

The Salem Leader
Educationally Speaking
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Rah. Spring is here. Whoopteedoo.

Spring is officially here. That means the neighbor children have re-invaded my yard and setup camp. Avid readers of my column will know that late last summer when I moved into my new home I had a problem with neighborhood kids congregating in my backyard. The problem stems from the fact that my backyard juts up against another person's backyard and the result is the largest, open space around. Thus, footballs and soccer balls are everywhere.

Like last time, I was sitting in my home watching a movie when I heard a loud thump outside. I got up off the couch to see that it was four young boys kicking a soccer ball. I noticed damaged siding on the house that backs up against my property and continued watching the kids. I asked my roommate Mitch to come take a look, too. He agreed with me that the obvious markings on the back of the other house weren't there earlier that day. I had just been in the backyard planting arborvitae trees and would have noticed something like cracks of that size, too.

Our continued watching led us to witness the soccer ball scuff up against the side of the other house four more times. Normally, Mitch is the softy and always asks that I let the kids play. His argument is that it's better for them to playing ball in my backyard than for them to be doing something illegal somewhere else. I suppose that's an okay argument but I've always argued that the damage they could do to my new house outweighed my concerns. For all I care they can go off and smoke as much of anything they want so long as I can watch my movie in peace. Plus, if they're off drinking or smoking something they ought to be inside a building other than my house.

This time, however, they broke the straw on Justin's back. I immediately called the Indianapolis Police (remember, I put their phone number in my phone's contact list a few months ago). This time they remembered my name and sent an IMPD cruiser racing around the corner with lights and sirens blaring. This, of course, draws the attention of the neighbors.

I, turning into a crotchety old man, stood over them as the police officer observed the damage, made a report and took their names and numbers. We learned that since the home that was damaged was for sale it would be up to whoever the current owner was to take further action. But, since then, my backyard has been childfree. They now play in the *other* neighbor's *front* lawn and I have a certain soccer ball sitting in my closet.

Furthermore, since it's spring that means potholes the size of my head. So far this year I've lost one hubcap and spilled tea in my lap while driving because of potholes. I don't every want to hear anyone ever say Washington County has problems patching potholes because they don't. I've driven the roads in Washington County lately and they're darn near perfect. The streets in Indianapolis are in shambles so much so local news media has reported the Mayor's Office has received over 2,600 phone calls in February about potholes. I'm proud to say that my phone calls accounted for two of those calls. Like the police department, the Mayor's Office has a special spot in my cell phone's contact list, too.

Armed with my cell phone, I call and report every single pothole I hit on my commute home from work every evening. I'm elated to report that Southeastern Avenue has, by my count, had 16 pothole repairs in the past two weeks. I still see dozens of cars everyday missing hubcaps and swerving. Evidently, more work is to be done.

Alas, I've claimed two small victories in the past few weeks. With my crotchety-old-man-ness and increasing irritability with age, I'll have this State whipped into shape in about six months. Mayor Bower, if you *do* see a pothole on your way to work you'd better call someone to fix it. If I find it, you'll be the first person I call. Hubcaps for my new VW Beetle cost fifty bucks a pop, you know.

As spring continues to blossom I'll just sit back and wait to start sneezing and dripping with allergies.