

## Children need to live their own lives

Parents have always lived vicariously through their kids. Since the days of Noah, when one neighborhood kid said to the other, "I'll race 'ya to the ark," parents have been boasting about how smart, fast, strong or beautiful their child is compared to your child.

In recent years, though, this competition thing seems to have moved to a whole new level. A few years ago, we had the "Texas Cheerleader Murder." The mother of a cheerleader "wannabe" thought she could better her daughter's chances of making the cheerleading squad if some of the competition was eliminated, so she arranged for the killing of one of the candidates. I think she got 15 years to life.

Then there was the father who attacked and killed his kid's hockey coach for not giving the boy enough playing time.

Granted, those are extreme cases, but you can see that it's not a big step for some overzealous, hormone-heated parent to cross over that fine line between excited spectator and blood-in-the-eye fanatic.

You know who they are in your hometown: The parent who goes nuts at a game, hollering and yelling at his kid to, "Get the ball. Get the ball. Get the ball." And all the kid wants to do is be able to run down the court without falling down in front of his friends. He doesn't really want the ball because then he knows he'll hear, "Shoot the ball. Shoot the ball. Shoot the ball."

They are probably the same parents who make that kid re-play the game over and over in the car on the way home, pointing out every mistake he made in not being aggressive enough, not shooting enough or scoring enough. Pretty soon the kid says, "Enough is enough. I can't ever be good enough. I quit."

Then the parents say, "I won't let you quit. You said you wanted to play...and by God, you're going to play. I won't have a quitter in this house."

When this scenario gets rewound, though, it probably started more like, "I signed you up for Little League today. You want to play, don't you?"

We can't blame it on the coaches. A coach's job depends on his win-loss record. He's going to push as hard as he gets pushed.

Gone are the days when little boys and girls just played a game for fun. Now they are being groomed from the age of 6 to win full-ride scholarships with an eye on turning pro.

Forget how unrealistic a goal that is. Consider the thousands and thousands of high school and college athletes competing for the few scholarships available. Then consider that in any given year, there are only a few hundred professional athlete slots to be filled. That's a lot of disappointed people who are going to turn around and push their kids to accomplish the things they weren't able to.

Not every child is capable of "A" level work. But if he is a "C" student and does "B" level work, then he is definitely doing his best. Let's try telling our kids, "Great job. Good game. You did your best. I'm proud of you."

We've got to quit pushing our kids so hard to be the best. Do their best, sure. They don't necessarily have to be the best. There is a difference.

