

Don't Help Others but, Help Yourself

Not Teaching Our Children by Example

In the wake of the attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center, Americans and many others have been extremely generous with their money, time, and efforts. They have shown what it is like to care for others and to share with those who are in need—a trait common in most every religion in the world—and certainly one most parents would want their children to learn and practice. What better opportunity can you have than the terrible events of the recent past to show the children of today that they should give to others who are less fortunate and to reinforce the lessons they have been taught? And what better place is there to reinforce this lesson than i

I certainly do not believe that teaching morals, concern for others and proper behavior is the sole responsibility of our schools nor even one of their primary purposes but, they certainly are capable and able of reinforcing those attitudes that are taught at home and at church. Or so you would think. In Boca Raton, Florida these lessons are forbidden and woe to the poor unsuspecting student who thinks he will help others. How dare he try to help others; he should only help himself and those close to him, according to assistant principal of the Coral Sunset Elementary School.

According to new reports, an eight year old student decided to help those in New York City by taking up a collection for them at his school. He worked with the American Red Cross and was going to put a can in each classroom for donations. Sounds like a good idea, something I think we would all like for our children to do. Apparently the Coral Sunset administration disagrees.

You see, there are rules and regulations against collecting for charities at Coral Sunset. I can understand that, I can understand the need to regulate such activities at a school and can imagine the problems that would arise if anyone could collect for anything at anytime. Where would you draw the line? What would be a worthy cause and what would not? Who would make the call? Who would suffer the consequences of the inevitable charges of bias if collections for only certain charities were allowed?

The problem is that all collections are not prohibited at Coral Sunset Elementary School. No, as a matter fact, some collections are allowed according to news reports. Coral Sunset most assuredly encourages giving when the proceeds will

be used to benefit the school or its students. Let's encourage students to give to themselves. Let's teach them to put themselves first.

Perhaps Coral Sunset does not believe they should be concerned at all about teaching their students proper behavior and concern for their fellow man. Perhaps they have decided that those functions are best left to parents and the church.

But this is not the case, not the case at all. Coral Sunset does indeed believe that they should teach students things other than the three R's. Their mission statement reads: *Through the combined efforts of faculty staff and community Coral Sunset Elementary will educate students to apply basic skills critical thinking skills and citizenship qualities to their environment while working for excellence in their thoughts and deeds.* Citizenship qualities? Excellence in their deeds? Yes boys and girls, citizenship qualities. A look at their rules and guidelines for behavior reveals that students **must** "obey and respect all adults representing the school the first and every time they are addressed". They **must** "respect school property", **must** "not fight, curse, tease, or make obscene gestures", and they **must** "treat others with kindness and respect"

They have a list of eleven *musts* at Coral Sunset Elementary school but, putting others before yourself is not one of them. While they **must** "treat others with kindness and respect" this goes only so far, and collecting money for others is going too far.

Policies and procedures are needed for any organization to maintain order and, as stated above, not allowing charitable collections at a school could be defensible on many fronts. What is not defensible in this case is the statement by Coral Sunset's assistant principal and the policy that only allows the collections for the benefit of the school and its students. How is this policy encouraging the students to treat others with kindness and how does this demonstrate work for excellence in deeds?

This is most assuredly not the proper lesson to be teaching the youth of today and demonstrates how our schools will never fill the function of parents. There should be some proud parents out there now, the parents of that eight year old student who tried to help those he has never met, to help those who have less than he does right now. Fortunately we still have parents like that who are teaching values to their children. I can only hope that in the end the parents of the world win over those who set and enforce policies that prohibit an eight year old boy from helping his fellow man by placing cans for donations in classrooms.