

CHEYENNE HERALD

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the local advocacy journal

Adults are also unwelcome at the Mall. Who will spend money there when their children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews and other youth of Cheyenne have been banned?

Frontier Mall is no Mall of America.

To use the Minnesota MegaMall as a comparison when issuing an edict to ban youngsters from Frontier Mall on Friday and Saturday nights is a stretch. The situation in Bloomington, Minnesota is totally different from the one here. And to use that Mall as a model for rules and regulations in Cheyenne makes no sense.

Cheyenne's only enclosed shopping mall is mediocre at best, poor at worst. The retail store selection leaves much to be desired, unless you're shopping for athletic shoes or cell phones.

It is important to remember that the anchor stores are not part of the Mall. They are separately owned and are attached to but not owned by Frontier Mall (CBL).

The ban on our youth does not apply to Sears, J.C. Penney, Dillard's or the Sports Authority. And even the Mall mismanagement is not crazy enough to ban youngsters from the movie theaters.

This ban is very much like curfews on young people. Curfews only negatively affect those who we do not have to control with a curfew. This Mall ban will only affect those young citizens we'd be proud to have in our malls, our schools, our churches and our homes.

What percentage of Cheyenne's youth do you think deserves to be banned from any place of business? Ten percent? Five percent? Two percent? Why would a struggling, inferior mall want to keep anyone out of their building? *Anyone?*

It is up to every retail environs to provide the necessary security to protect its own interests and the safety of its consumers. And this particular mall is more of an indoor walking path than a shopping center. A "ban" on an age group would just as easily be extended to race, religion and nationality if they could get away with it.

This ban discourages - prohibits - high school upperclassmen from Pine Bluffs, Burns or Albin from carpooling into Cheyenne for a night of shopping, dining and the movies. Many of our most exemplary citizens have not reached majority age.

And this mall doesn't want their patronage? No wonder it remains a pathetic pretender of a "regional mall."

Mall officials justify this draconian action by pointing out that they've had problems with unescorted teenagers at the Mall. Of course they have. As has Boulder and every other city with an enclosed mall in the United States. Solutions should not include banning certain age groups.

The ban means that a 19 year old Airman cannot take his 17 year old Honors Society girlfriend to the mall to buy her a BlackBerry or a friendship ring and then a snack at Taco John's. And it means that a 20 year-old college junior cannot take his 16 year-old sister or brother to the mall to buy them a birthday gift.

There is no denying that a bad element may "hang out" at a mall. But that doesn't mean that the good kids should be banned because the Mall is incapable of securing its own property.

For those who criticize parents for "dropping" off their children at the Mall - any Mall - and allowing them to stay there unattended until they return for them later (that obviously also happens during the day on Saturday and Sunday, when the ban does not apply). If Frontier Mall management does not want young people as customers, they should say so. Do they think a banned 17 year-old will be a customer when they turn 21? To ban them at times most practical for them to come the Mall is cowardly and foolish.

If you have a 16 or 17 year-old, and you allow them to be at the Mall with their peers because you trust them to behave themselves and they know if they don't, that privilege will be revoked, that is your call as a parent.

Walking around the Mall or sitting on a bench in the Mall or having a snack at the Mall - any of those activities are a helluva lot more comforting for parents than their teenage children being out in a car, either driving around to kill time or parked somewhere. In an enclosed Mall, a parent doesn't have to be [as] concerned about drug or alcohol use or other bad conduct - inappropriate behavior that

could lead to becoming a parent.

To some adults, laughing and fooling around at a Mall is distasteful. It has always puzzled me how they skipped childhood. They never did that? One of the best lines I've ever heard, when referring to children, is "they are not short adults."

Granted, they can be exasperating and the foul mouths on some of the kids is pretty disgusting. But, you know what? If I had to choose between a kid who uses coarse language and another who will get involved with illegal drugs or even drink alcohol at a young age, I'll take the one with the foul mouth. I think parents and other adults have a much better chance of correcting that behavior than getting a kid off drugs once they experiment.

If the Mall doesn't want the kids, that is their call. But adults have to take a stand, too. To allow any group of people, in this case, mall management, to disparage all citizens 18 or under because of the behavior of some, is just unacceptable.

I, for one, do not need Frontier Mall. I have attended, I think, two movies at the theater there in 23 years and now with another modern theater, it is easy for the students, parents, grandparents, etc., to go to the theater behind the former Ward's on Pershing. Or to Cole or Lincoln.

Even though the ban doesn't apply to the theaters or the "anchor" stores, patrons have to stoke those store's outrage and support to have the ban lifted. If it takes money for the Mall to provide the necessary level of security so bans aren't necessary, those larger businesses have to be called upon to contribute to that cost.

I can shop over the internet for anything I would buy from Sears or Penney's. Dillard's is not my style. And I'm not into hunting, fishing, etc., so I can do without the Sports Authority. We just got new cell phones and a new contract so we don't need the Mall for any of *those* stores.

But the ban *could* adversely affect the business of several Mall retailers. Kohl's can fill the gap for many products but there are still some items that can only be found in the Mall, poor as that selection is.

Will adults who support this ban pick up the sales slack? No way. Most of them are just "anti-kids" with none of their own. And they want to believe the worst about kids. Hell, kids are no worse now than they were a generation ago, or two generations ago, or three generations back. Each was going to cause the ruination of society and each generation's behavior was supposed to have been more abominable than the one before. Hog wash.

The problem in the Mall is not just poorly-behaved youth, it is incompetent Mall supervision and management. Certainly, parents can share some of the blame. There are bad kids and there are indifferent parents. But the vast majority of today's kids are good - they are at least as good as those who now label them incorrigible, foul, bad-mannered and worse.

Unlike the Wyoming Tribune-Eagle, I do not risk losing ad revenue by criticizing this decision by Frontier Mall management. I oppose it, the WT-E can't.

I spent my career before starting the Cheyenne Herald in and around the retail trade. The one thing I never tried to do was keep away customers. Of course, we had shoplifters and parents who did not control their children. I would never allow "No drink or food in the store" signs. I didn't care if customers brought a gallon jug of Coke or a Big Mac into our stores, I just didn't want them to spill it. Treating everyone as you treat the worst behaved will destroy a retail store and bring down a shopping mall. A better sign is: "Please enjoy your drink or food in our store. Please be careful with it."

What the Mall has done is invite retaliation by adults. And that is exactly what needs to happen to reverse this ban on our best and brightest - our youth.

Recruiting offices (in Malls) encourage 17 year-old high school juniors and seniors to enlist in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard when they graduate. And be willing to give their lives to protect our freedoms. But they cannot walk out of a recruiters office into this Mall at 7:00 pm on Friday night? I will not darken Frontier Mall hallways or interior while such a ban is in place.

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