

OPINION

DAILY JOURNAL

JEFFREY W. OWEN
PUBLISHER
E-mail address:
jowen@thejournalnet.com

SCARLETT SYSE
EDITOR
E-mail address:
syse@thejournalnet.com

"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

Habitat for Humanity offers a unique opportunity to help the community on an individual basis.

OUR POINT

The local effort is gaining momentum, and now it's up to the public to realize its potential.

Want to be good citizen? Lend support to Habitat

The Daily Journal

On Aug. 29, 2003, Lori Black moved into her own home in Franklin.

That's a milestone for most families, but it was an especially great moment for Black, a mother on a limited income.

Her home was a Habitat for Humanity project, built by volunteer laborers.

Black helped out, too, putting in more than 250 hours of sweat equity into her Franklin home. It included helping with construction, attending a series of classes and working on other Habitat projects. She took courses in money management, home repairs and landscaping.

The house isn't free, though. Habitat families must pay off a mortgage, just like other homeowners, even if the loan is interest-free.

Habitat builds and rehabilitates houses and provides interest-free mortgages with no down payment for families who otherwise cannot afford their own homes.

Applicants go through an extensive screening, including a credit check, rental history, financial need assessment and an analysis of current living conditions. Family income must fall between 30 percent and 50 percent of the median household income.

Families selected must take lessons in household finance, insurance, mortgages and home maintenance, and they must contribute time volunteering on Habitat chapter projects.

After the 2003 project, Habitat efforts in Johnson County went on a kind of hiatus. Local leadership was lacking. A building site was not readily available.

That leadership, though, began being rebuilt when a group of Franklin College students organized a student chapter of the organization.

After that, a county chapter was formed and moved into a renovated house on the edge of the college campus. Doug Grant, service learning coordinator at the college, is heading up the local Habitat effort.

Two Franklin homes are to be built this year. One will be on a vacant lot in Woodfield Village subdivision off Hospital Road. The other will replace a home in Knollwood subdivision significantly damaged in a fire. The house will be razed, and a comparable structure will be built so it will fit in with its neighbors.

These are encouraging signs for an organization once thought nearly extinct.

But this home-grown philanthropic and service effort won't succeed without the public's help. Volunteers are needed to clean up the fire-damaged home. Then more will be needed to help build the new one.

To volunteer or to obtain more information, call Grant at 738-8762.

An even easier way to help is Feb. 26. A fund-raising soup supper will be at 4 p.m. in the Branigin Room of the campus center at Franklin College. For \$15, diners get a handmade bowl filled with soup. Proceeds benefit the local Habitat effort.

The local effort is gaining momentum. The public's help is needed to continue building enthusiasm.

Focus: Asylum

Deserters will find no refuge in Canada

Scripps Howard News Service

In a case closely watched on both sides of the border, Canada's Federal Court took up the appeal of Jeremy Hinzman, 27, a U.S. Army deserter who is seeking political asylum.

If Hinzman succeeds, perhaps as many as 200 deserters living secretly in Canada will do likewise, and other unhappy soldiers may then be tempted to follow them north.

But his petition for asylum was rejected last March by Canada's Immigration Review Board, which found that Hinzman did not meet either of the two broad criteria for refugee status:

- The refugees are unwilling to return to their homeland because of "a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, political opinion, nationality or membership in a particular social group."

- Or their return "would subject them to the possibility of torture, risk to life, or risk of cruel and unusual treatment or punishment."

Arguably, none of these applies to Hinzman. He would face a jail sentence, loss of pay and benefits, and the stigma of a dishonorable discharge. And he knew this when he abandoned his 82nd Airborne unit rather than go to Iraq.

All of this recalls the Vietnam era when some 12,000 U.S. deserters and 20,000 draft dodgers took refuge in Canada. But there is a significant difference between then and now.

Back then, there was a draft; military service was mandatory and those who didn't show up for induction were prosecuted. The U.S. military today is all-volunteer. They know going in that they might be called on to fight a war. Hinzman enlisted for the same reasons many do, to gain a sense of purpose in life and to earn money for college.



Sun-starved? Rely on Willie, Beatles to offer pick-me-up

Throat tickle, slight sniffles, chilly, tired, almost a headache ... I think I might be getting something. Oh, well, what do I expect? It's winter.

Living in Indiana, I assume certain things will happen during this season. I figure that I will more than likely go through a period of one, two, even three weeks of living with a cold. I accept the inevitability of this just as I accept that politicians will posture and that the Colts will not play in the Super Bowl. I shrug, blow my nose and go on.

Since I've known Becky, I have learned that she too lives with certain inevitabilities during this time of year here in Hoosierland. Because there is less daylight in winter, she gets a little down.

