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pinion



Letter Drop

• Our Readers Sound Off

Wonderful community

To the Free Press:

Recently, my family experienced a long illness and death of my father. He spent many days in the Citizens Medical Center. I want to acknowledge all those who have touched our lives through this experience.

You should be proud of all the caring and compassionate people in this area. It may not be rare to find such people in Kansas, but I can tell you that my family is acutely aware of such kind people especially now.

Dr. Hildyard is more than a doctor. He has become a family friend, one that I am proud to have had the pleasure of know-

All the people at the hospital that helped care for my dad showed compassion along with their skill. I was continually amazed at the warmth that surrounded my parents as they stayed at the hospital.

There were many friends who visited my parents and offered comfort to them, but also offered their homes for Mom to stay so she wouldn't have to travel.

You are especially lucky to have people like Jeannie Solko in your community. She gave time, spiritual food, and plenty of hugs and laughter along with advice and much needed in-

There were so many people that blessed our lives by their time, words of comfort, and prayers. If I named them all, this letter would be too long to print.

You all have a right to be proud to live in western Kansas, and I know why I still love to visit the area.

> Nancy E. Horning **Gaylord** (Letter #7)

Letter guidelines

The *Free Press* encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, if at all possible, and should include a telephone number and an address. Most importantly, all letters must include a signature. Unsigned letters cannot be published. We reserve the right to edit for clarity and length, and, likewise, reserve the right to reject letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive or libelous.

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U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-6521

U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 1519 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715

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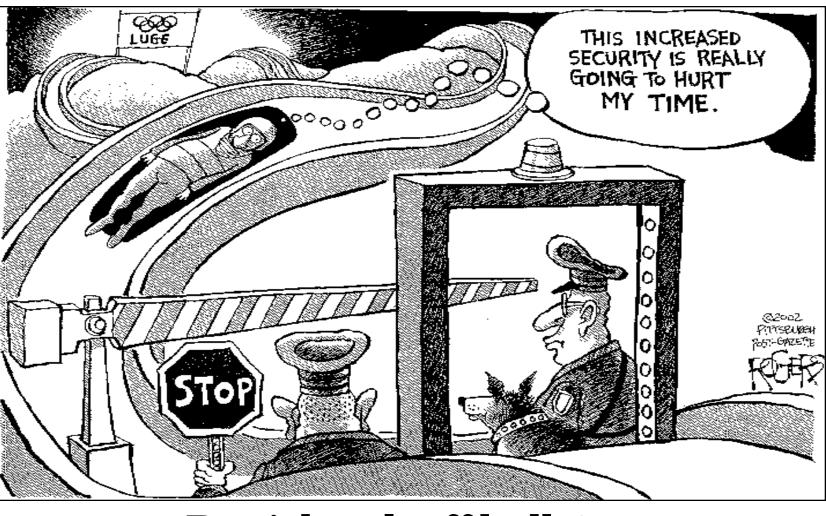
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Don't brush off bullying

In an article I read recently the subject of bullying was said to be getting much worse in this country and apparently not getting better soon enough.

While that didn't necessarily surprise me, what was disturbing was the thought that some parents of these bully-types tend to defend or deny their child's behavior even when confronted with the facts by a victim's parents.

The article, which was written by John Rosemond, a syndicated columnist who deals with family issues, pointed out that these bullies are psychopaths, who are immune to therapy and punishment only fuels their fires.

So what's the answer?

Rosemond suggests the only thing a bully will understand is force.

He also said that if your child is the victim of a bully, don't expect the bully's parents to apply the necessary force needed to solve the problem. Although a parent can ask for their assistance, Rosemond said not to count on a whole lot from them.

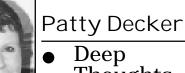
Further, he said that parents should not count on schools, in general, to apply the necessary force either. He cited that oftentimes schools are actually afraid to intervene in situations of this sort for the obvious reason being lawsuits.

