

# 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

Habitat for Humanity attacks the issue of homelessness one house at a time.

## OUR POINT

The public can offer support at a special fund-raiser Sunday.



DAILY JOURNAL FILE PHOTO

The Johnson County chapter of Habitat for Humanity built a home in the Knollwood Farms subdivision in Franklin last year.

## Habitat offers chance to help out homeless

The Daily Journal

Homelessness is an issue that can be hard to get a handle on.

Just how many homeless people are there in the county? Will efforts to combat the problem only encourage more homeless people to come to the county?

Habitat for Humanity takes a different tack. It doesn't try to solve the entire problem. Rather, the group takes it on one house at a time.

Volunteers, including professional builders and interested members of the public who have never hefted a hammer, work together to build a house. Joining them is a prospective Habitat for Humanity homeowner.

When the house is finished, it is turned over to the new owner, who must pay an interest-free mortgage, attend classes on home repair and money management and help out a certain number of hours on a Habitat project.

The county Habitat chapter grew out of an effort by Franklin College students. The chapter was chartered June 1.

Then during a three-weekend blitz starting July 13, Habitat teams constructed a home in Franklin's Knollwood Farms subdivision.

No family had been selected to live in the home, which president Doug Grant said is atypical, but chapter officials wanted to build on the momentum from the charter. Families have been interviewed, and one will be chosen this year.

In November, a steady supply of volunteers prompted the Johnson County chapter to build another house.

Even though the labor is volunteer and some supplies and services are donated, the group still needs money.

One of its most fun fund-raisers will be Sunday.

Just two weeks after the Indianapolis Colts won the Super Bowl, the Habitat chapter will stage its Soup Bowl at the Johnson County fairgrounds in Franklin.

For \$15, participants can enjoy a bowl of soup in a handmade bowl. There also will be an array of desserts.

The bowls were made at earlier fund-raising events.

The event offers people the opportunity to help out with the housing effort without putting hammer to nail.

## Focus: Education

Governor's plan fails to make state desirable

Scrrips Howard News Service

The situation must have been dire for Gov. Mitch Daniels to risk the embarrassment his proposal would inevitably bring to the state of Indiana.

Alarmed by a brain drain, he would pay local college students to stay in the state once they graduate. In return for \$20,000 in scholarship money, college students would pledge to live in Indiana for three years after receiving their degree. Presumably, three years is enough time for Indiana to work its subtle charms in a way that the previous 18 did not.

Something is sure making the kids leave. The Associated Press cited state figures showing that more than one in three Indiana students who go to school in-state leave after graduation, and of those who go to school out of state, 90 percent never return.

The wire service interviewed one local chemical-engineering major who said, "I can either live in Terre Haute, Indiana, or I can live in Houston." To some, that would be more of an ultimatum, and not a choice, but she chose Houston.

The governor's plan faces considerable skepticism. Some critics say the solution is to create desirable jobs so that the grads have a reason to stay. Some question financing the scholarships through the state lottery.

Because of the astronomical odds against winning, lotteries have been characterized as a tax on stupidity. There's an appealing irony in enticing the state's dimmer residents into paying for the bright ones to stay.



DANIELS

ARND BRONKHORST/STREET ARTISTS



YOUR

## VIEWS & COMMENTARY

### Misuse of assistance should be stopped

To the editor:

I have been contacted by several of my constituents regarding a growing problem in the area, mainly in Whiteland. It seems that many families are applying for government assistance and do not appear to fit the qualifications for receiving such. I have had complaints from members of the community on several occasions who feel this assistance is unjustified and unfair.

Certain families are receiving free and reduced-price lunches for their school-aged children, as well as free textbooks. I would certainly encourage those parents without the means to afford these items to utilize this program. However, residents of Whiteland have noted that these same families show no sign of financial struggles; in fact, quite the contrary.

Under the federal free and reduced-price lunch program, there is a wide margin for error in determining those who truly qualify. In many cases, only one parent will submit salary information or withhold necessary information altogether.

This blatant misuse of the system should not be tolerated, and I intend to actively search for ways the state can remedy the problem. I have contacted other area legislators, encouraging them to join me in determining ways the state could potentially limit this abuse, whether by prevention or stricter repercussions in these circumstances.

