

- MOVIE LISTINGS, C2
- NUPTIALS, C2
- COMMUNITY CALENDAR, C6
- WORSHIP SCHEDULE, C7

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SECTION **C**



Janet Hommel Mangas

Tabloid-style tactics don't faze writing colleague

I was hanging out at the "Middle of the Cornfield" swimming invitational at Indian Creek High School last weekend, and I kept repeatedly hearing a literary name announced over the loudspeakers.

"The winner of every 17-and-over boys is ..."

"Was it Hemmingway, Frost, Steinbeck?"

No, they were actually repeating the name of fellow writer and high school student Brad Vest, who is author of a sports diary which runs weekly in the Daily Journal.

That's when my great idea came. I thought since I've hung out with renowned Indiana writers like historical novelist James Alexander Thom and humorist Mike Redmond (OK, it was at a writer's conference, and we didn't actually hang out, but I still talked to them individually), I thought that this almost-18-year-old fellow Johnson County writer would surely enjoy sharing writer's-block stories with a really cool 47-year-old mom.

My 16-year-old daughter imparted some great advice as I nonchalantly skipped over to him out in the hall after the Friday evening award ceremony: "Mom, just don't say anything stupid."

Keeping that in mind, I asked: "Are you Brad Vest? The Brad Vest, as in the infamous writer?"

After listening to me ramble for few seconds and eyeing me with suspicion, he hesitantly agreed to hang out with me (those weren't actually his words or even close to his terminology) after Saturday's children's meet that he was helping coach.

The next morning while I cheered on swimmers, I took a few notes on Vest, just in case I needed a conversation starter as we hung out after the meet.

I watched him lead his 6- to 10-year-old Indian Creek swimmers like a piper on the pool deck in a chant echoing back and forth to the Center Grove Aquatic Club chant.

"We got spirit, yes we do, we got spirit, how 'bout you?" It went on with "we got more" and ended with "that's what they all say."

I saw him peering at his heat sheet, instructing the girls and boys so they knew when and in which lane to swim. At one point, six little girls with their blue swim caps formed a semicircle around Vest, watching him intently as he refreshed their memory on the backstroke arm movements.

After the swim meet I attempted to scrounge up a little "dirt" about Vest. I asked 10-year-old first-year swimmer Madison Hobbs how she felt about her coach.

She gave me the honest answer: "He's really nice and helps me improve my swimming."

So I asked her directly, "Tell me something strange about him, you know, some dirt."

She paused, lowered her sweet little voice and whispered, "He never, ever ties his shoes."

I went in for the kill and intensely asked her: "Don't you think untied shoes are a safety hazard on the pool deck, putting himself and all the swimmers at risk?"

(SEE WRITING, PAGE C5)

Empowering parents



Seth Easterday, a middle-school minister at Community Church of Greenwood, does some of his work in The Attic, a facility for young people on the church campus.

Community Church of Greenwood is sponsoring a seminar Jan. 31 to help parents understand their teens and the importance of positively influencing them.

Seminar will stress parent-teen interaction

By ANNETTE JONES
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Raising children with good values, healthy decision-making skills and a sense of personal responsibility doesn't just happen.

It takes positive parenting.

This is the message that Mark Devries and other speakers hope to convey at a parenting seminar at Center Grove High School on Jan. 31.

Devries, associate pastor for youth and their families at First Presbyterian Church in Nashville, Tenn., is the founder and director of Youth Ministry Architects, a firm that helps churches minister to young people.

Devries said in an e-mail that while parents contend with a range of challenges in raising teenagers that weren't present a generation ago, parents generally remain the most powerful

force for shaping the values and beliefs of their children.

During the Understanding Your Teenager seminar, Devries will focus on proactive parenting and the power parents have rather than on external forces over which they have little control.

Kerry Beasley, a Greenwood mother of four teenage girls age 13 to 15 and an 8-year-old son, hopes to learn techniques for communicating with her children.

She wants her children to understand that their parents have been through adolescence, too, and know some of the things that they are going through.

Parents continue to be the guiding force for their children even as they enter their teen years, said middle-school minister Seth Easterday of Community Church of Greenwood, a sponsor of the seminar.

(SEE PARENTS, PAGE C4)



Marci Johnson, the mother of four children, including a 15-year-old daughter, is concerned about outlets such as television and the Internet negatively distracting young people.

"I want to distract (my daughter) with things that are good," Johnson said.

Adult sibling rivalry

Family decisions about aging parents can cause discord

By CARLA K. JOHNSON
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHICAGO

The tension rose as Richard Aylward and his two sisters sorted their mother's possessions into four piles: to keep, to donate, to throw out and to move with her into an assisted living facility.

