

OPINION

DAILY JOURNAL

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"The Daily Journal is dedicated to community service, to defense of individual rights and to providing those checks upon government which no constitution can ensure."

SCOTT ALEXANDER
founding editor, 1963

AT ISSUE

Four Center Grove High School students hatched a plan to hold the student body hostage, police said.

OUR POINT

The willingness of students to speak up about what they heard may well have prevented a calamity.

Reporting all threats improves school safety

The Daily Journal

The arrest of four teenagers in connection with a plot to take hostages at Center Grove High School immediately raised fears of a Columbine-type incident.

On April 20, 1999, two teenage students at the high school near Denver went on a shooting rampage. They killed 12 fellow students and a teacher and wounded 24 others. Then they killed themselves.

The tragedy raised concern across the nation about safety in schools.

On Thursday, four boys, ages 15 and 16, were arrested after two or three girls told school administrators about conversations they had overheard that morning.

The Johnson County Sheriff's Office investigated. Security was heightened Friday, with officers at or in every school in the district.

On Monday, Sheriff Terry McLaughlin revealed portions of the teens' plans. He said the four planned to take the student body hostage and ask for at least \$4 million in ransom and getaway cars for their escape.

One of the boys said he had access to a gun at home. Another said he planned to buy one.

It does not appear the four planned a shooting rampage like at Columbine, but it's not hard to imagine what might have happened if the hostage-ransom plan went wrong.

As scary a situation as this is and could have been, there is reason to be more than relieved with the way it played out.

Credit goes to Center Grove school officials and local law enforcement.

School personnel reacted with calm professionalism as police were notified and security measures were put in place. There was no panicked overreaction.

Teachers, administrators and staff discuss similar scenarios in hopes they never happen. Yet when something did happen, everyone did what was needed and did it quickly.

Sheriff's deputies arrived at the school, secured the buildings and conducted their investigation without significant disruption.

Finally, the girls who reported the conversations deserve special credit for their willingness to come forward.

It is easy to dismiss casual conversations as just idle chat.

Teachers and administrators emphasize to students the need to report all such conversations they overhear or any claims they read on the Internet.

Sometimes it ends up being nothing, but it gives school personnel a chance to see if there is trouble in the student's life.

Other times, though, such as this one, the implications were much more sinister.

Johnson County Prosecutor Lance Hamner said it best: "This is a very disturbing incident. I think we are all going to be forever grateful that those courageous young ladies came forward and recognized that this was a potential tragedy."

Focus: Poultry

Bill regulating antibiotics in feed necessary

Minneapolis-St. Paul Star Tribune

Diners delving into a plate of chicken marsala rarely imagine the meal will make them sick. And unless the poultry is dreadfully undercooked, they're probably right — in the short run.

But over the longer haul, they've had good reason to regard poultry as a health threat. For years, America's chicken farmers have been fattening their flocks on feed laced with antibiotics, even though the practice is known to accelerate the development of antibiotic resistance in humans as well as animals.

Activists have been pressing poultry producers to kick the drug habit for years, and the industry is at last responding.

It's an impressive development, the sort that industry rarely makes without a shove from government. Antibiotic use has long been a mainstay of the chicken business.

But the World Health Organization and the American Medical Association have been urging a change since the 1990s, and recently big buyers have turned up the heat. Late last year, McDonald's announced it would no longer buy from suppliers who used antibiotics for growth promotion; several other large food companies have followed suit.

Anticipating such a nudge, the poultry industry is scrambling toward a drug-free future. Tyson Foods, the nation's top chicken producer, has reportedly cut its antibiotic use by 93 percent since 1997.

These days, Tyson's leaders say, they use antibiotics on only 1 percent of the 2.27 billion chickens they raise each year, and then only to handle diagnosed disease. Three others among the top 10 poultry producers have similarly reduced their antibiotic use.

The poultry industry should be cheered for taking this leap and for doing it before government stepped in.

