

Commentary

Tim Elfrink

Constructive criticism, not insult

Two weeks ago the *Prep News* printed a letter by junior Justin Austermann which criticized the diversity program and a perceived lack of true "cultural enrichment." The response by several individuals who did not agree with the letter serves as a perfect example of our inability to deal with criticism in a reasonable, constructive manner. Whether Austermann was correct in his opinion or not is beside the point; his letter was printed because it was well written and presented some valid arguments, while remaining non-confrontational.

However, two members of ACES, the program most responsible for the criticized diversity program, took personal offense to the contents of the letter and confronted Austermann at lunch. While this particular situation was remedied, this overreaction to

Austermann's opinion was furthered when he was compelled to spend the rest of his school day in the ACES office, defending his point of view to several members of the organization.

This response is an ideal illustration of our tendency as a community, perhaps even as a society, to view constructive criticism as a personal insult. We've all witnessed this on a lesser scale, when a teammate sulks after a coach offers advice on his play, or when a classmate refuses to learn from his mistakes on a test, choosing instead to believe that a teacher hates him. We would all benefit greatly if we learned to stop taking affront at helpful criticism and instead chose to learn from it.

Austermann's letter was not intended as an attack on anyone in the ACES club or on the club itself, and ACES should have taken the comments in stride and learned from them, or else voiced its disagreement with the letter in a more appropriate forum. The SLUH community should learn from this situation, and start dealing with criticism in a constructive manner; everyone benefits from this approach.

Tom Wyrwich

Junior bills they are

As I was washing some of the blue paint off my arms in the back of the clubhouse of Hughes Golf Course in Jefferson City, a runner from another school came up to use the hose for a drink. After I let him use the hose, he said to me, "You guys are awesome. Way to set the standard."

This guy thought that I was on the team. And after witnessing the complete group effort at State, I wish that I had been. Not since my Kairos retreat have I seen a group of SLUH students so closely bonded as this year's cross country team.

The closeness was evident even in the pre-race. Before the top seven runners went to the starting line, team members hugged goodbye and cheered as they left. Almost every JV and freshman runner was painted blue, along with spectating students and cross country alumni. The expanded, cross country version of the Blue Crew planned out their cheering strategy; what other team can boast a cheering strategy? Several sports have trouble getting

people to cheer in the first place. Before going up to the starting line to cheer on their runners, they started a series of cheers and prayed an Our Father.

Even more spectacular was the team's response during the race. As soon as the runners passed at the beginning, the team scurried to the one-mile split. The sight of all these blue students hurdling over ropes and dodging other spectators in order to cheer on their fellow runners was one of the most gratifying experiences of my life.

At the end of the race the group sped to the finish line and vigorously cheered the runners on as they made crucial passes that made the one-point victory possible.

And when they heard the final result, the whole team broke into a cheer of "We are Junior Bills!"

Then they ran out to the middle of the field and doused their beloved coach. Soon some of the top runners began to break into tears. And as the rest of the team began to console them, it was obvious: they definitely are Junior Bills.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Cross Country team members thank community, coaches

Dear Administration, Faculty, and Students,

The entire SLUH Cross Country team would like to express our deepest appreciation for the response we received in winning the State Championship. All of our hard work and dedication has paid off. Our coaches, Mr. Flanagan, Rob Behm, Pat Hamel, and Mr. Linhares are as responsible for this great honor as much as we the runners are. Mr. Linhares, this championship is a testament of

your love of the sport and your constant desire for us to achieve greatness. You have taught us to be great runners, but more importantly, you have taught us to be classy young men. We won this championship because of, and for, you.

Respectfully,

Members of the 1999 Cross Country Team.