

Opinion

Another Viewpoint



National registry has Thomas County

This week's spotlight on a National Coalition Registry participant is The Thomas County Interagency Coalition in Colby. Led by Vicki Beiser, this county-wide coalition focuses on substance abuse, early childhood education, youth with problem behaviors, juvenile delinquency, teen pregnancy, violence, school dropouts and child abuse and neglect issues. Data from parent and youth surveys were used to identify the most important issues in the community. Through their community assessment, including data from the Kansas Communities That Care Survey, the coalition recognized one of the areas of serious concern was teen drinking. Results from both parent and youth surveys indicated a strong interest and need for drinking and driving education and prevention. One way in which they are addressing teen drinking is via their social norms campaign, "Its OK to Say No Way." The campaign was initially created to children and teens to say no to all harmful substances and situations. They are going into their fourth round of this successful campaign. This year the Thomas County Interagency Coalition is focusing its campaign efforts on drinking and driving. Currently the slogan reads "Its OK to Say No Way: To Drinking and Driving."

This coalition recently held a successful town hall Meeting and already has a follow up activity planned for later this spring. The coalition will hold an additional meeting to discuss information on the impact of alcohol on teenage brain development.

Want your coalition highlighted on Coalitions Online, which reaches over 12,000 people a week? Make sure your coalition is included in the 2006 National Coalition Registry. This means you need to update your information from last year (if you participated in the 2005 Registry) or complete a new registration if you missed out last year. Coalitions are also eligible to win an Apple IPOD.

Make sure to complete/update your coalition's Registry information by then.

The Registry can be accessed at <<http://cadca.org/annualsurvey>>

If you have any questions, send an e-mail message to: registry@cadca.org or call 800-54-CADCA, ext. 243.

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail jvannostrand@nwkskans.com or pdecker@nwkskans.com.

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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**, 2443 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715 or Fax 202/225-5124
- State Rep. Jim Morrison**, State Capitol Building, 303 SW 10th St. Rm. 171-W, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7676 e mail: jmorrison@ink.org web: www.ink.org/public/legislators/jmorrison
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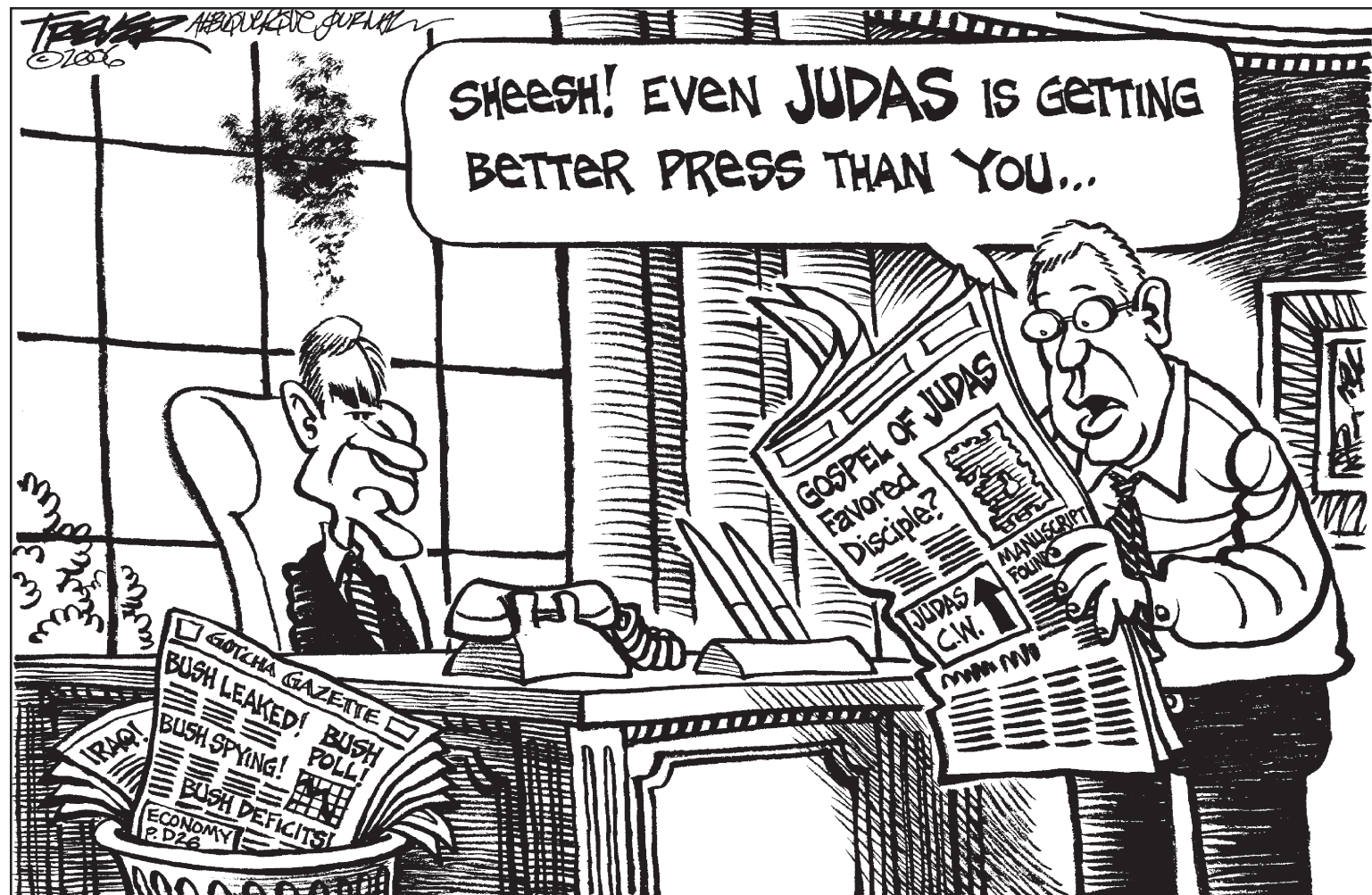
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Becoming part of the family