Narrowing down the options, the one thing that's usually left for victims of bully attacks is the law. Rosemond said that if a bully is causing another child to live in fear and parents have exhausted the other choices with no results, then they should call the police department — if for nothing else, than the

He substantiated such action by saying that bullies are nothing more than young criminals and they are breaking the laws of assault and battery.

At first, as I read the article I couldn't help but think to myself it's sure a sad state of affairs when parents cannot talk with one another about problems such as bullying. To think that a parent would have to take such extremes by having to call the police for their own child's safety because the parent's of a bully would deny the accusations or justify their child's

When I was growing up, I didn't stand a chance



Thoughts

when the adults got together about something I did wrong. If a teacher called my parents and told them I was misbehaving or had hurt another child, it would not be pleasant when I got home. Not long ago, I spoke with a teacher at some after-

school activity here and was shocked to hear her say that in some situations when a student acts in a disrespectful or disruptive manner, she won't bother to call the parents.

Perplexed, I asked her, "Why?"

She told me that it wasn't worth it when she already new particular parents would only scream at her for somehow having instigating or somehow having something to do with the negative actions of the child.

I was appalled to think that parents would deny and defend their children's actions to the extent of firing back at the teacher and blaming them for the kid's

One thing I learned early on in my household was that life's not fair and no man is an island. As parents, we are there to guide our children and in a safe environment teach them tolerance, respect and love for themselves and others.

Another important lesson I learned as a child was that the world is made up of all kinds of people and learning to get along was paramount then and now.

Whenever I hear someone say they are quitting a job and it's not because they're moving, retiring or in fear. looking at personal betterment, I sometimes wonder if it was because of their inability to get along with others and not because they couldn't do the job. Although, the subject is bullying, some of these other issues can fit in to the scenario as well.

But, back to the point.

In Rosemond's article, he cited an example involv- umn appears on Thursdays.

ing a boy that chased his own son home while he and his wife were away and a baby-sitter was there. The bully was so aggressive that while chasing this young boy, who darted into his own home, the bully opened the door and went right in to continue verbally threatening Rosemond's son.

When Rosemond got home, his son and the sitter told him what happened and he decided to call a few of the other neighbors inquiring as to whether or not the parents of this outrageous young man's actions would be disciplined. What he heard back from other parents in the

life."...or... "They are going to defend him, as they have many times before.' Rosemond thought about it and reasoned that

neighborhood were comments like: "Not on your

"Here's a kid who's not yet a teen and he thinks he can get away with trespassing and intent to assault What's he going to do next?"

Suffice to say, Rosemond called the police. They in turn, took a report and arrested the boy on a juvenile charge. Two hours later, the boy's parents called and begged Rosemond to drop the charges. He said he refused and they got nasty, proving once again that it takes one to raise one. The next week, Rosemond said this particular family's house was up for sale.

I noticed in another newspaper recently that a man working at a service center is making the circuit talking about this very subject at area schools. In a survey done at a school about the size of WaKeeney, he said, one-third of the seventh graders said they had been physically bullied and two-thirds had been verbally bullied. In addition, other students said they don't help others who are victims of this crime. This is a real problem and I still think Rosemond's on the right track in meeting force with force. Nobody should have to tolerate bullying and live

Yes, I agree that sometimes "kids will be kids," and that's why parents are around so that someday the kids will become emotionally, stable and responsible

Patty Decker is editor of the Free Press. Her col-

'Rose-colored glasses' vs. 'Just the facts'

Call this particular illusion the "after" effect. After Sept. 11, says Laura Bush, divorce is down,

weddings are up and "families have come together.'

In fact, fewer folks are taking vows and more are splitting up, says the available data, and hounds are twice as likely as husbands to get wifely attention.

After Sept. 11, says Colin Powell, secretary of state and once the nation's top soldier, more Americans want to be all they can be.

Maybe, if they can be right where they are. Enlistment figures haven't budged.

After Sept. 11, are more Americans finding religion? Definitely, people tell pollsters. Are they going to church more? No, say the same respondents. After Sept. 11, says just about everyone, Ameri-

cans got a little nicer. Except for that murder spike in Washington, D.C.

