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Choices...

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Education

Getting an education is another critical choice with which a young person is faced. Following graduation from high school a student may think he/she does not need to attend college or technical institution. Maybe school has been boring, or difficult, or perhaps the family is not one that sets goals and the young person doesn't see the need for more education. Or maybe he just decides to procrastinate; after all, there is always time later for college.

A 2005 study by College Board¹ produced the following statistics (among many others):

- In 2003, the typical full-time year-round worker in the United States with a four-year college degree earned \$49,900 - 62 percent more than the \$30,800 earned by the typical full-time year-round worker with only a high school diploma.
- Those with master's degrees earned almost twice as much, and those with professional degrees earned over three times as much per year as high school graduates.

she listened to a man who yelled to City Council members that they didn't understand what it was like to be raised in an underprivileged neighborhood, to have to eat government subsidized cheese, that not having a job is the reason people sell drugs and commit murders.

Judith stood in the meeting and refuted the man's assertions. She was raised in the Durkeeville projects, she grew up eating government subsidized cheese, but not once in her life did it enter her mind to go out and buy or sell drugs, much less take a gun and kill someone. Despite a financially disadvantaged childhood, she finished school (which is the privilege of every child in America), got a job and worked her way up to become vice president of a call center in one of the nation's largest financial institutions.

Additionally, Judith is dyslexic, making it difficult to read and spell, but her mother worked diligently with her, got her involved at an early age with Toastmasters (a nonprofit educational organization that helps members improve their communication, public speaking and leadership skills), and today she is president of a local Toastmasters chapter. How different her life might be today had her parents succumbed to a mindset of indifference or defeat, or blamed the government for their economic status and expected to be supported accordingly; instead, they opted to overcome challenges with positive goals and actions.



Perhaps equally as important as earning more money, however, is what Abraham Maslow defined in his Hierarchy of Needs as esteem and self-actualization. (See graphic.) After our physiological needs are met, we seek satisfaction by realizing our potential, developing our talents and gaining respect.

We often read about thugs who say they shot someone, or committed some other crime, because the victim "disrespected" them. How misguided these individuals are, their concept of respect shaped by their - and possibly their parents' - poor choices. For whether we like it or not, our choices affect others around us, especially our children. What far-reaching actions do we set in place by how we react to life's situations?

To me, Judith Chapple exemplifies the result of positive choices - those made by her parents, and subsequently by her. She speaks her mind when blame is placed on everyone but those responsible. A few years ago

The subject of choices is a broad one and we will address different aspects in future issues of the Victims' Advocate. As this edition goes to press, we're all still reeling over the inexplicable murder of Makia Coney by two of her classmates. What choices did those two young men make earlier in their lives that led to this heinous crime? And if Jarred Harrell (arrested in Mississippi for pornography and named as a "person of interest" in the murder of Somer Thompson) is found to be responsible for that crime, what fostered such a horrendous deed? How does one get to a point that he can brutally take the life of another human being, especially a child? What was the first choice that started the awful chain of events?

What is your opinion? Write and let us know your thoughts on the subject.

¹ http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/press/cost05/education_pays_05.pdf

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