

Letter to the editor: There's a better way to deal with teens in Park Ridge

Laura Smail | Submitted

July 23 5:20 p.m.

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Apparently there are residents who feel they may need to 'wear helmets, carry baseball bats and have 911 on speed dial' in order to contend with the influx of teens over the summer. It is this kind of fear and antagonistic attitude that continues to put a wedge between adults and teens. As a social worker experienced with working with teens, I feel compelled to suggest some other options. A teen brain is not fully developed enough for judgement, impulse control and social skills that ready them for appropriate behavior in all social situations. Adults should model, instill and remind them of what is and is not socially acceptable and I strongly urge all of us to maintain our composure and take steps to interact with teens that is not demeaning or provoking. We share space and must find a way to communicate because as the old saying goes, you attract more flies with honey than with vinegar.

The police are not babysitters and therefore, should not be spending hours shooing teens from the streets of Park Ridge, but holding them accountable for violations. Parents and other adults, including business owners, should be learning and demonstrating effective ways to engage, interact and encourage teens to make good choices and meet expectations for civil behavior. Reach out to other parents and create relationships that support each other during the more treacherous parenting years. I have said to my friends that if they see my sons or daughter, to please inform me on the good and bad behavior and I will do the same for them.

Laura Smail

Park Ridge