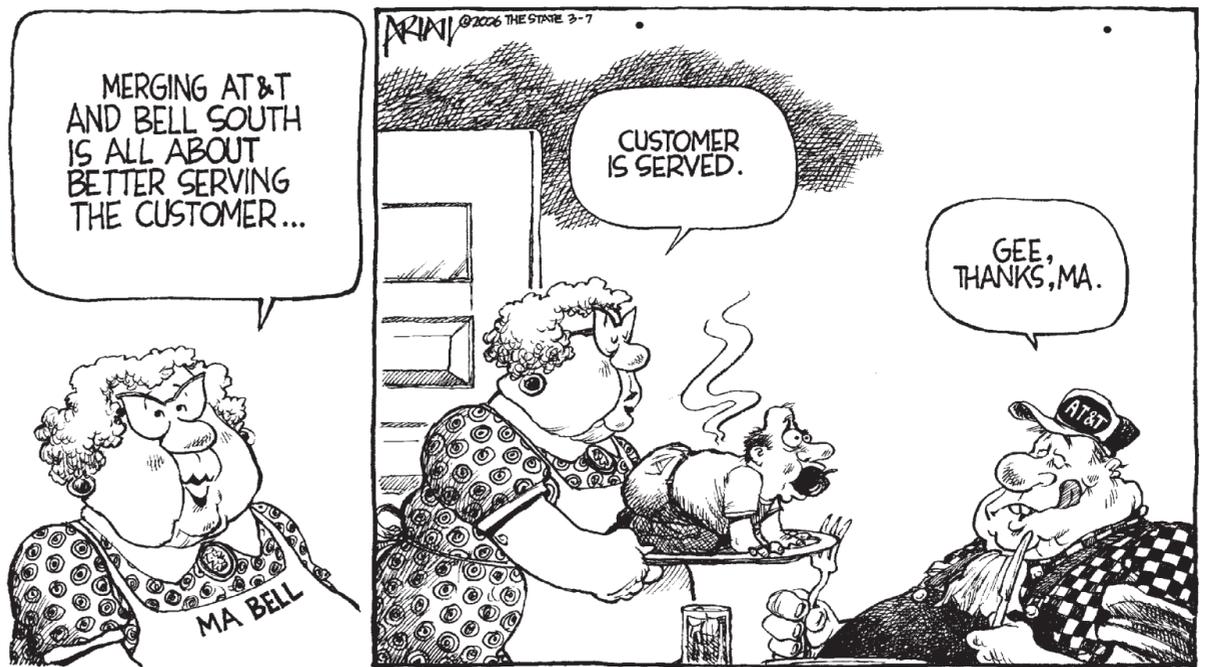
But the willingness of many to act on their own shouldn't deter government from further oversight. Antibiotic use in poultry and many other animals isn't supervised at all now.

For that matter, the success by Tyson and other poultry producers can only be acclaimed because so many watchdogs have been at hand to witness it.

A far wiser course is to oblige all animal producers to play on the same field by imposing rules all must follow.

That's the goal of the Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act.

Congress shouldn't hesitate a moment to pass it. The bill calls for phasing out antibiotics in animal feed unless the Food and Drug Administration determines that a certain use is appropriate and safe for humans. It would assure that the use of drugs in raising animals is transparent and enforceable, and that food makers remain accountable for securing human health.



YOUR

VIEWS & COMMENTARY

Items from state fairs sought for history exhibit

To the editor:

Do you have a piece of Indiana State Fair history?

To celebrate 150 years of the Indiana State Fair, wool department assistants George W. Harrell and I hope to borrow historical items from 4-H members and non-members to display in the wool room.

We want any history of the state fair. Photos, ribbons, general memorabilia, awards, artifacts, old sheep shearing equipment, stories, news articles and anything that is interesting.

If you have any items to lend to our historical display, please contact me at 422-9584. Many of our departments this year are displaying the history of your great Indiana State Fair.

This also is a time to find out about something you may have of your ancestors that you didn't know.

Be proud of what you have and let the people see it. Bring your camera.

Items will be returned after the fair, which runs Aug. 9 to Aug. 20.
Carl E. Dearth
Bargersville

High-speed Internet access helps seniors

To the editor:

Kudos to the Indiana state legislature and leadership for passing telecom reform legislation. We encourage Gov. Mitch Daniels to sign the bill into law and bring Hoosiers one step closer to much-needed new technology and investment.

We have long been advocates of this reform because of the many life-enriching opportunities that high-speed Internet access provides. OASIS has found the Internet to be an effective tool in fighting the serious problem of isolation in older adults, especially when dealing with disability, transportation or caregiver issues.

