-more member family on a single income? Full disclosure — I can't.

If either my wife or I stopped working, game over. There's no amount of budgeting or cost-cutting we would be able to do to reasonably afford home, child and the basic necessities to survive. Even with both of us working and earning a very much middle-class income, things remain tight.

And this is the part that I think employers repeatedly fail to recognize to their own peril. We hear complaints about a labor shortage and not being able to find workers.

How many people are sidelined because they can't work because they have to care for a child or children? Or, where they look at your job and the inconvenience and earnings don't make it worth the effort and labor to not stay home?

What if businesses thought about child care in the same way they think about health insurance, paid vacation or retirement plans, AKA an essential benefit any worker who doesn't want to be exploited would expect to receive from a full-time job?

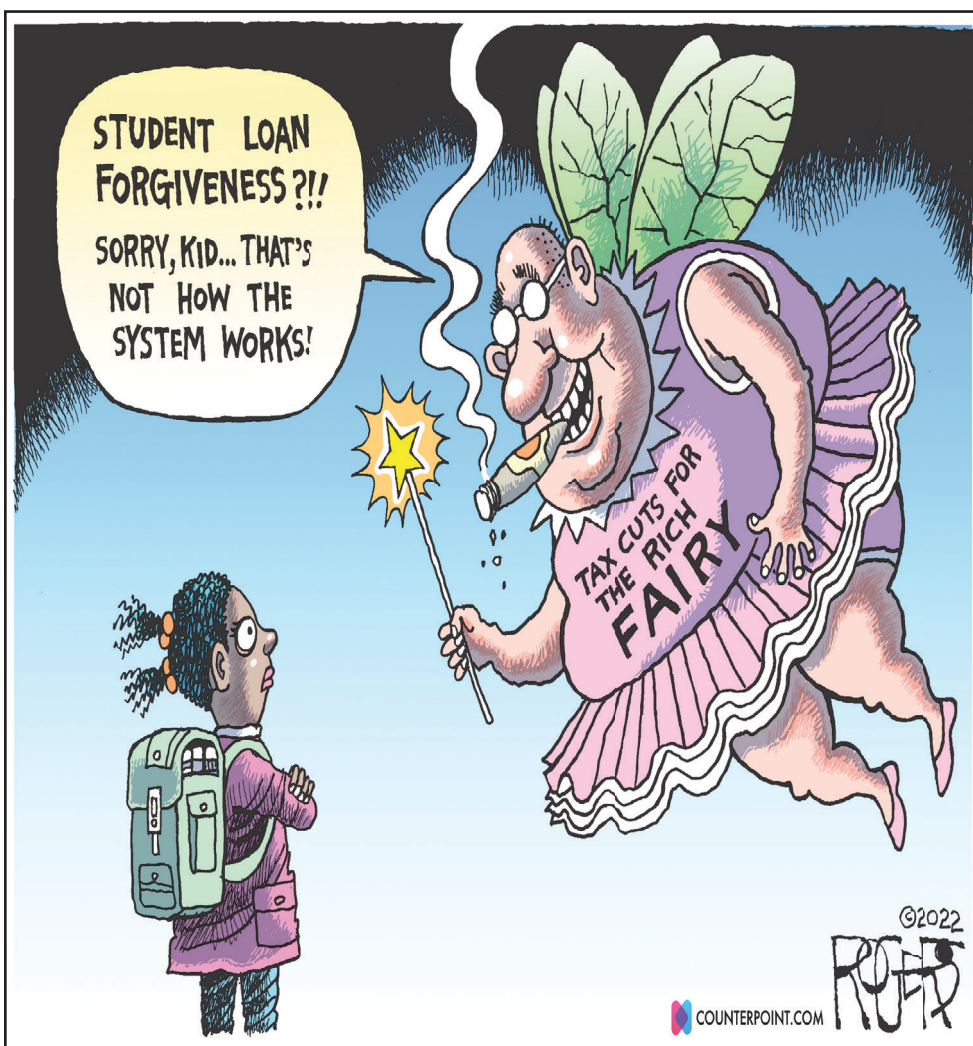
How can employers provide not only the support but the flexibility for parents with young children to work?

I don't have an exact answer for that — that's one of the things groups like Noble Thrive By 5 is working on figuring out with the business community — but it's a timely and critical question to answer NOW as the Baby Boomers all slip into retirement and we're left with a workforce very different from the one of the last 40 years.

Child care is critical.

Because in the end, if employers force an ultimatum for parents to choose between work and their child, it doesn't take a genius to figure out which side is going to lose that battle every time.

STEVE GARBACZ is executive editor for KPC Media Group and editor of *The News Sun*. He sends out all of his appreciation to everyone who works in child care for the important role they play in parents' lives every day. Thank you. Email him at sgarbacz@kpcmedia.com.



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Letters to the Editor

Our society is headed in the wrong direction

To the editor:
Are Christians criticizing woke gender ideology unloving?

An Easter article in this paper by Steve Garbacz indicated he thinks Christian critics are unloving.

Our society is headed in the wrong direction. Like the prophets and apostles, ordinary Christians have a responsibility to warn them. In fact, it is unloving to stay silent.

The gender ideology movement receives full support from Biden's administration. Woke activists are demanding indoctrination of children at early ages through public education.

