I had the opportunity to earn a paycheck at a very young age putting together booklets, folding programs, assembling three-part forms, etc. It was legal only because my parents owned the business.

Although child labor laws are intended to protect children from being abused, there are many very capable young people who are robbed of the chance to earn some spending money because of age stipulations. Learning work ethic, accomplishing something and having my own earning power certainly weren't abusive in my experience.

Not to be stereotypical, but common jobs for youth used to be paper routes for the boys and babysitting for the girls, that is unless you lived on a farm.

I'm surprised today how paper routes are often times handled by adults. A woman once told me it was a great way to fulfill her need to exercise. Profits were lost if she filled a vehicle with gasoline so she was committed to walking her route through thick and thin. Skipping a day wasn't an option.

I have a cousin who paid for a nice wedding trip by supplementing income with a paper route in the city.

I've recently taken on the task of a weekly paper route, and I love it. No, there's no financial gain but its value for me goes far beyond that.

My husband's aunt moved into the local senior facility and I started taking her papers to her on press day rather than mailing them.

Another subscriber took interest when I dropped the papers off one summer day, and I asked if she'd like me to bring hers also. She was delighted. Others were interested as well.

I started picking up my grandson for the journey each week. It was a joy to watch the residents' eyes light up when he'd walk into their room with the hometown news. He flung the black bag over his shoulder and started taking his toy drill, pretending to scan the rolled paper before he handed it over. I guess that made it seem more official.

One by one, we kept adding more subscribers to our route.

There were times when my granddaughter, Tayvin, joined us. Her focus was to get an ice cream cone when we were done. I think of the time we were there at mealtime. Both the kids were ready for some limelight and they sang to the residents. Watching the delighted reaction was a real spark in my day.

Austin commented that it was fun to make people happy. What a priceless concept.

The kids have moved, but I continue to get a buzz out of the route. People are so appreciative and go out of their way to thank me. Austin was right. It sure feels good to do something for others.

I had a conference out of town that would keep me from making the deliveries on a recent Wednesday. Yes, mailing them was an option but our pressman agreed to drop them off, and Aunt Edith graciously accepted the delivery routine. Again, everyone was so appreciative.

It's so rewarding to see how much people anticipate reading the local news. And it's a real treat to make a weekly connection with some special people.