— Carolyn Plotts

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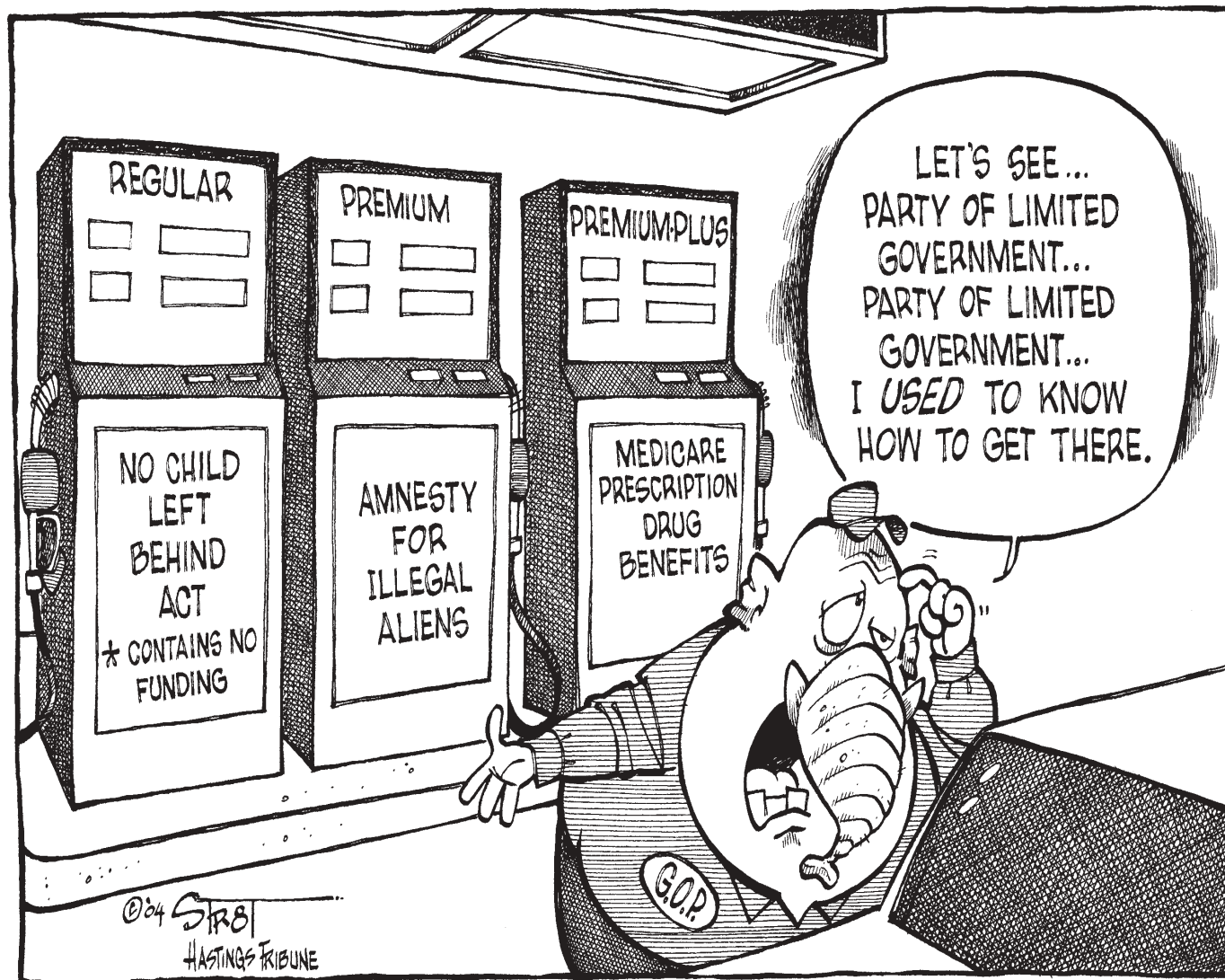
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Incorporating the Norton County Champion

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## 'Bored' was not tolerated at home

There was one word not acknowledged in my home when I was growing up. Of course, those of you who know my schoolteacher mother know there were others of the four-letter variety not allowed, but this was of a different nature.

The word was "bored". If you were ever so inclined to say you were bored, you immediately faced two interpretations; you were tired and needed a nap, which when you are a child is synonymous with the death sentence, or you were lacking in some way and needed direction.

Addle-brained is the phrase that comes to mind, although I'm not sure it is the politically correct one, but it is descriptive.

In my mother's mind this had nothing to do with intelligence. Not at all. It had everything to do with your ability to be creative, imaginative and innovative.

And you know those things your par-

### Phase II

Mary Kay Woodyard



ents did and you say you will never duplicate when you are a parent? Well, guess what?

I taught my children the same thing. And so it was, with some amusement, I overheard one of my children informing their spouse, boredom was a sign of an unimaginative mind. And how I agree.

I listened with some sadness recently when I overheard a very gifted, talented woman lament the fact there was nothing in Norton for her children, ages 5 and 7, to do in the summer if they couldn't swim. I was stunned.

## Territory disputes causing harm

In almost every community in Kansas, local law enforcement agencies, emergency medical services, fire departments, the highway patrol, the Department of Transportation, city and county road departments, public health, and public utilities all communicate by radio on different frequencies.

For the most part, units in the field lack the ability to communicate with each other. Not only do they operate on different frequencies but in most cases they refuse to share space on the towers.

We have a bunch of fiefdoms that tend to act like a king with a moat surrounding his castle. The plea for years was for all of these groups to share their resources because the citizens just want a coordinated response in times of emergency.

