

City council is trying to fix a problem it didn't create

We don't want to pay higher water and sewer fees. However, we understand the need. We don't like it, but we understand. The Norton City Council has decided to raise our fees by quite a bit, and no one likes it. However, we also realize that the City Council did not create the problem it is trying to solve. We also realize that the council members aren't all that happy about raising fees. After all, they live here, too. They will be paying the same increased rates as the rest of us. While we can rail at the state and federal agencies that are the real cause of the increases, since our old water and sewer system can't meet current water-quality standards, it won't do us any good. They're from the government, and they're here to help us. No matter that we neither need nor want their "help". So we will pay with many moans and groans and complaints to the council members. But we shouldn't be complaining about them. They have spent countless hours trying to figure out the least painful way to get new systems and pay for them, and unlike the federal government, our city can't spend money it doesn't have. So say "thank-you" to those council members. Tell them that you don't like the increases but you know it isn't their fault. Believe us, they'll agree with you. They don't like them either.

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We've noted that the municipal court judge is handing out some unusual sentences. He gave community service to several "criminals" who were violating the city's curfew and to a couple of drivers who were out and about without having their licenses on them. He required one person with a loose dog to put up a fence and pen instead of paying a fine. We like it. It might be an education for people to do good around town to make up for minor mistakes instead of paying a fine. Allowing a person to take their fine money and fix the problem instead of ignoring it is creative problem solving. While not every problem can be solved with community service or by allowing someone off the hook on a fine, it does show that the court is trying to solve problems instead of just punishing offenders.

— Cynthia Haynes

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: Soldier wishes dad a happy Father's Day

To the Editor: For Howard Richard, Edmond: Staff Sgt. Kirk Richard, U.S. Air Force, would like to say "Happy Father's Day, Dad", from a forward deployed overseas location in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

WRITE:

The Norton Telegram encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of public interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author. We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise.

We do not publish form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous should be submitted to the Want Ad desk. Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses which do not pertain to a public issue.

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Can bats be considered charming?

The great thing about old houses is they have charm. I know I have confused people by referring to the house we are moving to as "the new house." It is not a new house. It is just new to us. A bungalow built in 1920s, it has charm aplenty.

You can justify the little quirks you deal with by describing them as charming. As in "isn't it charming how little Eddie carved his initials on the window sill back in 1940." Or how the doors on the built-in china hutch are slightly off square.

And "Aren't the wood floors great?" And how charming that they are uneven. However some things I just cannot live with. These include bats.

I knew my mother-in-law had a bat problem. Well, that made a good joke. But when it happens to me, it is not funny.

Or in this case to Kate. Kate is spending as much of the summer as she can with us. She and Tricia moved into the "new" house when they came back.

We had been a little concerned that the bats were still around. But we thought they came in around a window air conditioner (now gone) and had not seen one in over a year (it was dead) so we convinced ourselves not to worry.

I noticed Kate had been cornering her father and telling him she thought there might still be a problem. They didn't seem to want to share this information with me. It's like they expected me to freak out or something.

Can you imagine? Then it happened, Kate awoke to find a bat in her room.

So how do you get rid of them? You find out where they are getting in and block the entrance.

Back Home Nancy Hagman



Okay, if we knew where they were getting in we would have fixed it years ago. The house has "charming" dormer windows and eaves. Some of these eaves are closets. One is a storage room over the porch. Some are just unfinished spaces. Sort of like bat caves.

I have been reading up on bats. There seem to be two schools of thought.

The first is bats are our friends. They eat lots of insects, particularly mosquitoes. Why not put up a bat house and see if you can attract them to your area.

Why not, indeed? Don't worry about disease. Only about 1 percent of rabies cases come from bats. There are some other nasty things they can carry, but just think about all the dead mosquitoes.

Yes, it's possible you could be bitten and not even know it. And some of these diseases can be airborne, but remember the dead mosquitoes.

Bats are migratory. If you feel you must get rid of them do not do it in June or July because that is when they have babies. The babies cannot fly, if you manage to get the adults moved out, the babies will die.

How sad — no adult bats and dead baby bats versus bats flying around in the house.

Hmmm — what should we do?

According to this group there are no pesticides currently approved for bats and ultrasonic sound does not work.

The other school of thought is ultrasonic does work to an extent (and they happen to have a system they will sell to you).

There is also a product with a "pungent" odor that will repel bats. Of course humans do not like the smell either so basically no one will be able to live in the house.

Come on — I read on a box of mothballs — do not use to control bats. Now I am thinking, "Why not?" It must work or why did they put that warning on there? I had an exterminator tell me that when spraying for insects some bats might "accidentally" die. But you can't just set out to exterminate them.

"Why not?" Oh, yeah, I forgot, "bats are our friends."

Did you know that 25 percent of all mammals are bats? Surely it won't hurt to exterminate one or two or a colony!

They live in colonies. They can get in an opening as small as three-eighths of an inch.

Do you have an old house? Not to alarm anyone but how many three-eighth inch spaces do you think there might be?

In the poor bat's defense, it is possible it did not want to be in Kate's bedroom. It probably would have preferred to be outside eating mosquitoes.

So I have convinced myself it is really not bad to share quarters with bats.

I am very calm and content with my decision. I hope the rest of family enjoys the "new" house.

Charm is sooooo overrated. I'm staying here.

Fathers urged to 'kick the habit'

Health Perspectives By Gina Frack

The Norton County Health Department urges all fathers to kick the nicotine addiction.

Sunday is Fathers Day and a good time to show your children that you want to be part of their lives for as long as possible by quitting smoking.

In Kansas, about one in five adults smoke and about 161,000 youngsters are exposed to secondhand smoke at home.

Children who are exposed to secondhand smoke are more likely to suffer from asthma, acute respiratory illnesses, acute middle ear diseases, coughing and wheezing.

"When Father's Day rolls around, it's easy to just focus on grilling with the family or playing with the kids," Dr. Roy Hartley, Norton County Health Department medical officer said. "But it is so important for Dads to focus on their health so they can be around and healthy for as much of their children's future as possible."

The Kansas Tobacco Quitline (1-866-KAN-STOP) is free and available 24/7. Counselors work with the caller to help them with a quit plan. The one-on-one telephone counseling is scheduled at times convenient for the caller. Callers are

told to call the quitline as often as necessary.

Quitting results in immediate health benefits for both light and heavy smokers, including improvements in breathing and circulation. The risk for coronary heart disease and stroke is substantially reduced after one or two years of not smoking. When smokers quit, their lungs begin to heal and their risk of lung disease drops.

According to the American Cancer Society, after 15 years off cigarettes, the risk of death for ex-smokers drops to the level of persons who have never smoked.

For more information on how you can

quit for your family or protect your loved ones from secondhand smoke call the Norton County Health Department at 877-5745.

Quit Smoking Tips

• Write down your reasons for quitting. Keep the list handy and look at it when you are tempted to smoke.

• Choose a "quit day". When that day arrives, throw away all your cigarettes, lighters and ashtrays.

• Stay away from places, activities or people that make you feel like smoking.

• Ask your partner or a friend to help you quit, and call that person when you feel like smoking.

• Ask your health care provider about patches, gum, nasal spray and medications to help you quit.

• Don't get discouraged if you don't quit completely right away. Keep trying. Quitting is a difficult, but very important decision for the health of you and your family.

