

What it means to be a listener

Who Listens?

My most recent column, about listening and/or talking, brought a lot of comments. Someone spoke to my husband about the column, telling Bob about being a listener. I began thinking about what it means to be a listener.

In one sense, listening is "doing nothing." If you were to watch someone who is focused on listening to another, it would seem the listener is not doing anything. This of course isn't true; the listener is engaged in active listening and hearing what the speaker is saying. In addition, he encourages the one who is talking to share at a deeper level, thereby coming to a solution to a problem the speaker may not have identified.

When one listens, truly listens, he/she is focused on the other to the exclusion of all distractions. The speaker feels important and believes what he/she is sharing is important. Often the listener need only say a few words of encouragement to enable the speaker to pour out something deep within. What matters most, I believe, is focusing exclusively on the other and letting the other know that he/she matters to you. When one listens to another, being heard empowers the speaker, allowing him to feel good about him/herself.

I am not talking about doing therapy, although engaging with a good listener can have a therapeutic effect. At the least, we come away from such an encounter feeling that we really matter to someone. At the most, we may be able to work out a solution to a problem we hadn't identified. For example, someone may talk about being angry over a situation. With a few, well-placed comments, the person may discover he was really dealing with fear. We can deal with what we know.

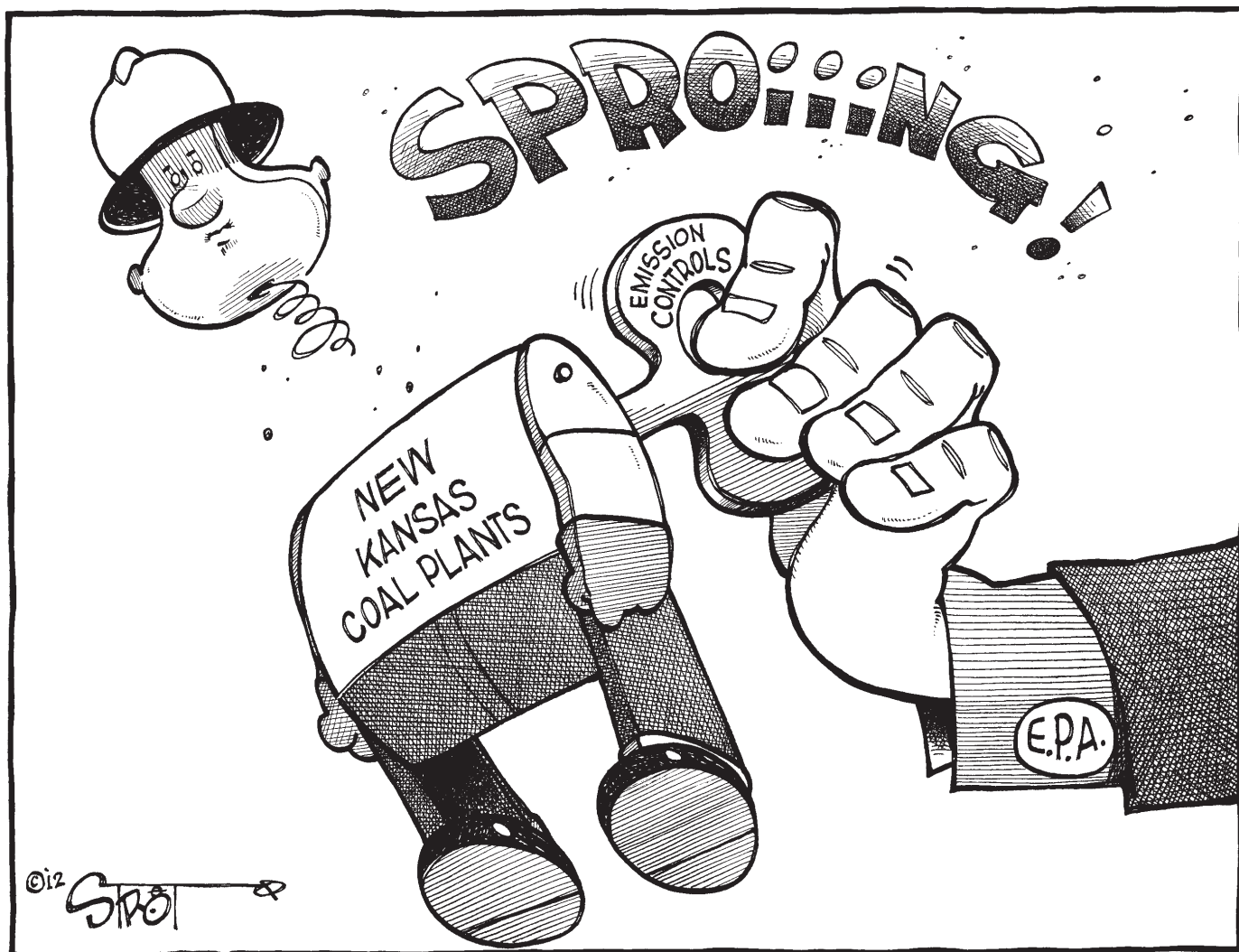
I am more and more convinced we all need to have someone listen to us, to really hear what we are saying. When I listen to others, I sometimes hear their pain, their fears. Few people begin a social encounter with another by saying, "I am afraid of . . ." or "I hurt so much because . . ." Sometimes that tumbles out as one speaks. I am sometimes in the right place at the right time to offer a hug or maybe just a Kleenex because someone has just confronted his/her own pain. To experience that is to experience a holy moment. It can be so deep that words aren't even necessary, but again, the listener is focused on the other person.

