

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:
Steven Asbury
MANAGING EDITOR:
Thom Schoenborn
NIGHT EDITOR:
Steven Asbury
EDITORIAL EDITORS:
Ashley Bach & Brian Diamond

OPINION

editorials, letters, commentary and perspective

NEWSROOM:
(541) 346-5511
DISPLAY ADVERTISING:
(541) 346-3712
BUSINESS OFFICE:
(541) 346-5512
CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING:
(541) 346-4343

Sex, Lies & Schools

OUR OPINION: Thurston High School principal dealt poorly with the alleged sexual misconduct of its faculty



Welcome to Thurston High School, a school with many claims to fame, including this one — it is now the sexual harassment capital of the Springfield School District. Over the last few months, a wave of sexual violations at Thurston has been exposed, leading to the termination of Thurston Principal Wayne Hill. In the wake of these allegations, many people have serious doubts as to how safe Thurston and other high schools really are.

BACKGROUND

- 1993:** Thurston wrestling coach Gary Bowden is accused of being involved with a sexual prank.
- 1994:** An assistant coach allegedly invites a Thurston student to his apartment, kisses and fondles her.
- April 1994:** Anne Gunningham, the a junior at Thurston High School, gives birth to a former assistant volleyball coach's child. The two are later married in September of 1996.
- Sept. 30, 1996:** Warren Weiseth, the Thurston volleyball coach, resigns in the face of allegations from seven former players who claim Weiseth sexually harassed them.
- Nov. 11, 1997:** Thurston Principal Wayne Hill and Athletic Director Dale Bachman are placed on administrative leave.
- Jan 11, 1997:** The Springfield School Board officially terminate Wayne Hill after holding a hearing on his role in the previous sexual incidents. They find him guilty of failing to investigate and properly deal with the sexual misconduct cases.

Weiseth resignation, Springfield School Superintendent Jamon Kent launched an investigation, which revealed a long history of sexual abuse and harassment. Kent's investigation uncovered several previous incidents, including an assistant volleyball

coach having sex with and impregnating an underage student, an assistant wrestling coach charged with inviting a student to his apartment and then asking for oral sex and an alleged sexual prank involving the head wrestling coach. In each case, Hill had dealt with the problem himself instead of reporting the incident to the proper authorities.

As the principal, Hill has certain responsibilities, not only to his students, but to the public as well. On the one hand, Hill did deal with each incident, but in many cases his actions were far from sufficient. In the case of the assistant wrestling coach, Hill simply gave a stern warning and told him to make sure there were no more incidents. By neglecting to look into the issue further, Hill allowed more incidents of sexual abuse to go on — many unreported until recently.

Hill has repeatedly argued that he was treated unfairly by the Springfield School District, and that if he had time to prepare more witnesses, he would have cleared his name. Unfortunately for Hill, it is too late for excuses. He has already allowed gross violations of student-teacher relations to go unchecked, and now is the time to pay up.

Hill was looking to protect the image of his school by sweeping these issues under the rug, and they ended up blowing up in his face.

The relationship between a teacher or coach and a student is one of trust. When teachers and coaches use their power for sexual purposes, that trust is shattered. Parents send their children to school with the belief that the school will protect them from incidents like those that happened at Thurston. Unfortunately, too often school officials are more concerned with protecting the image of their institution than future victims of sexual misconduct. When that happens, the safety of students is jeopardized and sexual violations are allowed to continue.

Sexual misconduct is never okay, but when it happens at a high school it is particularly disturbing. The problems Thurston is now dealing with may very well be typical of other high schools as well. We hope others will learn from Hill's mistakes and deal with the problem now. If not, it is inevitable that more Thurston scandals will arise and more Hills will end up terminated.

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board.

Overheard...

"Society is better served by protecting our cherished right to free speech, even at the cost of tolerating speech that is outrageous, offensive and de-meaning."

Federal Judge Shira Scheindlin, after refusing a ban on the sale of sexually explicit magazines on military bases.

"I apologized, but most people in the world would say he's acting."

Chicago Bulls forward Dennis Rodman, in reference to the cameraman he kicked in the groin during a game on Jan. 15.

"Dennis, I'm making a plea to you: Think about this with your guys. Other than just bringing attention to yourself, what's good for the game of basketball?"

NBA Hall of Famer Julius Erving to Rodman on "NBA on NBC" on Sunday.

"I felt that (if I accepted the money) I would be losing the beauty inside of me."

Mexico City cabby Manuel Lubian, after returning \$53,000 left by one of his passengers and refusing the reward.

Winners

President Clinton
After his inauguration on Monday, the prez is riding high.



Madeleine Albright

The first female secretary of state was approved by the Senate on Wednesday by a 99-0 margin.



Madonna

The newly-respected actress won a Golden Globe on Sunday for her performance in "Evita."



Lara Moore, Lyllye Parker, Marshall Saucedo, Chris Silva
All four University employees received Martin Luther King Jr. Awards on Wednesday "for demonstrating moral courage," among other things.

Losers

Dennis Rodman
After the Bulls forward kicked a cameraman, even his coach, Phil Jackson, said Rodman's time may be up.



Manny the Hippie

David Letterman's former sidekick was denied early release from an Ohio jail on Tuesday.



Newt Gingrich

The firm House reprimand of \$300,000 will be a lot to pay — even for a politician.



Todd Bridges

The former "Different Strokes" star was arrested again on Sunday — for assault with a deadly weapon.



America Online

The on-line service provider has been plagued by technical problems and user overload since implementing a \$19.95 monthly flat rate on Dec. 1.

