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Island Forum | Setting the tone for respect at South-end businesses

By [CONNIE CLARK-REDMOND](#)
Mercer Island Reporter Contributor
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As many of you know, South-end businesses need help with the difficulty posed by the 100+ middle school-aged youth hanging out in the parking lot and the businesses. The students are sometimes there from the end of the school day to 5 p.m., 6 p.m. and sometimes as late as 7 p.m. on Monday and Friday afternoons.

Middle school-aged youth need unstructured time to be with their friends. The businesses welcome those youth who are respectful and well-behaved. Most of the youth fall into this category, though not all youth. Several youth have blocked aisles, had sword fights with mops, opened and used products, spilled drinks or thrown food and have even stood on tables. When asked to leave the premises, youth have ignored staff or returned shortly after leaving the building.

The main concern of the South-end businesses is the safety of the youth and other customers. Too often, employees hear screeches as a car brakes to avoid hitting a youth running, skating or biking between cars. Some customers will not shop there when they see the abundance of youth.

Help set a new tone for this change:

- Say ‘hi’ to the kids: When you are at the South end, greet and acknowledge youth; they are great kids who might need to be reminded that Mercer Island is a small community where there is probably only a “degree or two” separating parents.

- Chaperone: Accompany your middle school child to the South-end business; no middle schooler should hang out for one, two or three hours. It is often the actions of other youth or the ‘mob mentality’ that can set in and turn a situation sour.
- Compliment or discourage: Compliment youth who are helpful, cooperative and acting in the myriad of positive ways that they are capable of. If you see youth behavior that is not positive social behavior, say something and re-direct the youth. We all play a role in stopping anti-social behavior that might hurt another person or destroy property.
- Support the businesses: Tell your children your expectations for their behavior when they are out alone in public — review respect, appropriate behavior and not joining in with other youths’ inappropriate actions.

Signs will soon be posted at the South-end businesses informing youth that stores welcome positive and cooperative behavior. Management will ask those who are disrespectful or ignore management’s requests to leave. These youth will not be welcomed back until they and their parents meet with a store manager.

Please join with concerned parents, the businesses and the PTA to encourage our youth and to hold high expectations for their behavior. The South-end businesses, in turn, will remain a positive and safe place for youth to socialize and relax after school and through the summer.

Mike Cero has three children and is a member of the Mercer Island City Council. Parent Connie Clark-Redmond is the president of the Islander Middle School PTA.

Find this article at:

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