

February 19, 2024

Dear Community Partners,

As I mentioned in the last letter election season is upon us. You might want to mark your calendars for a couple of upcoming dates. The Presidential Preference Primary will be March 12th. Early voting is February 19th through March 8th. Then on May 21st there is the General Primary that includes all of our county positions. Early voting is April 28th through May 17th. There will be no presidential candidates on the May 21st ballot.

The 15th Annual Taste of Chocolate, hosted by the GFWC West Georgia Woman's Club and the GFWC Georgia Bremen Junior Woman's Club, will be Saturday, March 2nd from 1:00-3:00 p.m. at Sewell Mill. Tickets and sponsorships are available. Proceeds will benefit Ferst Readers, the Haralson County My Turn Adaptive Ball Field and other local projects. For information please call 770-289-2943 or 770-880-0162.

When I was a child I loved books, and I loved cuddling in my mother's lap to have her read them to me. One of my favorites was a collection of tales by Hans Christian Anderson. It was a big, hard-to-hold book, but a wee one could tussle with it and flip the beautifully illustrated pages to find The Little Mermaid, Thumbelina and The Ugly Duckling. There was another story there that I thought to be more peculiar than the others. It was called The Emperor's New Clothes. I guess I never quite "got it" until many years later. Recently it has come to my mind many times.

In case you don't remember the story, there was a vain emperor who was obsessively fond of his clothes. He cared nothing about anything but what he wore. One day two weavers came to town that were swindlers. They proclaimed that they could weave the most magnificent fabrics imaginable. Furthermore, clothes made of their cloth had a way of becoming invisible to anyone who was unfit for his job or, to use Anderson's term "unusually stupid." The Emperor concluded that those clothes would make him able to tell the wise from the foolish. He paid the swindlers a large sum of money, and they went to "work." Although there was nothing on the looms, they pretended to weave far into the night.

The Emperor wondered how the weavers were getting along with the special cloth. The whole town knew about the cloth's peculiar power. Townsfolk were eager to see which of their neighbors were foolish. The Emperor wanted to look, but he was apprehensive about the possibility that he would not see the fabric and be deemed unfit for his position. So he decided to send the minister. When the minister looked at the looms his eyes flew wide open! He couldn't see anything, but he wouldn't say so. He responded, "Oh! It is beautiful! It's enchanting! What colors!" So the swindlers asked for more money. And the Emperor sent more people to look. They saw nothing because there was nothing to see, but no one dared admit that he saw nothing. The

weavers worked harder than ever. Finally the Emperor went in to see, but he too wouldn't dare say that he saw nothing. Everyone joined the Emperor in saying, "Oh! How wonderful!" The people even advised the Emperor to wear the clothes made from this incredible cloth in a great procession he would soon lead. The swindlers appeared to work diligently. The Emperor gave each of them the title "Sir Weaver." They helped dress the Emperor for the great procession by raising their arms as if they were holding garments and helping him slip into his non-existent clothes. The great procession began. I remember well the illustrative artwork of the Emperor in procession in my childhood storybook. I would gaze in amazement at a pudgy little man with a crown on his head, nose in the air, strutting down a crowded street—in his underwear. The crowd shouted, "How fine are the Emperor's new clothes! See his long train!" And nobody would confess that he couldn't see anything, even though there was nothing to see because someone said that would prove him or her to be a fool.

In the end a child shouted, "But he hasn't got anything on!" At first his father was embarrassed, but then the whole town joined in the cry of truth at last. The Emperor shivered, suspecting that they were right, but he thought the procession needed to go on. So he walked more proudly than ever as his "noblemen held high the train that was not there at all." Since the early 1800's the story has been translated into over a hundred languages.

How many lessons can we learn from this tale? We live in an entertainment culture that saturates our lifestyles with unreal things. Unreal imaginative things become normalized, and there are those people who do not know the difference between fantasy and reality. Some don't know the difference between killing a villain in a video game and killing a friend at a party. Movies and television are packed with fantasy being offered as inconsequential reality. In a culture that is engulfed in such pseudo-supernatural realities it can be hard for people to see the truth. In a world where truth is lacking there is no justice and no peace. Deception, confusion and corruption become common. Where are the places in our culture where our underwear is showing while we are parading around in prideful ignorance? Are we willing to go counter-culture when we know something to be the truth though others are saying that it is not? Are we more concerned with what others think than we are concerned about the wellbeing of everyone involved? I want to be intentional about being committed to loving, respectful, edifying truth. If we do it together we can change our world.

Let's remember that we change someone's world every single day. Let's do it for the better. I am grateful for you.

Sharon Sewell