Most people like to talk about themselves. They like to share what is happening in their lives, tell anecdotes about family members, make comments about the political scene and, when they feel comfortable, perhaps talk about what really matters to them. They need to know that they matter to another.

As I said earlier, we all have stories to tell. We just need to find the right person who can facilitate our telling that story so it has benefit.

Blessed story telling!

- Rita Speer



What will happen to the family farm

Dear Editor,

Three weeks ago, myself, along with nearly 80 other Kansas Farm Bureau Presidents invaded Washington DC to let Capitol Hill know that we have major concerns with many issues including the Dust Issue, Use of Pesticide Restrictions, as well as CDL Regulations. These proposals hit home living here in the Midwest. One of the main issues we were involved in is the Department of Labor's proposal on Agricultural Labor Standards for youth. There are several parts to this including restrictions limiting the ability of youth to work on common farm equipment such as tractors. Legally I will not share the actual age I began driving a tractor as well as my son's. I am sure many of you reading this are the same way. This is our livelihood here in Kansas. We worked on the farm in our pre-teen years to current with hopes of our children following in our footsteps. Thus the meaning of "family farms" in teaching the next generation to carry on our parent's legacy and our legacy

to help feed America.

This proposal also changes and hinders the ability of youth in training and educational programs such as Vocational Agriculture/FFA as well as 4-H. These programs help youth to gain real-life experiences on and off the farm. If it weren't for FFA/4-H, many students would not have obtained the valuable tools necessary to attend college or receive even scholarships to attend college. This will also restrict youth from showing livestock at the county and state fairs or handling livestock at all.

Just because this proposal is titled Agricultural, don't even think that it will not affect us all on and off the farm. This will also include the youth that mow lawns during the summer or stock shelves at the local grocery store.

Even though the Department of Labor comment ended December 1, 2011, Senator Jerry Moran has already received more than 10,000 comments from 46 states and even Kuwait, for

which he printed for the Department of Labor to read with our concerns and dislikes of their proposals. Wednesday, March 15 he appeared on Fox and Friends, a TV news show, to share his thoughts on this proposal.

Many of the Kansas Farm Bureau Presidents also took their children to Washington DC to set in on the Appropriations Ways and Means Hearings to show the Department of Labor who this will effect and how much. Senator Moran and Senator Roberts asked for our thoughts on this issue to. Senator Moran has set up a website <http://www.keepfamiliesfarming.com> and I ask along with him to please go to that web site and comment. Our comments do make a difference in Washington and Senator Moran and Senator Roberts are listening on all these issues that affect us in rural America.

Charlotte Stephenson
Norton County
Farm Bureau President

People come in two types

Not long ago I had the experience of attending a Norton City Council meeting. I had often wondered why so few people in our community become involved in our local government. It didn't take long to realize the very nature of certain members may be the cause of citizens not wanting to take part.

