

RESPECT

By Tony Johnson

A recent story on the front page of the Peoria Journal Star caught my attention.

It seems that a research group called Public Agenda conducted a national survey about America's manners.

The results

"A full 79 percent of the adults surveyed said that a lack of respect and courtesy in American society is a serious problem."

Poor customer service, annoyingly loud people, aggressive drivers and foul language were some of the examples cited.

But I didn't need a national survey to tell me about the lack of respect. I see it everyday here in Peoria. One particular example sticks in my mind.

On almost any given Friday night during the fall, you'll find me taking in a local high school football game. But on this particular Friday, I was especially focused on respect.

You see, this was the first game after the tragic events of September 11th. As the marching band took the field, three young people gently started to raise the American flag to its position on the post in the end zone.

As the band started to play the National Anthem, I grasped the hands of my family, closed my eyes, and began to tear up. As my watery eyes opened, my blood boiled at the site that I was witnessing.

Several people, including students and adults, paid no attention to the ceremony that was underway. They continued their casual strolls along the bleachers. They continued their loud, trivial conversations. And at one point, one young male high school student even had the nerve to shout out an obscenity.

Now, I don't know about you, but I was taught at a very young age that when the National Anthem plays, you stop, put your hand over your heart and you shut up!

To me, this is a pretty simple, basic and mandatory form of respect.

Unfortunately, this type of example isn't just an isolated case. Next time you're at a sporting event, take a look around during the National Anthem. I'm sure you'll see what I'm talking about.

The Journal Star story caught my attention because I have long emphasized to students in "Treasure Life" that respect is a dying virtue in today's society.

In the "Treasure Life" program, I challenge students to show respect to parents, teachers, peers, elders and to themselves.

Being respectful often means that one must think of others first; which seems to be harder and harder for today's "I" society to do.

Students must understand what respect is and adults must be role models in being respectful.

Remember, "Treasure Life ... Everyday!"



Quote to remember:

"Respect is love in plain clothes"
- Frankie Byrne -

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"Treasure Life" is a positive life message created by Caterpillar manager and Peoria Pirates coach, Tony Johnson. The program encourages students to be "pirates" by filling their "treasure" chests each day with some of life's most valuable traits, values and experiences. The "Treasure Life" program has been recognized as one of the Arena Football League's best community relations program.