

Community Comment
August 29, 2014
Sam Pennisi

The next generation

At a program during our regular Rotary meeting this week, we heard about digital news being the future of news media. It was an interesting presentation by local people probably on the cutting edge of the evolution of news production and presentation in the internet and digital world. There's a lot about this format that is potentially very bad. But, I fear they are right in assuming that the coming generation is wired. I'm not a fan for reasons that are best left to another time, but all transitions require fine tuning. The good news about this change is that it may be the most democratic setup for news delivery we have ever seen. The bad news is, as with anything democratic, we can end up with the most mediocre of solutions.

But the topic got me thinking about the people who are driving this technology. They are the next generation of us. They will be assuming productive roles in all aspects of society. They will be business leaders and worker bees; they will be political leaders and well educated constituents; they will be parents and teachers and doctors and lawyers. They will design our roads and mass transit systems and our buildings and energy systems. They will have access to instant information about how things work and how products are performing.

Unlike anytime else, they will have the ability to manage their life and schedule more than we could have imagined when I was their age. And of all the things that being connected but wireless might come to mean, one thing stands out to me.

The next generation will have the ability to almost constantly monitor how they are doing in life and what kind of impact they are having on their environment.

The internet will connect more than ever with anyone, anywhere, anytime in the world almost instantly. Education will be better and more available to more people than ever before. We will be able to monitor our energy demands and manage conservation of resources on a personal level. In short, our children will have the ability to decide on and implement the amount of their impact on the earth and manage that impact as they deem appropriate.

This kind of opportunity carries with it incredible responsibility. As a group, they will have to decide how much choice is left to the individual and how much will be regulated. With this level of ability, these choices will be more difficult than ever before.

Living in a college town and surrounding ourselves with a sample this next generation gives us a glimpse into what we can expect from them. Our small sample tells me we are

in good hands. These issues are being vigorously discussed and debated. They seek information and are learning how best to verify and use it. They seemed seriously interested in the state of our planet and what they can do about it.

They are concerned about their future. To me, that's a great sign. .

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment