

Not winning doesn't make you a loser

As I sat through a school honors program, watching dozens of scholarships being awarded, it occurred to me that it was a good lesson in capitalism. If you want the reward, you have to work for it.

Still, I have empathy for the young adults who had to sit there knowing that their pockets would still be empty at the end of the day. Hopefully, it will inspire them to work harder, or as they say, work smarter, not harder.

My empathy is not derived from some socialist ideal that everybody ought to be treated the same. I don't believe that. No, my heart sinks knowing that not everyone starts the

race from the same line, and some have significant hurdles in their lane.

Our education system, as flawed as it may be, does a pretty good job of identifying those students and their hurdles and trying to level the playing field — not by bringing anyone down but by lifting others up.

There are any number of reasons why some people lag behind and others sail. Learning disabilities, IQ, physical and mental health challenges, parental and familial influences, financial support, substance abuse, etc. Our attitudes and aptitudes are shaped by many factors.

Ramblin' Man

By David Porter



That's why I cringe when I hear things like, they just need to do this or that or another thing. It's not that simple.

But we can look around and see people who beat the odds and overcame their challenges to become successful, inspirational role models. Sometimes, their turning point didn't

come until after high school if they even finished high school.

So, if I had a million dollars, I would set up an award for those students. I would have one "either/or" criterion: you either demonstrate good character or you are a character.

Maybe you weren't an A student. Maybe you didn't ex-

cel in sports or the arts. Maybe you haven't found your groove yet and don't even know what you're good at. Or maybe what you're good at isn't measured by traditional norms.

But everybody does something eventually. Maybe your jam is rock 'n' roll, or racing cars, or telling jokes, or growing strawberries that you make into actual jam.

To be fair, there were a few scholarships that focus on the trades and some that don't focus as much on grades or college prospects. I just think there are quite a few people whose life trajectories could be greatly enhanced if they had a little boost.

My idea here is not a participation trophy. It's a message that everyone has value. Not winning a scholarship doesn't make you a loser.

But I don't have a million dollars, so I have nothing to offer. Sorry, kid; you're on your own. So use that. Use that self-determination to rise above it and show the world your value.

Your jam is sweeter when you make it yourself.

© Copyright 2026 by David Porter who can be reached at presseditor1@gmail.com. For some people, **not winning is the boost they need.**



Solomon the Wise set down a number of suggestions on how to rule effectively. He did this for the benefit of his chosen successor, who however did not prove to be an apt pupil. One of these suggestions advised the sovereign to know what was going on. Advisors have to be able to tell their leader about sensitive or difficult situations that, like it or not, the sovereign might have to deal with them.

Proverbs 11:14 says, "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety."

Unfortunately, our current president not only ignores advice, he even denies having received advice he has chosen to ignore. Such as that Iran might respond to being attacked by

closing the Strait of Hormuz. He ordered Operation Epic Fury anyway, then claimed he didn't know it might result in the Strait being closed.

Ten weeks later, the Strait of Hormuz is still closed. The latest will o' the wisp hope of restoring ship traffic in the Strait is a short-term "memorandum of understanding" which would lay out a framework for actual negotiations, and, significantly, formally end Operation Epic Fury. So there might be a 30-day window to make progress with negotiations while the backlog of ships wanting to transit the Strait (hopefully) gets cleared.

Unfortunately, the president keeps reverting to dire threats, like blowing Iran off the face of the earth. And decides to start

a new military operation ("Operation Freedom") without consulting our allies in the region. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait did not take kindly to being blindsided, and denied permission to use our bases on their territory to support the operation. That's why the president had to call a halt. He gave the phony excuse that he paused the operation because peace talks were going so well. Hopefully things got smoothed over with the Saudis and Kuwaitis.

And of course, the Administration didn't consult our allies, our Congress, or the public before launching Operation Epic Fury. I'll give the Admin a bye on not consulting Congress. But perhaps the DOJ could launch investigations of all our Republican U.S. Senators and Representatives for impersonating elected officials.

Meanwhile, fertilizer for our corn and soybean fields has gone wanting. Alas, plants have their own schedules, which we can't change. If you don't apply fertilizer at the right time, or

don't apply enough, yields will suffer. So this year, yields will likely be down.

Also meanwhile, the pump price for regular around here is pushing \$5 per gallon, diesel near six. If the short-term memorandum gets done, prices could start to head back down. It depends on what shipping company execs and maritime insurers think. And it wouldn't take much to spook them again.

