

Opinion

OUR VIEWS

A step in the right direction

Last week CVS Caremark announced that it plans to stop selling cigarettes and other tobacco products in all of its drugstores by October, including those in Nassau County.

"We came to the decision that cigarettes and providing health care just don't go together in the same setting," said Larry Merlo, chief executive of CVS. Better late than never.

"We have about 26,000 pharmacists and nurse practitioners helping patients manage chronic problems like high cholesterol, high blood pressure and heart disease, all of which are linked to smoking," Merlo said.

For years we have called on the pharmacies on Long Island, including Walgreens and Walmart, to stop selling any product containing nicotine.

In some of the stores the cigarettes, which now cost more than \$10 a pack, are sold behind the counter right next to expensive products designed to help shoppers break and addiction to smoking.

Here's an idea for stores that still sell tobacco: 25 percent off a box of Nicorette with every carton of cigarettes sold.

The campaigns by the Heart Association and others to publicize the dangers of smoking have been both commendable and impressive. Their disturbing commercials show people barely able to breathe, dying of lung and heart disease and cancer.

They don't appear to be effective. The people who smoke have seen the commercials. They know how dangerous smoking is. They don't care. They're addicted.

The drugstores say they exist to keep your family healthy – some stores on the island now have nurse practitioners and offer flu and other vaccinations – and it is inconsistent with their statement of purpose to be selling a product so detrimental to the health of their customers.

Some critics of the announcement by CVS note that its stores will continue to sell candy, chips and Red Bull. While it's true that all of these things can be and often are harmful to the users' health, they can be enjoyed safely in moderation. That's not true for nicotine.

And no one's health will be affected if someone drinks a can of soda and eats a bag of chips in the same room.

CVS estimates that its decision will result in a \$2 billion loss in sales each year. But the profit margin on cigarettes is far less than any other product that it sells because of the large amount that goes to federal and state taxes. And at a time when the major pharmacies are trying to position themselves as "health-care providers" concerned about your family, this move that made news across the nation was brilliant public relations.

We urge Walgreens, which has the largest number of drugstores in the nation, Walmart, Duane Reade and others to follow the example set by CVS or face a public relations disaster.

But it shouldn't stop there. Pressure should be put on 7-Eleven and other convenience stores to get rid of the cigarettes.

None of this will stop everyone from smoking. Nor will it stop smokers from dying of lung disease and cancer.

But hopefully it will reinforce the message that smoking cigarettes is a deadly habit.

At the very least, the CVS announcement was a big step in the right direction.

Printing documents in Spanish hurts Latinos

READERS WRITE

At one point in my life I was general manager of a company that employed some one hundred people most of whom were Latinos. Very few spoke English.

Six who spoke English were in management positions.

On occasions when I spoke to any group of employees I would ask (through an interpreter) if they noticed that their most successful friends spoke English. I attempted to encourage employees to learn English.

Logically it would seem that our government would promote this too.

However the reverse seems to be true. We are educating them in their own language; providing them with Spanish speakers with free legal help; printing documents in Spanish; and letting them take drivers license tests in Spanish even though they cannot read the roadside signs; also providing public assistance as they are unable to compete without knowledge of English; and much more.

All this ostensibly designed

to assist them but in effect retarding any transition into English.

Prior to the Latino influx there were other numerous huge waves of immigrants to our country. To what extent did our government at any level attempt to assist them, The answer is none.

Yet those groups quickly learned English if not the incoming immigrants themselves certainly their children did. Why? Because there was no option.

It is well known too that total immersion in a new language is the best way to learn that language. No ESL (English as a Second Language). No help whatsoever.

As a nation becomes prosperous it finds itself with the problem that there is no one left or wants to do the menial work so they bring in people to perform these jobs such as sanitation, lawn care, dish washing, ditch digging etc.

There is hardly a nation in Europe that does not allow some

form of immigration. That is what America does tho the government would rather refer to it as "illegal entry into the USA".

Don't tell me that it is impossible to seal the borders. Or really do we want to? If we keep the majority of them unable to participate in the great American dream, perhaps we can permanently keep them to do the menial labor. In effect perpetuating a sort of slave class.

Latinos who do speak English are in a position of power which rests on the fact that many Latinos do not speak English. They are the link between.

I have never yet heard an English speaking Latino politician or businessman meaningfully encourage their kind to learn English.

Why should they.

Am I being overly cynical? I don't think so.

Perhaps someone could convince me otherwise.

Theodore Theodorsen
Manhasset

Great Neck Plaza wrong to raise taxes and salaries

I think [Village of Great Neck Plaza] Mayor Jean Celender's plan to raise real estate taxes, while at the same time giving pay increases to elected officials

in her administration is wrong.

This is not the time to do either, much less both. One has only to look at the empty stores in Great Neck Village Plaza to agree.

It's time to rethink that decision.

Tom Jones
Great Neck

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OF

Williston Times • Great Neck News
Herald Courier • Roslyn Times
Manhasset Times