If activists get their way, children will undergo this indoctrination. If parents interfere, they could be charged with child abuse. Children could be removed from their homes. Pastors could be prosecuted for hate speech if they address LGBT issues biblically in counseling and preaching.

Sound wild? It's already happening in Canada and some states.

There are physical and spiritual consequences to woke gender ideology.

Puberty blocking drugs and hormones are commonly used. These treatments can cause permanent health and developmental issues, including infertility.

For instance, bone densities of young men undergoing these regimes are similar to geriatric patients.

Micropenises are common. One young man developed a micropenis due to puberty blockers. When he underwent "gender affirmation surgery," there wasn't enough material to create an artificial vagina. So, the surgeon fashioned it from his colon (sigmoid colon vaginoplasty). The odor caused his boyfriend to leave him, and now he is even more depressed.

Josef Mengele could not have designed more ghastly experiments. If you want to investigate the perverted fathers of the gender ideology movement, look up John Money and Alfred Kinsey.

Based upon empirical data alone, unbiased thinkers should see the bankruptcy of gender ideology.

There is spiritual revelation contained in Scripture, though, and Scripture defines objective reality.

God created mankind male and female, in his image. Adam and Eve were commanded to multiply and fill the earth with other image-bearers within the context of the nuclear family.

Rejecting the creation mandate and pursuing our own course is an echo of Adam's rebellion against God's design. Man was created to reflect God's glory and to enjoy communion with Him. Rejecting God and his good design results in frustration and existential angst.

Those on this path experience alienation from God now, and ultimately eternal separation.

There are many liberal, false pastors in pulpits who say otherwise, though. They are secularists disguising themselves as shepherds, nursing at the breast of this culture. They worship a Play-doh god shaped according to this culture. PCUSA, ELCA, UMC, and liberal Mennonite pastors are amongst them.

Does God have unconditional love for all? Liberal pastors focus upon God's love to the exclusion of his holiness.

Read the Bible, especially the book of Romans. God is holy. He exercises wrath and judgment against sinful men.

God loves his creation and sent his Son to accomplish its redemption, and restoration of the pre-Fall harmony.

He doesn't exercise redemptive love upon all men, though. Faith in Christ and repentance are required. Repentance involves experiencing a change of mind. The mind needs to be changed through the new birth from God. This new birth aligns us with him and his design. The body is not the issue. Our minds need renewal.

Born-again believers want to please and obey God. They find their identity and belonging in union with Christ, not the LGBT community.

Concerning Steve's claim that Christian critics don't know others with these issues, thus cannot empathize with them, many Christians left these backgrounds. Becket Cook, Rosaria Butterfield, and Christopher Yuan are Christian authors who were part of the LGBT community and address these issues with biblical faithfulness and compassion. Sound biblical churches include repentant, loved brothers with these testimonies.

Responsible, empathetic believers would not affirm the dysphoria of sexually confused individuals any more than they would affirm the dysphoria of anorexics starving themselves to death.

For more information on sexuality from a biblical perspective, I recommend "Love Thy Body" by Nancy Pearcey.

Robert Sparkman
Rome City

Accountability, honesty are cornerstone for living a new life

To the editor:
My name is Paul Sykes. I grew up in Wolcottville and have lived in Noble and LaGrange counties for the majority of my life. I am writing this letter to apologize to our community. I believe that in order to continue to grow and become a better father, husband, son, brother and neighbor that I need to take responsibility for my actions. I have started this process already, but I have barely scratched the surface of clearing up all the wreckage of my

past. I have been published in this newspaper for my arrests of dealing drugs, counterfeiting money, check fraud, multiple vehicular pursuits from the police, and for discharging firearms. I have been in legal trouble for the majority of my life. I am an addict and alcoholic. By the grace of God, my sobriety date is Feb. 20, 2021.

When I think about all the damage I have done, I can't help but feel like it was another person that did all of it. But it was me. I was a miserable, self-destructive, unhappy person. I was a coward that was being dominated by life and any challenges I had. I didn't care about myself, my family, my children, or my fellow human beings. My entire life had been a constant cycle of damage and more damage.

My goal for writing this letter is to accept responsibility for my actions. I believe wholeheartedly that accountability and honesty are the cornerstone to living this new life that I get to experience each day.

In the past, I have made decisions that defrauded other people and put lives in danger. I helped distribute poison into our community. I participated in criminal activity and encouraged others to do the same.

When I found myself incarcerated and looking at the rest of my life behind bars, I realized that I was the problem. I created my own problems over and over again. The fear, shame and pain I felt was indescribable. After all, innocent people got harmed and put at risk because of my actions. In that pain and shame, I found the courage to face the man in the mirror. I decided to get honest and own my mistakes, and take responsibility for them all. I sought help and support, and against all odds, God provided it. He has continued to provide throughout this entire process and I believe that I have found my purpose in life along the way.

Ultimately, I want to help others that are just like me.

But in order to do that, I have to continue to clear up the past and clean up the damage I have caused. To the people I have hurt or put at risk: From the bottom of my heart, you have my apologies. If there is any way I can make things right with you, do not hesitate to reach out to me.

To some, this letter may be received in bad taste. I may be seeking forgiveness from some that are not ready to forgive. Those things are out of my control. I still have to try to set things right.

I hope no one misunderstands what I am attempting to do. I am not making excuses for my behaviors. I don't want to justify what I have done, I want to own it.

Thank you to the newspaper if you publish.

Paul Sykes
LaGrange

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