

The misguided

By Al Schneider

Mark Bauerlein, Assistant Professor of English at Emory University, labels our emerging academics as the “Dumbest Generation.” He speaks out of frustration. They know nothing, he points out, of literature, history, or recent scientific advances. They don’t seem to care. They opt to live in a world all their own, oblivious to the world around them, a world they must soon manage.

I’ve thought about it. I’m troubled by the lack of student achievement. I feel cheated. Considering all the monies being poured into education in America, shouldn’t students perform better? Why is it that we rank 25th in math in international testing? Given all the advantages, shouldn’t we be number one? Why is it necessary for colleges and universities to spend resources on remedial training for those unable to pass basic entrance exams? But is it fair to say they are the dumbest?

There is plenty of evidence to support Bauerlein’s assessment. How can it be, for instance, that 52 percent of high school students believe that Nazi Germany was an ally during World War II? Imagine trying to engage a young person in a conversation about World War II. Or any of our other wars, such as the Revolutionary War. Many students are uninformed about those early days of our history, including facts about how and from whom we gained our independence.

There is also the matter of the framing of our Constitution. Who were the framers of that and what is contained in the document? I was surprised to learn recently that Patrick Henry opposed the Constitution’s ratification because it granted too much power to the federal government. Am I wrong to assume that to most students such information would be superfluous? “Who

was Patrick Henry?” they might ask, assuming they cared enough to ask.

Our students may not be shining stars, but I don’t think they’re dumb. Look at them with all their gadgetry. Their rooms, as Bauerlein points out, are media centers, equipped with a laptop, an iPhone, and iPod, and iPad, and more. It would take me weeks to learn what all these devices can do and much longer to learn how to use them. Give them credit. They’re really quite knowledgeable, especially in dealing with sophisticated communication methods. So what’s the problem? Why are these youngsters so adept at using their electronic tools, yet deficient in academics?

After some thought, the reason seems obvious. It’s a culture problem. Society hasn’t offered our students a good reason for learning. They’re kids, after all, and what they want to do is spend time with their peers, talk to them on their iPhones or text them on whatever gadget does that. Such interchanges take priority in a young life. School assignments get minimal attention. What does it matter if grades slide? Teachers generally expect little and are generous when even minimal work is performed.

So, we have kids not interested in learning, teachers who accept whatever they can get, and parents who can’t be bothered. Along with that, colleges that are prepared to offer remedial to anyone who hasn’t prepared himself (or herself). It’s a formula for failure.

Is there a solution? Sure. It’s simple, but I doubt whether anyone wants to hear it. Make college entrance difficult. That’s it. Think about it. It might make parents take charge of homework, force teachers to insist on learning, and the students themselves to become motivated to learn all they can. Problem solved. •

Faith In Action International seeks helpers

(Submitted by Faith In Action International)

Faith In Action International (FAI), a Christian mission-based organization led by Tom Braak, is seeking individuals from around the United States to build a new ministry campus near Verrettes, Haiti, as part of an upcoming mission trip during spring break.

The mission trip will be held from March 31 to April 6, 2013. Up to 15 individuals are needed and can be accommodated during the trip.

To prepare for the building of the ministry campus, a concrete mason and Braak are pricing out everything and preparing the related contracting services required. The foundation is in and the walls should go up this month. The group in March would most likely help with painting and electrical work.

“Individuals who choose to go on the upcoming mission trip will be trained to work on various projects,” said Tammy Davison, administrative director with FAI.

“Ideally, we would have at least one electrician join the group,” said Braak.

The activities of short term groups vary based on the desires of the groups, the physical condition of the members, the demands of the project, plus the season in which the mission trip occurs. During the past mission trips to the FAI mission in Haiti, individuals have helped build a rainwater reservoir at a church, worked in tree nurseries, helped with soil conservation projects, made guest house updates, visited schools and other locations of interest throughout the area, and repaired the FAI office and/or the rented home used by Braak.

“Everything we do, we do alongside the Haitians. Also, we never push workload, as the reason for coming is not so much to *do* as it is to *be*. We certainly do ap-

preciate the help, though, when needed,” said Braak.

On previous mission trips to FAI headquarters, participants have usually finished work by 2 p.m. each day and then rested, relaxed and used the rest of the day to socialize, journal, or visit the nearby marketplace.

There were over 100 farmers in the FAI garden program in 2012 and Braak estimates that 60 new farming families will be added to the program during 2013.

Braak reports that in June, FAI will give a garden owner tomato, hot pepper, eggplant and papaya seedlings, plus seeds for amaranth and okra. Some farmers are anticipating incomes from these small gardens of over \$600 in 2013.

“A typical week-long mission trip usually costs about \$1,650 per person. This includes air travel from the U.S. to Haiti, ground transportation in Haiti, lodging, three meals a day, purified water, and all tips,” said Davison.

Participants must have a valid passport and receive the necessary immunizations for travel to the tropical region of Haiti. Anyone interested in going on the upcoming trip should contact Tammy Davison at the FAI office based in Spring Lake by calling her cell: (616) 843-5133 or by email at tammy@faithinactionint.org.

The mission of Faith In Action International is to reveal God’s love to the people of Haiti by facilitating sustainable development programs. This involves educating Haitians to stop deforestation, teaching agribusiness to create sustainable businesses and generate income, combating soil erosion, and providing water filters and supplies of clean water to villagers. FAI incorporates ministry into all of its development work.

Visit Faith In Action International on the web at www.faiinactionint.org. Persons can also access Tom Braak’s Facebook page from the site. •

New book explores walking in faith for women

By Pam Mettler

A new book just published by a regional Michigan author is written to help people learn how to stop running the show and start walking in faith.

