



## Apostrophes? Commas? Please, use ‘em correctly...

**BY MARGO HORNER**

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In a world of text messaging and e-mail, punctuation marks, for some, have become more familiar as eyes or smiles :-) than as tools for effective written communication.

Use of proper punctuation is important because it is a sign of receiving at least a minimal education, said Tim Stewart, an English teacher at Thomas Jefferson High School.

Stewart, who said he is passionate about punctuation, teaches the fundamentals of colons, semi-colons, dashes and ellipsis points in proofreading and editing exercises.

The ability to use punctuation to construct proper sentences demonstrates higher-level thinking skills, he said.

National Punctuation Day on Sept. 24 is a day for folks like Stewart, who are gung-ho about commas, to celebrate.

In an effort to draw attention to proper punctuation, Jeff Rubin founded National Punctuation Day three years ago.

Rubin, owner of a newsletter publishing company in Pinole, Calif., created the holiday after becoming increasingly frustrated with improper punctuation in newspapers, business correspondence and store signs. After spending several years each morning with a red pen in hand, correcting the local newspaper and firing off nasty letters to the editors, he decided to finally do something about it. He wanted to draw attention to the importance of proper punctuation by creating a national holiday.

Somebody must have agreed with Rubin because the holiday is now featured in *Chase's Calendar of Events*.

Rubin suggests celebrating National Punctuation Day by reading a newspaper and circling all the punctuation errors with a red pen.

Rubin also recommends taking a walk and paying close attention to store signs with incorrectly punctuated words. Be sure and stop in and notify the owner of any mistakes, Rubin said.

Sian Fankhauser, an English teacher at Decatur High School, said she hadn't heard about National Punctuation Day, but she thought it was a good idea.

As an English teacher, promoting proper punctuation and grammar are tremendously important to Fankhauser. After years of studying the basics, many kids still struggle with semi-colons, apostrophes and periods, she said.

“It’s been taught and it’s been reinforced, but for some reason a lot of the kids just don’t pick up on it,” Fankhauser said. “I think the lack of reading causes lower punctuation levels or awareness.”

If kids spent more time reading and less time watching TV and playing video games, punctuation would be easier for them, Fankhuaser said.

**Note:** Punctuation errors found in the Federal Way Mirror are most certainly the fault of the editor and comments should be directed to Andy Hobbs at *editor@fedwaymirror.com*.