The Administration and their lackeys have been dealing with this by telling fairy tales about gas being \$6 per gallon in 2024. Or that prices are coming down quickly now. Where? Not here. Secretary Hegseth has called "naysayers" in Congress the "biggest adversary" to the Admin's war and that their statements are "clouding the judgment" of the American people. He's lying, of course. Our elected representatives have been responding to their constituents. Besides not being consulted, folks are not happy about high gas prices, high grocery prices, low fertilizer supplies, etc. The

constantly shifting rationales for the war, and the lack of any prospect of things being any better than they were before we started the war, are also not being greeted with joy.

Even if hostilities recede enough for shipping operations to resume, our situation will be less good than it was before our president started the war. For one thing, we have drawn down our stocks of high-end attack and interceptor missiles. For another, we are drawing down the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to a level not seen since 1982, when we were only five years into accumulating the stockpile. In doing this, the president reversed his previous policy of building up the reserve — a policy I happened to agree with. And then there is the damage in relations with our allies.

Our Secretary of State just met with Pope Leo XIV at the Vatican. It seems our Great Leader's penchant for telling lies about what other people think or feel led to the meeting. The prez keeps falsely accusing

the Pope of "being fine with Iran having a nuclear weapon" even though the Church is against nuclear weapons, period. The Pope said, "If someone wants to criticize me for proclaiming the Gospel, let him do so truthfully." Ouch!

So Marco Rubio had his work cut out for him. Well, at least the meeting was "cordial." But it didn't accomplish anything other than an agreement to try to "maintain dialogue." The Vatican's statement on the meeting did not mention any areas of substantive agreement. Very unusual, that.

In theory, Rubio could tell his boss to quit telling lies to insult the Pope. If he did, though, his boss would deny having told lies, and maybe fire him. And so it is all around. The president keeps ignoring advice, saying stupid things, and making stupid decisions. There is no counsel. Nobody wants to give him advice because first, they know he won't take it, and second, if it's anything he doesn't want to hear, he will retaliate.

America 250 celebrations begin at the Tolono Public Library

This year, we are celebrating 250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence. This took place on July 4, 1776, but we have programs planned all summer long to celebrate the birth of our country.

This Tuesday, May 19, at 5:15 p.m., will be the second meeting of our Rebellion 1776 Teen Book Club. We are reading *Rebellion 1776* by Laurie Halse Anderson. If you missed the first meeting, don't worry! Still come and join us and be a part of the fun revolution-themed activities and discussions.

Our second program leading us into our America 250 celebrations will take place at Coffee Talk this week on

Wednesday, May 20 at 9 a.m. We are partnering with the Tolono Historical Society, which has invited Jane Faust of the Daughters of the American Revolution to come speak about the history of the bell and its significance to the American Revolution. The Historical Society invites you to bring your own bells of significance to the program for a bell show-and-tell after the discussion.

In addition to our patriotic celebrations, we are also excited to host the Crisis Nursery for their Cuddle and Connect program. Presented by the Crisis Nursery for pregnant moms and parents with infants under 24 months. The program is meant to pro-

vide support for each other through parenthood, focus on mental health and wellness, bonding with your baby, and connecting with

other parents. Topics include acts of self-care, helpful and unhelpful thoughts, thinking about baby's future, and more. This is a six-week

program beginning Tuesday, May 19 at 4 p.m., but registration is not required and feel free to bring your babies with you.

For information on all our upcoming programs, don't forget to visit our website at tolonolibrary.org/events. See you soon at the library!

Philo Public Library report

The first BYOB Book Club met on May 5. Dianne, our staff member who coordinated the BYOB, reported, "The first BYOB Book Club met on May 5; there were 7 of us. The group decided we will meet the first Tuesday of each month, from 6-7 p.m. (So mark your calendars for June 2, July 7 and August 4 for a start).. We had a great time getting to know each other and hearing about books. We each came away

with a long list to add to our individual reading lists. It was a very fun time!" We hope more will join the group in the coming months. If you have questions, call us (217) 684-2896.

Another event we hope you'll be interested in is on May 17 from 2-3 p.m. Ale' Hernandez, whose early education took place at St. Thomas school in Philo, and who earned his Parkland degree in Horticulture with another

in Agriculture coming soon, will be talking about gardening and helpful hints for you and your garden. At the end of his presentation, there will be a seed and plant exchange. Bring some unwanted plants or seeds and take some new varieties home. We hope to see you on May 17.

In all the events being planned, I forgot about our new books. Large Prints include "Five Star Summer" by

Sarah Morgan and "The Retirement Plan" by Sue Hincenbergs. There are also two new fiction "The Last Mandarin" by Louise Penny and Mellissa Fung and "The Library After Dark" by Ande Pliego.

Flyers about summer programming will be coming home from school next week. They will also be available to pick up at the Library's checkout desk. Thanks for reading. I'll be back next week with more.

Southern Champaign County
TODAY

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