

LETTERS

Dear editor,

I can think of no greater sadness than the loss of a child. Many will think that I am extremely crass for writing this and if they don't see the real message in it, that can be considered a sadness in itself.

Over the past 45 years I have resided in New Mexico, I have seen too many incidents where children between the ages of 2 and 11 have been left to fend for themselves in busy parking lots while their parents and caregivers walk to their destinations without even glancing in the direction of their children.

Parking lots are already chaotic as people attempt to get to an unoccupied parking space or get out of parking spaces without hitting a car racing to get to an empty space. In the case of the accident at Lea Lake reported June 3 in the RDR, an outing at Lea Lake is a very chaotic time when people are thinking only of getting to or from a place of fun and frolicking in the sun or sand and water at the beach, and therefore not watching or anticipating the movements of others with the sole desire of getting onto the beach or in the water.

If fault or blame can be placed in such a situation, it cannot be placed on the 15-year-old girl who drove the SUV, but on a society that allows children to wander more than six inches away from their parent or caretaker.

No driver, at any age, can see a toddler in front of or

in back of a motor vehicle. From when my stepson was toddler to 11 years old, he was at my side. My hand was either holding his or was at his shoulder guiding him through parking lots or crossing busy streets or intersections. Some may have thought I was too cautious, but I believe that it is partly why he will be celebrating his 50th birthday in 2016. I had nieces and nephews whom I helped care for when I was a teen. I also had them in hand when we were away from home on shopping trips, etc. My parents emphasized the importance of taking care of "little ones" when they were at their most vulnerable, crowded places, parking lots, city streets, etc., because their minds were not fully developed enough to appreciate the dangers in their surroundings.

When I was a child, standard-sized automobiles were almost the size of today's SUVs and there were many 5-foot-tall people who were barely visible over the hoods of those cars. My eldest sister stood 4-foot, 11-inches at her tallest and is now 4-foot, 9-inches in her senior years. I am the tallest in my family at 5-foot, 8 ½-inches and remember watching over my younger brother who was always a head shorter. If you have more than two in tow, use a shopping cart and teach each to never let go of it (you can tell them that they are helping to push a heavy cart). I have also watched older children holding their

younger siblings' hands and staying very close (within the 6 inch margin) to their parents, and I commend those parents for their teachings of responsibility.

I guess what I want to say, on this saddest occasion is this: We as a society need to speak up when we see "un-tethered" children wandering through parking lots more than 6 inches from their parents. And, to the parents of those children, "Don't be offended by someone reminding you to watch your child." They are trying to help keep you from suffering a devastating loss. And, to the person speaking up, it can be done with a modicum of consideration and polite nudging no matter how angry you may be to see what you perceive as irresponsible behavior.

One last thought. You can be angry with me and keep talking among yourselves about my crassness because if you get my message and remember it, maybe we can help keep others from these needless devastations. My heartfelt condolences go to the 15-year-old girl because she will suffer most throughout her life.

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