As the older adult market expands, every effort should be made to encourage and connect this market to the best and latest technology that will provide older adults with more choices and services, delivered faster, and at a better price. This includes encouraging new choices in cable television and video-entertainment services.

OASIS is a national nonprofit educational organization designed to enhance the quality of life for mature adults. Offering challenging programs in the arts and humanities, health and wellness, technology and volunteer service, OASIS creates opportunities for older adults to continue their personal growth and provide meaningful service to the community. Nationally, OASIS serves more

WRITE A LETTER

The Daily Journal invites readers to submit letters, opinion columns and e-mail comments for the opinion page.

GUIDELINES

- Letters sent to the Daily Journal must be signed and include a daytime telephone number for verification.
- Letters should be kept as brief as possible.

SEND IT

Mail

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2575 N. Morton St. (U.S. 31), Franklin

than 366,000 members with 62 centers in 25 cities. Indianapolis has four OASIS centers with more than 25,000 members.

Melony Barney
director, OASIS

Nonsmoking 'majority' imperiling free choice

To the editor:

OK, you guys keep printing all this about smoking bans; one can resist only so long.

There has been way too much concern about this. I even regret wasting my time commenting.

1. It is or was a free country the last time I checked. At least until your "majority" gets its way.

2. There are already nonsmoking establishments, made so by the owner's or franchise's choice. So be it, I seldom frequent these places.

3. I smoke. If it's a fast meal, I refrain from smoking to be courteous of others, sometimes even in a smoking establishment, by choice.

4. I, by choice, do not patronize nonsmoking establishments for a longer meal.

5. Your "majority," I read that earlier in the paper, should exercise its rights and stop the smokers. What will you do when in the future you happen to be in a minority position on something in your life? What will you do when the majority is against you?

6. I wonder who asked for this "coalition" to come in our county and stop the smoking. Are my tax dollars paying for this also?

7. Medical theory and studies. Remember how much has been published and then retracted or downplayed in the past? Covers all the health scares.

8. To those nonsmokers who go into a smoking establishment and feel that it is a great hazard to your health, I ask why. You already "know" the risks. Why do it?

I don't deliberately hit my finger with a hammer because I know it will be bad for me. I

don't debate it. I don't even flirt with the idea.

9. What about you heavy perfume-wearers? Littering? Driving for miles in the left lane of a four-lane highway when others think it is a passing lane?

10. Is it possible that we smokers get a little sicker because we're outside in the weather? Maybe there is a link between some genetically deficient or sicker people and the tendency for them to take up smoking. Dig long and hard enough and you'll find the truth. But you aren't there yet.

Jerry Castner
Greenwood

Put critics of smoking in charge of enforcement

To the editor:

The Greenwood City Council can't agree on who should ticket smoking violations (Daily Journal, Feb. 22).

I have a great idea: Why don't they let all the politically correct, monkey-see-monkey-do big mouths stand outside all of the places where there is no smoking allowed with their tape measures?

They can stand out in the cold and the rain, like us smokers have had to do for a long while, and measure how far away from the business we are, then run in and make sure nobody is smoking inside.

They also can pay all the bills for businesses from which they've taken away their freedom.

They are certainly brazen enough to do the job. I, myself, have been accosted on more than one occasion smoking in a lawful place.

Now it's our freedom; yours is next.

Mayor and city council members, election time will come. And if I have my way, you all will be out on your ear, and we'll try to elect some people who are about all citizens instead of just the ones with the loudest mouths.

Thanks to Ron Deer for casting his vote for freedom.

Mr. Keith Hardin, we don't have other problems, we go where you have pushed us, and we're not dumb either.

Pat Ficklin
Greenwood

Clark-Pleasant should use funds more wisely

To the editor:

School spending has reached epidemic proportions. Have you looked at your school taxes lately?

Now look at the beautiful buildings, sports arenas, football field, concession stands, weight-lifting rooms, tennis courts, baseball fields and gymnasiums, etc. Unnecessary spending has gotten out of hand, can't you tell by looking at your taxes?

The Clark-Pleasant Community School Corp. is hiring a human resources person at a salary of \$105,000 per year. Give me a break.

What are the superintendents, principals, assistant principals, department and maintenance heads, and other people doing? In my opinion this is wasteful spending of tax dollars when we could hire at least three new teachers.

If the school board has an extra \$105,000, hire more teachers or lower our taxes.

