

Marion man's actions supported by veterans

It's a scary thing that a lot of people, especially veterans, came to the support of a Marion man caught following members of a dissident Topeka church around Mulvane with a couple of guns.

At first, Ryan Newell, 26, who lost both legs in Afghanistan, told sheriff's officers he was providing security for members of the Westboro Baptist Church. They let him go. Then someone asked church members about their "security detail."

Later, Sedgwick County sheriff's officers found him parked headed-out in a garage across the street from where church members were meeting with Wichita police officials about security. He had guns and ammunition with him.

Members of the church have a decades-long campaign against homosexuality that began with pickets of those they considered "enablers" of gay rights. Later, that morphed into protests at the funerals of more than 600 servicemen and women killed in action in Iraq and Afghanistan. The church believes these deaths are God's punishment for America for tolerating homosexuals.

It goes without saying that this group is about as popular as mud with veterans, veterans groups and other patriotic organizations. Groups including the American Legion Riders have organized to peaceably block Westboro protests and keep them away from the family at funerals. Emotions run high.

After Mr. Newell was arrested and charged with misdemeanor counts including stalking, people across the country began to call and offer to pay his legal expenses. That's admirable, we suppose, but we hope these "patriots" weren't in any way condoning his actions, planned or actual.

The ex-soldier was, after all, lying in wait for the Westboro group with three weapons, a combat rifle, a pistol and a revolver. We can only guess what he intended to do.

Worse yet, after state and federal officers searched his home, he was charged with a felony count of conspiracy, which implies that others helped him or put him up to whatever misdeeds he had planned.

No one in Kansas is proud of the Westboro gang or its cause. They are an obnoxious wart on the pretty face of our fair state. But nothing more.

They express an opinion that, while grossly unpopular, is theirs to hold. Few agree with them; fewer still support them. But under our Bill of Rights, they are allowed not only to have their weird thoughts, but to express them.

The right to freedom of speech and assembly, protected by the First Amendment, is among those we're told our veterans fight to protect. It's part of the American Way.

We never felt that mayhem or murder were among the rights veterans fought for. You have to believe in this case, those could have been the outcome had not a few sheriff's officers asked some pointed questions.

One thing we do believe in is that Mr. Newell is innocent until proven guilty. Anyone who wants to help him defend himself, that is their right.

We hope just none of them means to endorse his actions, which pretty clearly go beyond the call.

— Steve Haynes

Being a healing and reconciling person

For his birthday, I gave my husband Bob a Guided Writing Workshop at Manna House of Prayer in Concordia. He wanted me to go with him, so we spent his birthday with

seven other people and a nun who led the workshop. One of the activities was to reflect on a piece she handed out. This sentence leaped out at me as if it had been bold-faced and capitalized: "My longing to be a healing and reconciling person to your people is affirmed within the daily comings and goings of my life."

That is what I have hoped to do with my life since my diagnosis of breast cancer. Bob was having chemo at the time of my diagnosis, and so many friends reached out to us during the time following my surgery and during my own journey through chemo. People brought us meals, others took me to Hays for doctors' appointments, and still others came to visit. One of the things I especially appreciated was that there were literally people around the world praying for me. When there were days that all I could do was get dressed in the mornings and make it to the living room couch, it buoyed my spirit to think of the people who lifted me up in prayer.

Since I completed chemo, I have made an effort to reach out to others, espe-

Life is Good
Rita Speer



cially other women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer since then. I became a Reach to Recovery volunteer, receiving training so that I can offer newly diagnosed women information as well as

being a link in their own chain of support. I have made hospital visits, home visits and phone calls. I respond to what others are saying and leave my own agenda at the door.

I have an on-going list of women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer for whom I pray daily. There are other people with other needs for whom I pray daily. In praying for others, this "longing to be a healing and reconciling person" is being partially met.

The other part of the phrase refers to my daily comings and goings. Sometimes it seems I come and go much more than I'd like, but when I feel overloaded by that, inevitably I meet someone with whom I share. It may be little more than letting someone know I really care about the kind of day he/she is having; sometimes it is a deeper encounter. And of course I benefit from these chance meetings.

I desire being a "healing and reconciling person," so if we meet somewhere about town, please know I do care how you are when I ask. Peace be with you.



The importance of music and band to success

We thought we left in plenty of time to secure a good parking place. When we arrived, the area surrounding East Campus was full of cars. Eisenhower Elementary School (EES) Principal Corey Roy said, when they unlocked the doors at 5:30 a line had already formed waiting to be admitted for the school concert. If you weren't in the holiday spirit before, you were afterward.

