

Letter to the Editor

Skateboarders don't allow drugs at city park

Dear Editor:

This letter is a response to one part of Aimee Yee's August 16 article regarding rising poly-drug use in the tri-parish area.

In the article, Lori Wagner, director and therapist for the Adolescent Drug Alcohol Personal Transformation program at the New Horizons Youth Service Bureau, made some comments that I found not only appalling, but factually incorrect.

The article says one of the most popular places for kids to get pain pills or marijuana is the skatepark.

This statement is simply untrue. I spend hours at the park skateboarding every day, and I personally know nearly every person that steps foot on the facility that Hammond has provided us.

Granted, some of the kids and adults that use the park may indeed use illicit drugs recreationally, but the ratio of kids that use drugs is no different than any other place you'd visit in the city... and quite frankly, they aren't coming to the park to purchase anything.

Riding a skateboard at 20-plus miles an hour on a vertical concrete wall simply doesn't mix well with inebriation, especially if the intoxicant is as powerful as ecstasy or LSD.

As far as drug sales go, it simply doesn't happen at the park. The portrait painted by Mrs. Wagner's words illustrates a place where drugs are easy to access and acquire, which flies in the face of what I know to be true.

(When asked about popular places for young people to get

drugs, Wagner said:) "It's any place you've got a group of kids without their parents, and they're all hanging out," she said. "They tell me they try to avoid the scene, but before I know it, they'll admit they 'snuck off to the skate park' or to a parking lot to score."

This quote completely misrepresents the reality of the social scene of the skatepark.

Again, you simply can't walk into the skate park and "score" drugs. More often than not, there is an adult presence, whether in the form of a young skater's parent or some of the skaters themselves.

I'm typical of the adult skateboard population in Hammond.

I'm one of the people who not only ride the park whenever possible, but I help to regulate the park rules as best as a citizen can do. I keep an eye on my fellow skaters as if they were my younger brothers and sisters, and I help to make sure that the flow of the skate park, both physically and socially, is maintained.

Again, I am not unique. There are many adult skaters that do exactly as I do, ensuring that the park is a safe place to visit for people of all ages.

I respect Mrs. Wagner's efforts in helping to curb drug use, but I take issue with her assumption that the park is a haven for this type of criminal activity.

I'm one of many watchful eyes at the park, and I can say with full authority that her statements regarding the buying and selling of drugs at the park are false.

The skateboard community as a whole is very lucky to have the facility, and we simply won't allow that type of activity to take place.

— Neal Boyd, Hammond