Call me sentimental, but with spring here, I can't help but think about our family pet, Milo, who died three years ago and about this time of year.

While I don't dwell on it, I can't help but sometimes reminisce how Milo entered our lives and how he was with us throughout my children's childhood years.

We all moved to Colby almost 15 years ago, and brought with us a little kitty named Tiger. I wanted to find the Tiger a home in Idaho, but my children insisted that Tiger had to come too — after all he was a member of our family.

Within a month after arriving, Tiger was diagnosed with leukemia and had to be put down. It was a tough time for all of us being in a new place, not knowing very many people and then losing our pet.

A few days after losing Tiger, a friend from the newspaper office found a six-week old kitten that almost got run over by a car. Actually, the cat narrowly escaped — rolling end over end under a vehicle. This friend witnessed the incident and immediately grabbed the small animal that was understandably shaken. If cats really have nine lives, it would be safe to say Milo had used up one of those lives that day.

Apparently our friend believed it was fate and



Patty Decker

Deep Thoughts

remembering that we had just lost our cat, she brought the kitten to us. At first, I was unsure about the whole thing because none of us really had a chance to grieve Tiger's death. Still, in the end, it turned out to be one of the most loyal animals we ever had.

After accepting the kitten, the next step was deciding on a name. It wasn't long before my children unanimously agreed that his name should be "Milo" and our small family instantly grew by one.

In those earlier years, we lived in the Court Street neighborhood and back then there were a lot of cats wandering around.

It was a tough place for our young little Milo to break into. He was forever coming home beat to a pulp. For the first year, it was routine to see the veterinarian about once every couple of

months. Along with all of his cuts and scrapes that he came home with, one area extremely vulnerable on Milo was his ear. It never failed that even with all his fresh wounds, the ear never seemed to have a chance of healing. The wear and tear eventually left Milo with only one good ear.

Looking back, I think the best thing that ever happened to Milo was when I remarried and the family moved to North Lincoln. Whatever the reason, the neighborhood seemed to agree with him and he stopped coming home such a mess.

As the years went by, Milo became a popular guy in Colby — visiting with neighbors walking by the yard — keeping other cats out of his territory, etc.

Then maybe a year before Milo died, my husband, Randy, came up with the idea that another kitty might be a good idea to soften the loss.