There are schools which have targeted music programs to answer the budgetary dilemma. Music, however is more than just a frill for students. Research has found a direct link between the ability to play an instrument and learning in general. Processing sounds improves one's ability to stay focused and because of the training to hear differences in pitch and timing it may help children learn new

Phase II
Mary Kay Woodyard



ers have only been playing six months. It is evident how important this outlet has become to these young people.

Each year I am in awe of Joyce Morel, vocal director. Not only does she get these youngsters to learn the songs, sing them and even sometimes have accompanying body motions, they love performing. Vocal music will last these children a lifetime whether it is in the shower, a church choir or a community performance their love of music will be a forever companion. But aside from this, research has shown, children who sing in choirs do better in school studies, especially math and are better equipped to overcome shyness and develop self confidence.

But Monday night, it was sheer enjoyment. Merry Christmas

languages.

Band Director Don Mordecai has taken 5th and 6th grade youth with little or no instrumental experience and created a band. He has introduced them to new sounds and songs and taught them the importance of working together. These young people began lessons upon completion of their fourth grade year. So the most experienced player has been playing only 18 months. The fifth grad-

Life is what happens to us even during the holidays

You are out there, somewhere! I'm not going to name names, because you know who you are. YOU---the harried parent with three sports events and two Christmas programs last week, the grandparent with a limited income and dwindling energy, the one who just lost a job or got bad news about your health during this season that is supposed to be joyful. The stay at home mom who should have plenty of time so they ask you to do one more thing-----

I've been there, done that. Death doesn't know it's Christmas. Cancer doesn't know it's Christmas.

Christmas---the season when on top of all the ordinary things we tack on endless shopping and overspending; planning, cleaning and cooking for get-togethers; and special programs, church services etc. It's no wonder the holidays often bring stress and depression.

And sometimes the stress begins at Thanksgiving. Like the time I came home from work on the Wednesday before, thinking I'd make rolls.

This Too Shall Pass
Nancy Hagman



to nine it dawned on me something was wrong---

I looked at the recipe. In my haste 1/3 cup had read 1 1/3. I had 4 times the water needed. It was a good thing we were headed to town. I didn't have any more yeast and the reasonable thing to do was start over. (It did occur to me to build on what I had but that would have taken 30 more cups of flour and I don't have a bowl that big!)

When I got to town, I thought of a third option: frozen rolls. Everyone was happy, especially me. I got my new faucet, a lunch date and more time with my family.

The situation could easily have spiraled out of control, because that happens a lot during the holidays.

Last year my sister sent me this Christmas version of First Corinthians. No matter what we are coping with this Christmas: problems we brought on ourselves or things we never saw coming, it's such a comfort to know: Love never ends.

Merry Christmas!

Dear Editor,

Your gifts are still needed this year.

It's that time of year when you see The Salvation Army bell ringers out and about in the community, and come across our donation envelopes in your local newspaper. It is our hope that you might consider dropping some change into one of the red kettles while you are out shopping, or using one of the envelopes to mail in a donation. It is an unfortunate reality that we are seeing more need among our neighbors this year.

Being able to provide the assistance that is needed to help people in crisis throughout the year comes from your generosity. Helping your local Salvation Army makes an impact directly in your community. 88% of the funds raised during the Christmas Season stays to assist families and individuals who live right here with things like rent/mortgage assistance, utility assistance, prescription medication, and other critical needs.


Thank you to all those who have volunteered and those who have donated. We cannot thank you enough for everything that you do and for your support.

God Bless you all and Merry Christmas,

Brian Carroll

Director of Service Extension

The Salvation Army Kansas and Western Missouri



Letters to the Editor and Thumbs Up: e-mail dpaxton@nwkans.com, or write to: 215 S. Kansas Ave. 67654

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Thumbs Up is meant to honor good deeds or events around town. Thumbs Up are reviewed by Telegram staff prior to publication. Thumbs Up comments may be denied if they are not meant to honor a positive event or deed.

THE NORTON TELEGRAM

ISSN 1063-701X

215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, KS 67654

Published each Tuesday and Friday by Haynes Publishing Co., 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, Kan. 67654. Periodicals mail postage paid at Norton, Kan. 67654.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Norton Telegram, 215 S. Kansas, Norton, Kan. 67654

Official newspaper of Norton and Norton County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, and the Nebraska Press Association

Nor'West Newspapers
Dick and Mary Beth Boyd
Publishers, 1970-2002

Kansas Press Association



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