Now, I'm no doctor, and I can't say that if she saw one she would be diagnosed with actual Seasonal Affective Disorder, but I do know she misses the sun — a lot.

For those who are strongly affected by the lack of sunlight, there is no question that Indiana in winter is a challenge. While August is the sunniest month with 68 percent possible sunshine, December and January check in with 38 and 40 percent respectively. By February we are starting to climb out of the gloominess, but still we get only 49 percent possible sunshine.

Anyway, with the desire to be a gallant and caring friend, I tried to think of some ways to cheer



Norman Knight

her up. Since I couldn't bring the actual sun to her, I decided to create a mix of songs about the sun that she could play in her car during those cloudy dismal drives. And so I sorted through my CD collection, logged on to iTunes, and, in between sneezes, compiled a list of Sun Songs.

Since we're both baby boomers, I decided to go with what we both knew. "Where better to start than with the cheery and ever-upbeat Beatles?" I reasoned.

It was a good choice. I immediately thought of the George Harrison song "Here Comes The Sun" from *Abbey Road*. Then I remembered "Good Day, Sunshine" off the *Revolver* album. (OK, OK ...off the *Revolver* CD. Hey, I'm a boomer; I still think in terms of record albums.) The Beatles also recorded "I'll Follow The Sun," and "Sun King," but I didn't want it to be an all-Beatles CD, so I didn't include them.

I knew she liked John Denver (so do I), so I added "Sunshine On My Shoulder." The song has a

slow tempo, but like John Denver himself, it is positive and optimistic.

I had to include "Sunshine Of Your Love" by Cream. After all, my guitar hero, Eric Clapton, created one of the most memorable guitar riffs of the 1960s with that tune.

I have in my collection a wacky song, "Why Does The Sun Shine?" (The Sun Is a Mass of Incandescent Gas)" by a group with a wacky name. They Might Be Giants. It always makes me smile, so I put it in.

I stuck in the Willie Nelson version of "On The Sunny Side Of The Street" (good old Willie) and closed the CD with the infectious 90s pop hit "Walking On Sunshine" by Katrina and the Waves.

Although it isn't nearly as good as the real sun, I think my Sun Songs CD has helped cheer Becky a little and get her through these winter doldrums. I know the They Might Be Giants song makes her smile.

Winter won't be here much longer.

Soon the grass will be green, and we will see the sun more often. Hmm. Maybe I'll put together a Spring CD — that is, if I can shake this cold.

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

If president wants to promote science, he can start by supporting research

President Bush talks a good game about science. His new budget proposal includes additional money to fund basic research and train science and math teachers.

But the president could use some instruction in scientific thinking himself. Too often, he takes a theological approach to problems, deciding what he believes before the facts are in and ignoring evidence that undermines his prejudices. That is the exact opposite of the scientific method.

The latest example is the attempt to silence James E. Hansen, a highly respected researcher on climate change working for NASA. Hansen's sin: he pointed out that rising temperatures are so dangerous they could create a "different planet."

This is not what the White House wants to hear. It has long derided the whole concept of global warming and refused to participate in the Kyoto Treaty aimed at limiting greenhouse gases. So NASA's public relations staff monitored Hansen's statements and kept him away from inquiring reporters. "They feel their job is to be this censor of information going out to the public," Hansen says.

This prompted Rep. Sherwood Boehlert, R-N.Y., to write a letter warning NASA that "good science cannot long persist in an atmosphere of intimidation."

Boehlert's right, and the Hansen case is hardly an isolated incident. As the scientist told *The New York Times*: "The problem is much broader and much deeper and it goes across agencies."

The Union of Concerned Scientists has gathered signatures from more than 8,000 scientists protesting the Bush administration's approach. "There have always been isolated incidents where people have played politics with science," Francesca Grifo, director of the union's Scientific Integrity Project, told *Time* magazine. "What's new is its pervasive and systematic nature."

Many of the complaining scientists didn't vote for Bush,



Cokie Roberts and Steven V. Roberts

some are playing politics themselves, and liberals can also deny evidence that contradicts their beliefs. One example: abortion-rights disciples minimize medical advances that expand fetal viability and diminish the legitimacy of late-term abortions. But the president has the power, and he's the one who's been abusing it. Take the issue of stem cell research. While early experiments have been disappointing, many scientists still believe it holds enormous promise for aiding sufferers of diabetes, Parkinson's and other diseases.

Most of that research involves the destruction of human embryos, an act of murder to Bush's most conservative religious supporters. So the president bowed to those supporters, severely restricting federal research support. Even though scientists complain bitterly that their work is being undermined — a claim reinforced by Sen. Bill Frist, the Republican leader and noted heart surgeon — the president has refused to budge.

