

# AS I SEE IT ...



## Corrupting our young

Truth in communication was trashed recently by a story in *Ranger Rick*, a kids' magazine published by the National Wildlife Federation. (Thankfully, the NWF is not tax-funded.)

Rick is a cartoon raccoon who fights for a clean and healthy environment. That's something we all want, but it's notable how tactics toward achieving a goal can differ.

In the May issue, Rick and his wildlife friends "find deadly dangers in the deep green grass." Those "dangers" are lawn care chemicals, which are presumed to kill worms and fish, and cause distress to Casey Cottontail and Becky Hare. Rick and Co. take violent action against a man spraying a lawn, causing a swarm of wasps to attack him. (It's *assumed* that the applicator will drench a nest of bunnies.)

The epilogue reads: "How dangerous are lawn chemicals to people, pets and wildlife? No one knows for sure. So until we know they're completely safe, it's better not to use them at all."

Allen James, executive director of RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment) wrote to Gerald Bishop, the editor of *Ranger Rick*, noting that, "the story's implications and misstatements...serve to induce the 'fear factor' in children regarding chemicals used to protect and maintain our lawns..."

James offered Bishop the services of RISE members in developing a more balanced story.

Bishop's response (*italics mine*): "We are confident that what we presented is in the best interest of all children who may be exposed to such *toxic* products. We properly point out that while direct harmful effects on children and animals from lawn care chemicals have not yet been conclusively demonstrated, it makes sense to avoid their use through the choice of non-toxic alternatives."

Notice that Bishop says harmful effects have not been proven, yet, in the story, the rabbits experience watery eyes and sneezing, which is blamed on the product.

Bishop never returned my calls, but I spoke with Allen James.

"The RISE governing board reviewed the response and was discouraged with (the magazine's) attitude," says James. No more letters are planned.

The most harmful aspect of this is that the people at *Ranger Rick* believe that they are "educating" children.

We beg to differ. The magazine's "thanks-but-no-thanks" attitude is stubbornly defensive and overbearingly self-righteous. Combined with the article's exercise in misinformation, we have to wonder whether the truth really matters to *Ranger Rick*.

Terry McIver, managing editor

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