



helping today. building hope for tomorrow

**Friends of  
South End Community Outreach Ministries (SECOM)  
Newsletter  
July 12, 2010**

Dear Friend,

"Moral disorders comes from bad education ..."

Ivan Turgenev

*"Fathers and Sons"*

Education is on my mind again. No surprise since the State education department recently gave their school rankings and the schools closest to SECOM scored near the bottom. Here's the link to the story in the GR Press: [bit.ly/95XBII](http://bit.ly/95XBII)

At the end of the article are the school rankings. Buchanan Elementary gets a score of 13.4 compared to Burton Elementary at 7.1 and Burton Middle at 5.3. None at the bottom, but the scores don't inspire confidence in hopes of a bright future for many of the children in these schools.

Then I read an opinion piece comparing the Kalamazoo Promise program versus the charter school/voucher system which is supported in Grand Rapids. Here's that article: [bit.ly/c6zadd](http://bit.ly/c6zadd). Note the comments at the end of this piece. It is a contentious subject and plenty of opinions on whose to blame for high drop out rates and low test scores.

I'll take the easy way out and not point a finger at anyone. I'll blame poverty. Children from impoverished homes simply do not have exposure to the same experiences as children from working and professional class families. Cultural events, museums and libraries present a vast array of learning opportunities that children from low income homes experience much less frequently, if at all, than other children.

Going to the symphony may not have endeared my parents to me, but it did broaden my horizons. Merely broadening my horizons gave me a point reference for comparison with other activities and the ability to have an informed discussion. How do children with no point of reference know what questions to ask in school or what might be of interest to them. Yes we all have obstacles to success, but in today's world any additional obstacles can seal a child's fate.

It was disturbing to hear recently that the government projects the number of prison cells that will be needed based on school test scores. Low test scores lead to high drop out rates which leads to high unemployment and ultimately higher crime rates.

So by virtue of the geographic area in which a person is born and raised the likelihood of them spending time in prison is determined.

As unfair as that may seem, we can take comfort in the fact that there are many people in the community that are aware of the situation and are taking action. The solution to the problem may be up for debate, but ultimately it's poverty that is getting in the way of our community's ability to progress.

These may be dark times in the economy, but due to the vision, hard work and philanthropy of so many in the community there are reasons to be optimistic that better times will come. SECOM's goal to have everyone participate in those better times.

Thank you for helping to supply the optimism.

Best Regards,

Robert Heys  
Development Director

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