Give the taxpayers a break.

John H. Trisler
Greenwood

Girls being punished to gloss over adult failings

To the editor:

In response to Bill Self's letter, "Parents, not schools, responsible for behavior" (Daily Journal, Feb. 15): If you are directing your comments to the general population, you will have a difficult time finding someone to disagree with you. If you are directing your comments to the families of the two girls who were suspended from school for 10 days, then I believe you are incorrect.

There are many reasons why people may get in trouble with authorities, but I believe they can be summarized into three categories: 1) They don't know any better. 2) They know better but are trying to beat the system. Or 3) they are innocent.

I know the family of one of the girls, and I believe she falls into the third category.

I think the bigger problem is not if the girls are guilty or innocent, it is the system that is being used to punish them. The present system says admit guilt, waive due process rights and accept a 10-day suspension or be expelled for up to one year. The only option left to them while they are trying to prove their innocence is to sue the school.

To list just a few of the injustices that have been leveled against them: 1) They have not been given an opportunity to defend themselves. 2) They have not had their questions answered as to why alcoholic beverages were even available on a school outing.

3) Why was an investigation not started at the time the wine was discovered missing? 4) Why were they suspended on the say-so of only one other student? 5) Where was the adult supervision? Mainly, why wasn't the alcohol locked up when our students first arrived? They didn't have any problems locking it up after the bottle of wine came up missing.

In conclusion Mr. Self, to make general statements about behavior almost always sounds nice, but it is rarely accurate.

Lewis Warren
Greenwood

I'd check off 'Write column' if I could find my list

The premise of the television show "My Name Is Earl" is that the title character has decided to change his bad ways.

Each week he tries to make things right with people he has wronged in the past. Each week, something goes amiss and, this being network TV, hilarity ensues. The thread that connects each episode is a list he carries in his pocket. On it he has written the bad things he has done. At the end of every show, he pulls the list from his shirt pocket and checks off another item.

It's funny and quirky, a two of my favorite qualities in a TV show. I actually try to make time on Thursday nights to watch it.

My only difficulty with the show is that list. Not that he made it. No, my problem is that he manages to hold on to it week after week without losing it.

I find lists somewhat frustrating. I don't mean those lists of The 100 Greatest Songs of the 20th Century or The 100 Lamest Column Ideas Ever (I figure this one should make at



Norman Knight

least No. 43.), and I'm not referring to no-call lists, the dean's list or Angie's List.

I'm talking about those lists I make to help me organize my life.

I can't tell you how many lists I make in a week. I make grocery lists; lists telling me what things I need to drop off and what things I need to pick up; lists of people to call; lists for work; lists for weekend chores.

Making the list is no problem for me. Keeping track of it is something else.

I read an article recently offering tips for people who are getting older and forgetting things. One of the techniques the author suggests to help us

memory-challenged people deal with our affliction is to make lists of things we need to remember.

I made a list of the other suggestions in the article, but I forgot where I put it.

Besides making lists and then forgetting them, I have a problem keeping my lists to a single page.

What happens is, I think of something that needs to go on my list and, knowing I will soon forget it, jot it down on the nearest piece of paper. I wind up heading out the door with a handful of used envelopes, sticky-notes, paper napkins and magazine insert cards.

Some of the younger adults that I have talked with wonder if pencil and paper lists aren't soon to be a thing of the past.

"That's so 20th century," their rolled eyes seem to say.

They might be right. Seems like every other person these days is whipping out his or her Palm Pilot and using that little stylus to electronically make a note to remember to get some milk on the way home. It could be that

my scraps of papers will someday be as obsolete as good manners.

I'm sure lists will always be around in some form, though. After all, whether scribbled with a quill pen or digitized on a computer screen, Santa will never stop keeping a list of all the naughty and nice children and checking it twice.

No question, lists are good and useful things.

On those rare occasions when I don't drive off while the list sits on the kitchen counter, I get a real sense of accomplishment as I draw a line through a completed item on my list. Just like Earl.

Speaking of crossed-off items, I guess I can cross off "write column" from my list for this week.

And I think you will agree, this should easily make No. 43 on the Lamest Column Ideas list, at the very least.

Norman Knight, a teacher at Clark-Pleasant Middle School, writes this weekly column for the Daily Journal. Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com.