Please contact me if you have any questions or suggestions. Send letters to State Rep. Woody Burton, 200 W. Washington St., Room 401-6, Indianapolis, IN 46204; e-mail, H58@in.gov; or call toll-free, (800) 382-9841.

State Rep. Woody Burton  
House District 58

### Multi-tasking behind the wheel can lead to tragedy

To the editor:

The death of these two brothers (Jacob and Travis Findley) is tragic, and it saddens me because it didn't have to happen. The railroad crossing is not at fault here.

The better warning needs to go out to all drivers: Pay attention. Drivers are using cell phones, eating, drinking, listening to music, watching movies or just in a hurry and not focused on driving.

We are all aware that there are

WRITE A

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### WHERE TO SEND THE LETTER

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railroad crossings all over the county that just have stop signs. We know we are supposed to stop and look, but we get in a hurry and don't pay attention and roll right on through.

I live near a railroad crossing on Stop 18 Road, and I have seen plenty of drivers not even stop, just roll right up and over the tracks, many of them living in the neighborhood and knowing it's a stop and that it is an active track.

Yes, maybe the arms on the crossing would help, but I have seen many a driver ignore them, also.

The warning that needs to be sent out is that we need to focus on driving and not multi-tasking when we are on the road. Again, this is a terrible tragedy, and a warning should sound. Pay attention to your driving so everyone can get home safely.

Sarah Sharp  
Greenwood

### Parks board had reasons for disbanding group

To the editor:

I was an avid follower of the Greenwood Trails Advisory Board for some time when all at once it was disbanded by the parks board. I wrote a letter in the Daily Journal chiding the parks board for the disbanding of this group. I then joined the newly formed Greenwood Trails Advocacy Board. I was excited to help this great cause continue.

During several months of participation in the newly formed trails group, I found some disturbing facts.

Several discussions took place on how to continue as a newly formed group. At every meeting I would mention that the trails group needed to make amends with the parks board and repair the burned bridges.

Every time it was blown off. It would seem that Don Cummings and Thane Morgan had other plans.

During each meeting I would say the same thing, and every time Cummings and Morgan would not allow the conversation to continue. They were arrogant

and would not accept any opinion, unless it was theirs. I found them very dictatorial.

I asked them to consider a rewrite of a proposal that Cummings had made to the parks board but this time make it more generic and directly from the trails group, not from Cummings personally.

This would be a sign of willingness to work together. A great beginning of dialogue. That was shot down right off the bat.

Their attitude was that they were going to make the parks board do what they wanted. Again another arrogant, hard-headed and poorly conceived action.

Cummings created a fund (The Greater Greenwood Trails Fund) that he has total control over with absolutely no recourse to the Trails Advocacy Board.

He dictates where and when the money will be spent. He does not ask the trails group for a vote nor does he ask for any opinions. He just does what he wants and expects everyone to accept it. He makes it plain to any person that he alone controls this fund.

I have documents in which he uses terms such as "me personally" in reference to who controls this fund, when the Trails Advocacy Board was supposed to be the unit acting. But this was always left out.

Additionally, I made a donation to these funds with a specific request.

I would donate the required funds that the Trails Advocacy Board was short to meet the price to purchase a trail-side bench.

But my stipulation was that it was to be from the Trails Advocacy Board, and the funds were to be used only for a bench. Cummings accepted my proposal. There was not a vote on the matter or even a general consensus.

Cummings drafted an e-mail and sent it to Tim Schrader at the parks department and to Trails Advisory Board members. He made it plain that it was from him (Cummings) directly, that the request was on "his behalf."

He failed again to mention the Trails Advocacy Board. He made

it quite plain that he alone controlled the fund from which payment would be made.

A disappointing and most certainly self-righteously unnecessary statement.

My purpose for this bench purchase was to begin a dialogue. I was appalled. This attitude was the downfall of the previously formed Trails Advisory Board.

This group is run by two people: Don Cummings and Thane Morgan. The other members are great people with a great purpose. After many months of meetings, the group is no further than they were the first day I joined them.

They cannot seem to focus on anything tangible. Cummings will not accept any input. It is his way or no way. That was one of the reasons for the big blow-up with the parks board previously. Don and Thane thought they were the only ones who were right. Well, guess what guys? Others can be right once in a while.

Now don't misunderstand me. The parks board, in my opinion, was wrong in the manner in which it disbanded the trails board.