Let It Go, by author Karen Ehman, guides readers in the discovery of living a life “out of control” in order to allow God to take the driver’s seat.

Through biblical and practical examples, Ehman provides methods to learn new ideas, ways of thinking and implementation tools in order to let things go.

Ehman feels women are compelled to control because they have a false notion that it actually works. She believes that women use control in different ways and situations. Through humorous and specific examples, she outlines characteristics of what she views as the “soft-spoken saint,” the “enabler,” the “martyr,” and the “people pleaser.” These many faces of control provide a stepping-off point for readers to check and see if they fit into any of these categories.

“We compare our reality with the perception of someone else’s perfection,” states Ehman.

Throughout the book, Ehman provides rating scales, lists, an exercise in finding and replacing selfish thinking, guidelines for establishing a balance in the home, plus an inventory for women designed to rate their control tendencies in mothering and determine how controlling they are in situations. Ehman also gives

practical and humorous suggestions on how women can brainstorm ways to turn over some control to children, spouses and God, depending on the situation.

The book also addresses with numerous insights how women can “decide to stop deciding all the time,” as they go about getting in the groove with their groom. Early in the book, Ehman explains with great clarity that, “being responsible for so many other people and in charge of so many tasks can beckon us into the land of over-control.” She outlines four areas where women are most tempted to run the show at home instead of walking in faith.

Ehman provides readers with examples from her own life to emphasize the many ways women are wired to control. She also explains why over-controlling everything can not only be exhausting, but also cause friction with friends and family.

The title is available in soft cover, as an ebook, and in an audio edition. Visit www.zondervan.com for complete information.

Karen Ehman is the director of speakers for Proverbs 31 Ministries’ national speaking team. She is a five-time author and has appeared on the *700 Club*, *Engaging Women*, *The Harvest Show*, *Moody Midday Connection*, and *Focus on the Family*. She is also a contributor to *Focus on the Family’s Thriving Family*. She makes her home in central Michigan. •

The Muskegon farmers’ market Letter to the Editor:

There has been another group formed in downtown Muskegon through the Chamber of Commerce to move Muskegon’s farmers’ market from Yuba Street to Western and Terrace. The idea of this proposal is to create foot traffic for commerce in downtown Muskegon. In all the talk, I hear little mention of the farmers.

Moving a market to an area with less than half the parking and dealing with downtown summer events will be an epic failure, long-term. As it is now, many people who are not participating in festivals find ways to drive around them. People will need to walk for blocks to carry flats of plants and produce. They know this. That is the goal. What about the flea market on Wednesdays? Many people sell there, and that money is put back into the economy. It will be a short matter of time till the Chamber folks will view the flea market as beneath them.

So if they move the market and I am right, what will happen to our food chain? The farmers are left with an upscale market with limited customers, and then we all see a major jump in prices. All of this to move a market five blocks? Our market manager now has done a wonderful job. She has made our market self-sustaining and making money verses a yearly loss. I cannot say that about many others around the state.

We need to stop allowing a handful of people who are in a few offices to convince the public that our market is not good enough. It is good enough to be solvent, good enough for the farmers, and good enough for most of the customers. Take a stand and contact the City of Muskegon and let them know that it needs to stay on Yuba Street because our market manager and her success of keeping our market functioning and financially secure is not only good enough, it is wonderful.

Morning Bear

Downtown Muskegon Resident

Tobacco cessation support

(Submitted by Public Health-Muskegon County)

Public Health-Muskegon County and Community Mental Health are partnering with “1 in 21 Healthy Muskegon County” to get the word out about tobacco support resources for Muskegon County smokers resolved to quit or who are deciding to quit in 2013. *The Muskegon Community Health Project Tobacco Treatment Programs* brochure, which can be found at www.mchp.org, will provide a number of available programs locally, out of county, and free telephone and online cessation support that will assist a smoker in quitting.

Quitting smoking is the first step a smoker can take to improve his/her quality of life. After one day of quitting, your risk of heart attack starts to go down; after two days, your senses of taste and smell begin to return to normal; and after two weeks your lungs are working 30 percent better than before you quit. Smoking only causes diseases and cancers, so quitting smoking will not only improve your quality of life, but help you save money and will create a healthy smoke free environment for your family and those around you.

Looking back at the county health rankings for the year 2012, Muskegon County ranked 82nd out of 82 Michigan counties in health behaviors, with adult smoking rates at 26 percent compared to 21 percent for the state of Michigan and 14 percent for the national benchmark. The *County Health Rankings*, produced by the University of Wisconsin and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, helps counties understand what improvements can foster healthier place to live. These results promoted 1 in 21’s ambitious goal to make Muskegon County the healthiest county in Michigan by 2021.

The Michigan’s Smoke Free Air Law Public Act 188 and the Muskegon County Clean Indoor Air Regulation prohibition of smoking in public and private worksites and public places has not only positively impacted a non-smoker’s life, but can make it easier for smokers to quit. There’s no more cigarette smoke or smoking taking place in public places, helping reduce the cravings and triggers to smoke.

According to the County Health Ranking, adult smoking rates in Muskegon County are moving in the right direction. In the past three years, adult smoking has decreased by a total of five percent. In America, fewer than 21 percent of Americans were current cigarette smokers; and of those smokers, more than half wanted to quit, according to a 2008 national survey. •

How the Hostess Company is Being Split Up

Submitted by Karen Bergeman, Phoenix, Arizona, formerly of Fruitport

You may have heard that Hostess Bakery plants shut down due to a workers’ strike, but you may not have heard how it was split up: the State Department hired all the Twinkies, the Secret Service hired all the HoHos, the generals are sleeping with the Cupcakes and the voters sent all the Ding Dongs to Congress.