

Democrats aren't providing leadership

The Democrats took control of the United States Senate and the House of Representatives after the 2006 November elections by the slimmest of margins. Since they have desperately tried to convince everybody on the planet they had a mandate to turn things around.

Well, it just hasn't quite turned out that way. While they did manage to get a few things passed in House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's first 100 hours, the going, since then, has been anything but smooth.

The way they talked after the November '06 mini-victory, they were going to tell President Bush how to run the country, the war, and anything else they thought needed running.

They seem to be shooting themselves in the foot. Senate Leader Harry Reid just doesn't seem to be equipped for the role. Speaker Pelosi is misguided as to what her duties are.

While Mr. Bush's approval ratings are still in the gutter, he need not make many adjustments; instead, all he need do is sit and watch the Democrats continue to unravel. They seem to have too many voices in the pot, allowing one to surmise leadership isn't the result of the 2006 election.

Democrat leadership tells the president their bill to continue funding for the troops would include a calendar for withdrawal. President Bush said he'd veto any bill with that stipulation. That would be like extending the enemy an invitation to the going away party. Sen. Reid remains adamant about that wording.

There are other Democrats, thank goodness, telling Sen. Reid, of Nevada, to cool it.

The Democrats, under Reid and Pelosi, are — at this early stage in their mini-majority role — setting themselves up for a letdown in 2008 if things continue on course. And if the letdown happens, won't that be something: Republicans in the majority in both the House and Senate, and the Democrats occupying the White House!

The voters are watching closely. Change is the name of their game. And if they have to change political diapers every two years, they will.

—Tom Dreiling

Grandparents in role of parents

An increasing number of children live in households headed by grandparents, most commonly due to teenage pregnancies, the high rate of divorce, and the increase in single parent families. Other reasons include the death or disability of parents, parental abuse or neglect, substance abuse by parents, or the incarceration of parents. These grandparents range in ages from the thirties to the seventies, and their situations vary. Most are ready and eager to take on the role of nurturer and caretaker. Many have already simplified their lives, are making plans for retirement, or have retired. For them, giving up those plans and taking on the responsibilities of being a parent can bring up many feelings including loss, grief, anger, resentment, and also guilt. In addition, their financial burdens will most likely increase.

Many children moving in to live with grandparents arrive with risk factors such as abuse, neglect, prenatal exposure to drugs and alcohol, and the loss of their parents due to death, incarceration, or abandonment. Many are in need of, not only love and caring, but also structure, clear expectations and effective discipline. The transition for both children and grandparents can be very stressful. Infants

High Plains Mental Health

By Karen Schueler

and preschoolers require a great deal of time and energy, and dealing with adolescents of a different generation can be particularly challenging. Many grandparents underestimate or are unaware of the added burdens of taking on the role of parent. The role of nurturer comes easy, but they must also become, once again, the adults who establish control and set limits.

It is very important for these grandparents to receive support and assistance from other family members, support groups, the faith community, and social service agencies. In some situations, financial aid may be available. Teachers, counselors, and mental health professionals are also available to serve as resources. Grandparents must be able to take care of themselves and their own lives in order to also be successful as a parent to their grandchildren.

E-mail questions to: www.highplainsmentalhealth.com.



Many questions, but few answers

There cannot possibly be any reasonable explanation for the murders of 32 students and teachers at Virginia Tech University, Blacksburg, Va., at the hands of one of its students. I watched and listened closely to just about every mental health professional the news channels were able to parade in front of their cameras. Their take varied little, no answers, of course, just guesses. But we can all guess.

Some of the news channels were openly questioning the way the university initially handled the situation. Easy to dig for fault when those in charge and all others affected were in a state of total shock. It was poor taste by the media's big boys that early in the disclosure.

Can a similar nightmare happen right here in Norton? You bet. Are we prepared? We would like to think so. But let's hope and pray we never have to put our plan in action forced by that kind of situation.

Virginia Tech probably thought they had all bases covered. But they faced something different. On that fateful morning, shots rang out shortly after 7 a.m. at a dorm. Two dead. The plan was put in effect to isolate that facility. Unbeknownst to authorities at the time, the killer left that building, made a video and wrote a detailed, rambling description of hate and anger, mailed it off to NBC, then returned to campus to continue his fatal assault. In the end, he put one of his two guns to his head and joined those he cold bloody silenced forever.