And the mayor was wrong and disrespectful to the residents of Greenwood when he said, "It is not a public issue."

But at least now in just defense of the parks board, you and I can understand the need for them to act as they did. It was absolutely necessary to stop this abomination before it went any further.

More importantly, the public can get a little better understanding of these events and how the disbanded members have reformed but still maintain the same lack of proper guidance, lack of respect to authority and lack of proper etiquette.

The residents can at the very least understand how the Greater Greenwood Trails Fund is controlled and, as Don puts it, "TAB has no authority on how the monies are directed." The residents can make a judicious decision.

I hope this letter, in some way, may help heal some of the negative press the parks board has gotten from myself and others in this matter, and the public will show support to the parks board for their actions in the disbanding.

My most sincere apologies to the Greenwood Parks Board and Evan Springer.

Allan Watts  
Greenwood

## Important community members dying in Iraq war

Not long ago while perusing reports of the daily slaughter in Iraq, I noticed that one of those killed in action was a 48-year-old enlisted man with five children.

What, I asked myself, is a man of that age with those responsibilities doing in this fight? We didn't take those men in World War II. Then it occurred to me. He was either a member of the National Guard or the Reserve.

The recent casualty lists from Iraq reflect a military problem common to most wars but punctuated in this one by the apparent lack of professional troops, a reliance on citizen soldiers who signed up for the National Guard to serve their states and to be called up to federal duty in extraordinary times. Iraq seems to be one of those times as the U.S. military struggles to keep up with the manpower demands.

The result has been the loss of their services, often permanently, to their families and communities that was never anticipated when they enlisted for part-time duty in what has been known, sometimes derisively and unfairly, as the "weekend warriors." These are often men and women approaching middle age who come from the same locale, not 18-year-old regular military volunteers who come together from different



Dan K. Thomasson

parts of the country. The impact, therefore, can be devastating to their towns.

Former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, who is running for the Republican presidential nomination, sees this as one of the major concerns of the continuing long-term deployment of Guard troops, calling the overuse of these forces the result of "a tone deafness" that has plagued the war planning and management from the beginning.

He notes that in his state 80 percent of the Guard has been called to fight in Iraq, "exactng a huge strain on families and employers both private and public." The losses to community services include police officers, nurses and teachers, fathers and mothers.

Almost daily there is a new report of a father or even a mother who has left the children to head for the war zone, something that would have been unimaginable in previous conflicts.

As a youngster immediately

following World War II, I remember vividly seeing several survivors of the Bataan death march who had been called up in the National Guard and sent to the Philippines as the war approached.

A recent acquaintance, Nick Chintis, an Indiana boy who had gone to play basketball in New Mexico, joined that state's Guard, a coastal artillery unit, and with a teammate became one of the heroes of that terrible experience, returning to and remaining in his adopted college-town community of Silver City the rest of his life.

But that was a time when the pre-Pearl Harbor standing military was tiny and the first draft was being instituted only as a precaution, with draftees serving a short time. Certainly, Guard units carried much of the fighting load at the beginning and even throughout World War II.

Audie Murphy, the most decorated soldier of that conflict, was a member of the Texas National Guard.

When Korea began, U.S. permanent forces had been drastically reduced, so units like the Oklahoma National Guard once more had to carry much of the water until regular Army units could be trained.

The difference now, however, is enormous. This was supposed to be a limited engagement in two countries, Iraq and Afghanistan,

to be fought by regular career troops. The fact that it is now being undertaken by a disproportionate number of part-timers is, as Huckabee noted, testimony to the bad planning that went into this exercise. He points out that although the number of casualties in Iraq is low in comparison to other wars, including Vietnam, the impact is horrendous when men and women vital to their families and communities are killed.

As the Congress debates the plan to increase U.S. troops by 21,500 and President Bush asks for funds to bolster the manpower in the Army and Marine Corps, it has become clear that many of those in the Reserve and National Guard, most of whom are in their second tour, probably will have their terms extended once again.

This is a problem facing governors when their states' own needs arise. It is also a dilemma for any number of cities and towns across the nation where important members of the community are being missed as never before in what was supposed to be a short-term affair and has now lasted longer than World War II.

Dan K. Thomasson, a Hoosier native and Franklin College trustee, is former editor of the Scrrips Howard News Service. Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com.