And the shoplifting in Denver.

And the looming crisis at the charities. And the baby boomlet? Urban mythlet.

Hope, it turns out, is the thing without legs. First, Mrs. Bush's wedding-divorce inversion. "Divorce cases have been withdrawn at higher rates, and more people are buying engagement rings

and planning weddings," the first lady told a group of New York women. Mrs. Bush was referring to a news report out of Houston that was retracted four days before her talk. In fact, the federal government hasn't tracked divorce

and marriage on a monthly basis since 1995. The only

information is on the county level. In Reno, Nev., the self-proclaimed "marriage capital of the world," Washoe County Clerk Amy Harvey rattled off numbers showing an 11 percent drop in marriage applications after Sept. 11.

"The numbers don't lie," Harvey said, launching into a sales pitch. "We're available and accessible from 8 a.m. to midnight, 365 days a year."

No wonder she's anxious. "This is our industry," she said. "I field calls from wedding chapel owners every day, asking us for numbers. The lobby's empty. My staff are taking breaks!"

In Leon County, Fla., divorces for the September-December period increased from 389 in 2000 to 415 Ron Kampeas

• Washington Today

in 2001.

After Sept. 11, "maybe people understand the importance of staying together a little better," said Richard Albertson of the Tallahassee Community Marriage Policy, a Christian counseling service that monitors its success by counting divorce dockets in the county courthouse each month. "That doesn't mean they have the tools. It takes more than a crisis for that."

Are families that are staying together coming closer

Maybe, if you count Fido as a dependent. Market research conducted by advertising network Euro RSCG found that, post-Sept. 11, 36 percent of American women who have dogs said they were spending more time with them. Less than 20 percent were spending more time with their husbands.

"We've got children, we've got pets," Euro RSCG's Marian Salzman said as she reviewed her most recent polling, which has a margin of error of 3 percentage points. "I don't know who's enjoying time with

And don't even talk about the baby boomlet. Hospitals and doctors are ethically bound not to give out that information until about June 11.

What about the call to arms? Powell said last month that "people are now stepping forward to join the military in greater numbers.

Not quite. It's true more people are asking, but once they learn details — the conditions, the salary, the lifestyle — the same number are signing up.

That's OK, says Douglas Smith of Army recruiting — the idea has always been to recruit what the branches set as their need, and that has yet to rise appreciably.

"The level of success prior to Sept. 11 continues after Sept. 11," he said. For the Army, that's between

6,000-7,000 recruits a month. More religion? A November poll by the Pew Forum found 78 percent of Americans — the highest in four decades - believed the role of religion was increasing, more than double the number who said the same thing in March.

Yet the same respondents, only a month after the terror attacks, said their church attendance had not changed from four in 10 Americans going once a

'When you settle back down into what people are doing, measurements have more in common with what there was before the attacks," said Melissa Rogers of the forum, which monitors belief patterns The surveys have a margin of error of 3 percentage

What about the America two in three respondents told a Washington Post-ABC News poll had "changed for the better" after Sept. 11?

Consider these changes: In Washington, D.C., the murder rate spiked 47 percent after Sept. 11; in Denver, shoplifting went up by 12 percent.

The National Association of Convenience Stores sent its members a crimestoppers tip sheet, anticipating a steady increase in crime, and the Chronicle of Philanthropy reports that many charities anticipate shortfalls when 2001 numbers are crunched by the end of this month.

No one is blaming any of those phenomena on the attacks — the busted economy presaged an upturn in crime and a downturn in giving months before Sep-

It's just that the conditions creating the bleaker outlook are beyond the influence of the attacks and their aftermath.

'A lot of shoplifters are stealing for specific purposes, like drugs," said Diane Stack, the detective who runs Denver's shoplifting unit, where the sharp rise reflects national trends. "Those are old habits."

Ron Kampeas writes on national affairs for the As-

sociated Press.