I don't think the reality of the situation has sunk in. Thirty-three dead, including the assassin. Never before in modern U.S. history has such a deadly rampage occurred. In the scope of things — before Monday's tragedy — when school shootings are discussed, Columbine High School races to the forefront.

We, as mortals, can only hope we are prepared for whatever the circumstance. But time and again, those with evil on their mind seem to succeed before capture or ending their own lives.

Good Evening Norton

Tom Dreiling



eral years when I was editor of *The Sheridan Press*, a 6-day daily. Sheridan is about 125 miles north of Casper, which sits on I-25, which eventually joins I-90. Give it a try.

-td-

Four retired guys were walking down the street in Dodge City, Kansas when they saw a sign that said, "Old Timer's Bar. All Drinks 10 Cents!" They looked at one another, then went in, thinking this is too good to be true. The old bartender said in a voice that carried across the room, "Come on in and let me pour one for you! What'll it be, gentlemen?"

All four asked for a martini. In short order, the bartender served up four iced martinis, shaken, not stirred, and said, "That'll be 10 cents each, please." The four men stared at the bartender for a moment, looked at each other, then paid the 40 cents. After the second, 40-cent round, their curiosity got the best of them. Finally, one of the men said, "How can you afford to serve martinis as good as these for only a dime apiece?"

"Well, I'm retired and I always wanted to own a bar. Last year I hit the lottery for \$50 million and decided to open this place. Every drink costs a dime — wine, liquor, beer, all the same."

"Wow, that's quite a story," said one of the men.

As they continued to sip their martinis, they couldn't help but notice the other three guys at the end of the bar who didn't have a drink in front of them and hadn't ordered anything all the while they were there. One of the men gestured towards the men with no drinks and asked the bartender, "What's with them?"

"Oh, they're from Oklahoma. They're waiting for happy hour at 5 o'clock when drinks are half price."

-td-

Have a good evening and a good weekend. And if you hear bells in the distance, they must be coming from your church. Please respond accordingly.

Just hold on, summer's on the way

It's hard to believe that I still have daffodils blooming out in the yard. After getting hit by the freeze, many of my flowers curled up their petals and called it a year. Others kept a bloom on their stems and just laid low during the cold.

In fact, some of my tulips were practically trying to dig their way back into the ground.

I went out on Thursday night and cut a bunch of tulips and daffodils. All the tulips were lying on the ground but the daffodils were hiding among some lilies.

I read several years ago that if you plant daffodils among your lilies you increase the bloom time without increasing the space needed for your flowers.

It works.

Since the lily bulbs form a circle, you can plant the daffodils in the spaces between them. The daffodils come up and bloom in the early spring just as the lily shoots are starting to emerge. By the time the lilies are fully leafed, the daffodils have stopped blooming and just blend into the foliage. Then in the summer, the lilies

Open Season

Cynthia Haynes



everything is yellow.

Every year after the beautiful display of yellow daffodils along the walk, I dream of red tulips blooming beside the steps. And every year, the tulips there come up yellow.

When I tell Steve that I keep hoping for red, he just shakes his head. We dug that bed up a couple of years ago and he was going to toss the tulips, but I stopped him. I should have gone out and gotten some red bulbs, but I didn't, so I guess I'll be looking out at the front steps and sighing every year.

The flowering pear tree by the back door took a hit from the weather but it will still have plenty of blossoms for us. It doesn't produce fruit anyway, so we don't care if we lost half our "crop."

Out back, we'll have to wait awhile longer to see how the spirea and the lilac fared. We may have flowers and we may just have a bunch of green bushes.

Anyway, the irises will be in bloom pretty soon. And even without all the usual display, summer is coming and I can't wait.

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THE NORTON TELEGRAM

Office hours:

8 a.m.- 5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.

Phone: (785) 877-3361

Fax: (785) 877-3732

E-mail: telegram@nwkansas.com

STAFF

Tom Dreiling editor and publisher

Christie Anderson advertising

Veronica Monier staff reporter

Dick Boyd Blue Jay sports

Carolyn Plotts society editor

Sherry Hickman bookkeeping/circulation

Vicki Henderson computer production

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