From 1992 through June 2002, the Kansas Department of Transportation constructed 76 towers at a cost of \$36.5 million to provide an 800 Mhz radio communications system for the highway patrol and highway workers. In 1996, additional radio equipment to assist emergency medical services personnel was added. Two years ago, legislation was passed that required the department to allow a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration weather warning transmitter on one of the 76 towers but Gov. Bill Graves vetoed the bill.

One of the benefits since the tragedy of

### Senate Doings

Sen. Stan Clark



Sept. 11 is that there is an awakening that we have to work together during an emergency. Excuses like an additional antenna might cause the tower to collapse during a storm are proving to be hollow rhetoric. A structural integrity test can be confirmed by calculating of the loading on the tower. Similarly, concerns about radio interference from multiple users on the same tower can be controlled and corrected. Concerns about site security and access can be controlled with locks and individual fencing.

Barriers that were erected by bureaucracies, turf battles that were impenetrable with common sense and any legislative or citizen-based cajoling, which only increased the hostility, are starting to ease. It is refreshing to see a willingness to work together for the common good. Voice, data, and Global Positioning System information has to flow among all emergency service agencies because an effective and efficient emergency response requires coordination, communi-

Whatever happened to "pretend". The blanket draped over the picnic table for a tent. Paper towel tubes for telescopes, toilet paper rolls banded together for binoculars, a wagon for a boat, or digging to China. Are there no more trees to climb or neighborhood parades to plan?

Childhood is when we learn how to be adults and "pretend" is all a part of that. Most of us recall our favorite childhood memories.

They are not usually big events but the little happenings of everyday life. Too much structure eliminates the possibilities of creative play.

Balance, of all life has to offer, is the key.

Maybe we have just become too sophisticated for our own good. Maybe we have schooled, lessened and gifted (meaning giving of things) our youngsters into unimaginative lives. What a sadness. What a loss.

education and sharing of information.

Can we actually share our resources and provide a coordinated emergency response today? Well, we are seeing a willingness to work together that has never existed before. This week, in the Senate Utilities Committee, which I am chairman of, the secretary of transportation presented her vision of a communications network that included opening access to tower space for other public safety agencies and private companies; and creating a fund from fees for tower rental — to provide grants and loans to local and state agencies to buy 800 Mhz radio equipment, and generate money to maintain, support and enhance existing communications services. Following her presentation we heard enthusiastic support from representatives of just about every public safety organization in our state.

It is wonderful witnessing the barriers being broken down and seeing a willingness to work together. Maybe this can serve as an example of how agencies can cooperate and actually work together.

Please feel free to contact me on this or any issue. I can be reached by writing to Sen. Stan Clark, State Capitol-Room 449-N, Topeka, Kan. 66612; calling (800) 432-3924 or (785) 296-7399; by fax at (800) 457-9064; or by e-mail at sclark@ink.org.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

To the Editor:

News items involving the Norton County Commissioners over the last few weeks would lead one to believe the Kansas Department of Health and Environment is an example of bad government in action. It sounds as if the commissioners feel the department is abandoning common sense on the trash issue with their new costly regulations.

This comes in stark contrast to the commissioners actions concerning Norton County livestock producers. Their 2002 resolution to implement more strict guidelines on Norton County livestock opera-

tions than those enforced by the state health department is a prime example of the bad government about which they are complaining. Norton County commissioners have effectively put me and other livestock producers in the area at a competitive disadvantage with those as close as Decatur, Phillips and Graham counties. State health department regulations on livestock facilities are already considered some of the most strict in the nation and are designed to protect water quality for us all.

In the next few weeks, the Kansas Supreme Court will decide whether environ-

mental law is a matter of statewide concern or should be regulated on a patchwork, county-by-county basis.

So on one hand, the commissioners think the state health department is too strict, specifically in the case of trash. On the other hand, they don't see it as strict enough on livestock operations. They want more flexible regulations in their case, and more strict guidelines when it comes to the compliance of livestock operations.

As a livestock producer, I certainly understand their point on the trash issue.

Robert Clydesdale, Edmond