It became very evident, to me, there are two types of individuals who participate in our local government. There are those members who are interested in and care about the thriving of Norton and then there are those who are interested in themselves. Rather than listening to the information provided, they were busy planning what they were going to say, paying little, if any, attention to the data.

I can appreciate wanting more information. However, once that information has been imparted and the professionals have had their say, then is the time to evaluate. The decision, at this meeting, should not have been difficult and did not require a contractual agreement, nor funding, merely further inquiry to see what avenues could be explored.

I can also understand being fearful

of moving too fast, but you can't claim something is going too fast when you have just proclaimed the subject at hand has been discussed frequently during the last ten years. The meeting dragged on because of these types of exchanges. The sad thing about this is, these are the individuals who deter other interested people from becoming involved.

People are willing to give of their time, if 1) they feel their time is valued, 2) people have done their homework, and 3) those present listen to proposals and are able to differentiate between risk and service. There are people who want to be part of a group working to move forward rather than bogging down. Serving on the City Council, at times, has been the wanna-be bully in the sandbox and when things don't go their way, they take their marbles and run home, leaving a city with bills for extra things, like special elections.

What is needed for our local government is to have people dedicated to Norton's success. It is important to have respect for the office and for your fellow members, regardless of whether they agree with you, and stay the course. Mail to: mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net

- Mary Kay Woodyard

Learning the truths about the Catholic faith

Letter to the Editor:

I have been asked by the Telegram to shorten a letter in response to Mary Kay Woodyard's column entitled "mixing religion and constitutional values" in the March 16, 2012 issue. I hope this will help with Ms. Woodyard's many false assumptions and miss-guided comparisons.

She speaks of how voters in some states wanted someone who shared their religious beliefs and is surprised with their choice of Santorum and continues to question "born again" people being incompatible with Catholicism. The term "born again" or "born anew" (1 Peter 1:3 and 1:23 and parallel thoughts in several other passages) comes from the Greek word Anagennao which means "regenerate" or "cause to be born again." Catholics have always believed in this gift of grace, we just haven't always used that term "born again." A misconception created out of misunderstanding and what someone means rather than how they express it.

As far as Santorum's statement in 2002 (Catholics who were "uninspired, watered-down, versions of our faith") he was right then and sorrowfully, still is. I am sure that every church, and organization for that matter, has

those members who are "members" mostly in word and not in action. The Catholic Church is sadly no different. And as far as "taking back our religious institutions," if the word Catholic with a capital C, is attached to something (school, hospital, organization, group) shouldn't people be able to expect a certain set of values, morals and ideals to be present in that group/business? If I attend a Bible study, I expect to use the Bible and study; people should be able to trust what is projected.

Ms. Woodyard then tries to impugn Mr. Santorum's dedication to faith and the constitution--I remember this same kind of rhetoric being used in the early 60's. Anytime you want to scare people into seeing something as you see it, use something they don't know and/or understand, such as the Catholic faith. There is nothing in the Constitution that goes against the Catholic faith, in fact we uphold it more than many---when it promises us life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness we believe that means every one; regardless of age (unborn to natural death), handicap, ability or disability.

Then she brings in the NY Times article that "reports" that "Mr. Santorum has lost the Catholic vote in primaries,"

so what? Anyone who stands up for anything, especially their beliefs, is going to be criticized, maligned and ridiculed. I wonder what our founding fathers would have thought about someone who stands up for their beliefs, their value system, morals, justice, and freedom. Read Glenn Beck's book *Becoming Washington* if you would like to learn first hand their thoughts and ideas. And as far as labeling some organizations as "extremist" doesn't it stand to reason that you should first know what it is about and the purpose and mission behind it?

As far as the Second Vatican Council and her understanding of it, I believe she is as capable of defining and understanding the Council and all it stands for as I am of defining Einstein's theories.

If anyone is interested the original and complete letter, please let me know and I will get a copy to you. Also, if you are interested in visiting, sharing and learning about the truths of the Catholic faith, I am at your service, what I don't know I will find out for you. My email address is rscheetz@ruraltel.net.

Ardith Scheetz

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