Then there was Terry Schiavo, the Florida woman diagnosed by reputable doctors as suffering from irreversible brain damage.

Bush and his conservative allies refused to accept that medical finding and fought the decision by Schiavo's husband to remove her feeding tube and let her die. An autopsy proved conclusively that the original diagnosis was accurate.

Bush is also at war with science

on the subject of the universe's origin.

While research data overwhelmingly supports the theory of evolution, the president says the idea of "intelligent design," an updated version of creationism, should also be taught in public schools. His view was forcefully rebuffed recently by a federal judge in Pennsylvania who ruled that "intelligent design" is purely a religious concept and has no place in a science class. Even the Vatican endorsed the judge's ruling.

The president and his hard-core supporters are particularly squeamish on the subject of sex and science. Under pressure from religious conservatives, the Food and Drug Administration rejected the overwhelming opinion of its own scientists and barred the over-the-counter sale of Plan B, a "morning after" contraceptive.

Religion is not the administration's only motive for trashing good science. Big corporations, heavy contributors to the Republican Party, are the main reason for the administration's refusal to take global warming seriously. The nation's boardrooms aren't exactly hotbeds of support for the endangered species act, either.

This is all part of a disturbing pattern of stubborn ignorance. Remember, this president said that there was no way of anticipating the collapse of the New Orleans levees, when scientists for years had been warning about just such a catastrophe.

We applaud the president's support for better research and more science teachers. He's right in saying that good science will enhance American competitiveness.

But the core of the scientific method is to go where the facts lead you. And this president is not all that interested in facts.

Cokie Roberts is a political commentator for ABC News and senior news analyst for National Public Radio. Her husband, Steven V. Roberts, is a contributing editor to *U.S. News and World Report* and a TV and radio commentator. Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com.

YOUR VIEWS

Parties, showers don't justify WRT boondoggle

To the editor:

I found the article in the Jan. 25 Daily Journal about the White River Township Government Center to be interesting.

But to depict this facility as the culmination of any kind of business plan is comparable to calling an outhouse a ball room because you varnished the door.

Now that we have been informed of where we can schedule a baby shower, family dinner, association meetings and the Little League draft meeting, maybe the Daily Journal could do an article and explain the growing expenses of the township trustee who headed up this initiative.

The White River Township trustee has built an overly lavish and overly spacious office for himself.

It is nicely positioned within the building, where he can look out his windows at the useless nine acres of flood plain he purchased along with the usable three acres when he spent \$500,000 for the ground.

Throw in a \$2,700,000 building, and you have a large sum of money spent without a plan to assure occupancy or even a plan to maintain it.

According to the budget figures the trustee provided me: the poor relief and abandoned cemetery maintenance budget for 2006 is \$40,000 total. The trustee's salary is \$37,000; his full-time assistant is paid \$31,000; his part-time assistant is paid \$15,600 per year; and his investigator is paid \$5,000 per year.

Yes folks, that amounts to \$88,600 in salaries to distribute the \$40,000 for which the trustee is responsible.

The total budget for the trustee's office for 2006 is \$330,000. I think this trustee's office and his past advisory board are out of control and have not utilized sensible business practices in decision making.

Please, Daily Journal, do an article about this expense to the taxpayers of White River Township.

Ken Baker
Greenwood

Parents, not schools, responsible for behavior

To the editor:

The solution to the expulsion and dropout rate in our high school systems is really quite simple.

Some parents need to do a better job of being parents. We could cut our expulsion and dropout rates by at least 75 percent and also solve many of our other societal problems.

I have known many teachers and administrators who have worked very hard with problem students.

In many instances, they have made a lot of progress only to have it negated by problems that exist in the home. To be honest, I am surprised that some students are as good as they are when you consider what they have to go home to every night.

I remember a family-living class that I taught several years ago where several students were complaining about their parents being too strict.

A young lady who had been in and out of trouble many times raised her hand.

She said, "I would give anything to have parents like yours because they care enough about you to want you to do right. I have parents who let me do as I please, and they have never once told me they love me."

In many instances the parents of the expelled student or the dropout are more concerned about their own image in the community than the welfare of their son or daughter.

At this point, Mom and Dad, it is almost impossible to become the parent you should have been all along.

The most important thing you can do in your lifetime is be a good parent. It requires a lot of work and many tough decisions.

Bill Sleaf
Franklin

Politicians working for selves, not taxpayers

To the editor:

We do not need more of the same in Washington; we have enough extremes.

It seems they want to line the ranks with their own kind; no more check and balance in our government. Just take away everything that is right by the people, the taxpayers, now the victims of political and corporate greed.

Our forefathers are now crying in their graves for what is being done.

Sharon, Bob, Joe and Matt
Kennedy
Greenwood