It turned out to be a good idea since we lost our faithful kitty, Milo, last spring. Today, we have two cats, Oreo and Mocha, which wasn't exactly how we planned it, but best to leave that story for another time.

As for Milo, he was quite the trooper and he will always have a special place in our hearts.

Happy Easter!
Decker is editor of the Free Press.

A trillion good reasons to keep estate tax

By Mike Lapham

My grandparents and great-grandparents paid the estate tax when they passed along the family business. Some decade soon, my own parents will.

With hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of dollars to gain, I should be cheering for the proposal coming before the Senate in May to do away with the estate tax, which applies only to multi-million dollar inheritances.

Instead, I'm organizing wealthy members of Responsible Wealth to oppose repeal of the estate tax. As multi-millionaires, we have benefited handsomely from all that our country provides: public education, roads, clean water, legal protection, research funding and public safety, just for starters.

One Responsible Wealth member, Martin Rothenberg, grew up using the public library, went to school on the GI Bill, received a government fellowship, and built a \$30 million software company using publicly funded research and publicly-educated employees.

"I hope the taxes on my estate will help fund the kind of programs that benefited me and others from humble backgrounds," he says.

Given the choice to be taxed or not, we all tend to choose not. That's just human nature. But we have to look at the wider implications of what we ask our elected officials to do for us.

In 2001, when Congress voted to phase out and repeal the estate tax, the federal treasury was expecting a \$5 trillion surplus. Times have changed, however. Now there's over \$8 trillion in federal debt.

There are a trillion good reasons to retain the estate tax in the years to come. Permanently

abolishing the estate tax would cost almost \$1 trillion in the first 10 years.

I believe our country has higher priorities for \$1 trillion than giving families like mine a huge tax break.

Besides our existing \$8 trillion debt, consider some of the additional expenditures coming down the pike.

The Iraq War will continue to be costly in both human lives and money. Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz and his coauthor Linda Bilmes estimate a total budgetary cost of between \$750 billion and \$1.27 trillion.

In late 2003, Congress passed an expansion of the Medicare prescription drug benefit. The Center for Medicare and Medical Services projects a ten-year cost of \$797 billion.

Congressional leaders have pledged to abolish the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT) for individuals, especially as an estimated 30 million taxpayers will pay the AMT by 2010. Eliminating the AMT will reduce federal revenues by \$611 billion to \$790 billion over ten years.

The Republican leadership in Congress would like to extend the tax cuts they passed in 2001 and 2003. The cost of this extension would be \$1.4 trillion in lost revenue over ten years.

Estate tax repeal, combined with these other expenditures, would balloon our national debt in the coming decade. With lighter and lighter taxation of wealthy asset-owners like my family each year, more tax dollars would come out of the pockets of working Americans. In this context, considering estate tax repeal is fiscally and morally irresponsible.

A new poll shows that most Americans agree.

Voters chose keeping the estate tax as one of the two best ways to reduce the budget deficit. Almost three-quarters support reforming the tax or leaving it intact rather than repealing it.

In a society where the economic rules are strongly tilted in favor of the haves at the expense of the have-nots, where tax laws give generous loopholes to the wealthiest among us, the occasion of passing on wealth to the next generation is an appropriate time to tax our accumulated fortunes. Most of the appreciated value of these assets has never been taxed.

The choice is whether to remove a tax on estates of more than \$2 million, affecting only the 6,343 wealthiest individuals who die each year. Responsible Wealth members believe that a fair tax system, fiscal responsibility, and priorities like healthcare and education are better choices than lining the pockets of our progeny.

I could be sitting back hoping my parents' estate won't be subject to the estate tax. Instead, I'm hoping the majority of U.S. Senators understand what many of them don't: that we in the richest 1 percent can and should pay this very fair tax, as an appropriate way for us to give back and create opportunities for others.

Mike Lapham (mlapham@responsiblewealth.org) is Director of the Responsible Wealth project of United for a Fair Economy. United for a Fair Economy is a Boston-based national, independent, non-partisan organization that puts a spotlight on the dangers of growing income, wage and wealth inequality in the United States and coordinates action to reduce the gap. United for a Fair Economy, e-mail: stw@stw.org.

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