

Recruiting Topsfield's youth

It looks like the Coalition for Neighborhood Information could be recruiting Proctor Elementary students to join its campaign against plans to build a rail trail behind the Main Street school.



**OFF
DEADLINE**
BY DAVID
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I received two unsigned letters last week from sixth-graders. Both letters were typed, came in the same stationary and the envelopes were affixed with the same postage stamp. While they vary in length, they start off eerily the same.

You be the judge...

• "Don't you hate that feeling

when someone is watching you? Imagine if you had to live with it. Some citizens of Topsfield will feel this everyday if we go through with the project Rails for Trails."

Here's the second one:

• "Wouldn't you hate to get woken up in the morning because cyclers were chatting and kids were screaming? Hearing this first thing in the morning would certainly irritate me."

I have a hard time believing two sixth-graders wrote these letters independently. What's more likely is they were coaxed, prodded or encouraged to write the letters by adults. Sadly, there wasn't a return address on either of the letters so I have no actual proof who wrote them.

I would have had more respect for those responsible for the let-

ters had they signed their names. It takes guts to make your opinion known, but none to simply mail an anonymous letter or two. I probably would have taken their concerns more seriously. But instead, these sixth-graders come across looking like pawns involved in the machinations of adults who are unhappy with what's going in their backyards.

If the coalition is behind the letters, they are addressing their concerns in a manner that doesn't do their message justice. The coalition, led by Bob and Cathy Morgan, have brought up several valid and important points regarding the Rail Trail Committee's plans to build a recreational path where a former railroad used to run. The first stretch would be built in the downtown area behind the ele-

mentary school and near residential homes on Washington Street.

It's too bad I can't do anything with the letters other than to criticize them for it would have been much more beneficial to print them in the paper. Unfortunately, those in favor of the rail trail can expect similar scare tactics in the coming weeks and months. The coalition's recent tactics reminds me of Hilary Clinton's "3 a.m. phone call" advertisement. Her television message, which ran in the days before the Ohio and Texas primaries, effectively damaged rival Sen. Barack Obama's credibility when it came to foreign affairs experience. Clinton won both primaries although she was unable to cut into Obama's delegate lead.

Back in Topsfield, I offer this

proposal: If the real authors of these letters would like to resend them with your names at the bottom and a phone number where I can reach you, then I

would be more than happy to print them.

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