He was annoyed that his sisters wanted to reminisce about every photo and book. He wanted to hurry up and finish the job.

"Because I was the one who had to do the moving, cleaning, selling, closing, etc., I knew I had to play the heavy," he said.

Eventually, his oldest sister — fed up with her brother's pressuring — walked out.

Big sisters, little brothers, black sheep, dad's favorite: All the old roles, battles and rivalries resurface when a parent's health is failing and decisions must be made.

With about 20 million Americans providing care for a parent or in-law, such family dramas — often with financial questions lurking unsaid — are playing out across the country, said Bonnie Lawrence, spokeswoman for the Family Caregiver Alliance.

Eighty percent of long-term care is provided by families, not institutions, Lawrence said. Even families that don't provide care, though, are choosing a nursing home or making medical decisions about a dying parent.

But getting stuck in an old squabble can sabotage wise decisions, said researchers who study family dynamics.

To help, some states offer free consulting to families making decisions about elders, and a new school of professional mediation has sprung up to help baby boomers stop fighting with their

(SEE AGING, PAGE C3)

DO'S AND DON'TS

Tips for families making eldercare decisions

- Do keep all siblings in the loop about the parent's health and care needs.
 - Don't be afraid to talk about money. All siblings should know the financial picture. Bring into the open concerns about inheritance.
 - Do ask for help from siblings with parent care by being specific and emphasizing the parent's needs: "I'm finding myself getting impatient, and I don't think that's fair to Mom. Could you help by taking care of her every other Saturday?"
 - Do work together as a family from the beginning, before a crisis blows up.
 - Do explore resources. The Family Caregiver Alliance offers state-by-state information on caregiving decisions at (800) 445-8106 or infocaregiver.org.
- SOURCE: Donna Schempp of the Bay Area Caregiver Resource Center in San Francisco

Drunken-driving tragedy spurs mother to educate others about risks

Mom-turned-activist on mission to spare other families her grief

By ANNETTE JONES
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Even after six years, coping with her son's death has been a daily struggle for Cathy Schofield Sexton.

But the Whiteland woman is channeling some of her grief into a campaign against drunken driving.

U.S. Army Spc. Ryan Schofield was 20 when he was killed in an alcohol-related traffic accident outside Statesboro, Ga.

He was one of two passengers in a car returning to Fort Stewart, Ga., where he was stationed. The three soldiers had gone out to celebrate Schofield's promotion scheduled for the next day.

The car veered across the center line on a two-lane highway and was struck by a tractor-semitrailer rig.



Cathy Schofield Sexton holds mementos of her son, U.S. Army Spc. Ryan Schofield. He was 20 when he was killed in an alcohol-related traffic accident in Georgia.

The three men were killed instantly. Ryan was the only one wearing a seat belt.

The Army promoted him from private first class to specialist posthumously on the day he died, Sept. 7, 2000.

Ryan didn't want to go out that night, a friend of his told Sexton, when she and her husband, Darrell Sexton, went to Fort Stewart to bring her son's body home.

Before the accident, Schofield had been home visiting his family. He was 1998 graduate of Whiteland Community High School.

"We were making plans for Christmas. We were going to bake cookies," she said.

Ryan left on a Monday to return to Fort Stewart and was killed the following Thursday. He had three more months in the service before he was to be discharged after serving nearly two years.

Ryan was stationed in Kuwait for a time. He received a commendation for being a "superior soldier ... who showed dedication."

When his Army unit was deployed to Bosnia-Herzegovina after his death, the unit named a street in Tuzla, Bosnia, after him in his memory.

Every year since his death, Sexton puts up a small Christmas tree in her

yard in Ryan's memory. The tree is decorated in red, white and blue ornaments with "America" across the top, a small flag and lights. She keeps a light burning by the flagpole with American and U.S. Army flags attached. An angel holds a card that says, "Bring our troops home safely."

"There's an empty hole in my heart, and nothing fills it," Schofield said. "I felt like life stopped."

Meeting her son's flag-draped coffin at the Indianapolis airport hangar was traumatic for Sexton.

"I never realized how fragile life is," she said.

After the funeral in Whiteland, she rode behind the hearse past her house, so Ryan would be home one more time before he was buried. More than a hundred cars were in the funeral procession, she said.

On his birthday, Sexton releases butterflies at his grave. She promises Ryan that nobody will forget him.

A substitute teacher for Clark-Pleasant

(SEE MOTHER, PAGE C4)