

# Opinion

## A Kansas Viewpoint



### Family Day needs on the calendar

**From The Hutchinson News**

When we have to create a special day to eat dinner as a family, we have to wonder what we have become.

Maybe we are late to take notice, but some family advocacy groups now have an annual day when they say we should have dinner with our children. As if we don't the rest of time — or at least not often.

They might be right about that. If so, we do have problems as a society.

The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University in New York has marked the fourth Monday in September as "Family Day." That means you should have had dinner with your kids.

CASA's research has found that the more often children eat dinner with their families, the less likely they are to smoke, drink or use drugs.

Dinner-table conversations are one opportunity for parents to find out more about what their kids are doing and begin to be clued in on the challenges in their lives. Also, family togetherness has to have a long-term effect on children's well-being, self-esteem and feeling that they have a support structure.

We assume that a trend away from family dinners is a result of busier lifestyles. Even if we do eat in relative togetherness, we might eat on the run. Family dinners might not be meaningful sit-down dinners.

We should not think of this as prevention of youth substance abuse nor of having it be just one day in the year. Every day should be family day in a healthy family.

That should go without saying, but as long as we have a need formally to designate a Family Day in this country, we better keep reminding ourselves. Today might not be Family Day, but every night is a good night to sit down at the table together as a family.

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@nwkansas.com](mailto:jvannostrand@nwkansas.com) or [pdecker@nwkansas.com](mailto:pdecker@nwkansas.com). Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.

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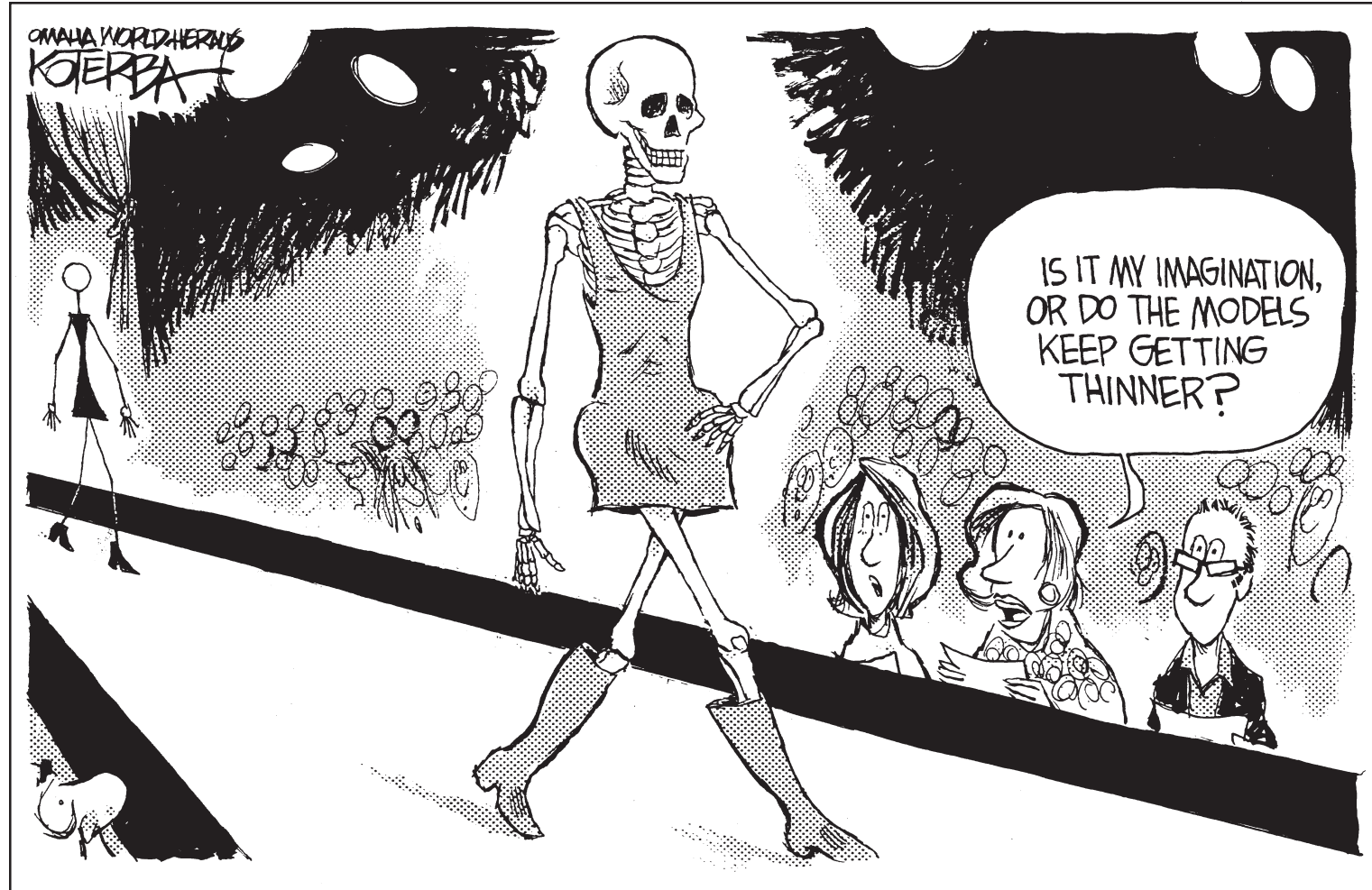
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## Plenty to be proud of

Last month we had two stories that made me feel pretty good about the people who claim Colby as their home.

We talked to Mark Schultz about his new record "Broken and Beautiful." Schultz, who was adopted and grew up in Colby, found the right words and music to explain his thoughts and feelings about the importance of adoption in his new songs. He even found out a fan of his heard about his pro-adoption stance and chose that route over abortion.

Later on, we had a short story about Colby's own and opera star Samuel Ramey who will perform for the first time in his career in Kansas. In March he will be in Wichita. We are talking with the Wichita Grand Opera's public relations department about an in-depth story about Samuel in the near future. Stay tuned.

The only thing I know about opera is how to spell it. Opera is one of those things in the arts that is an acquired taste. It took a few years for my wife Jennifer to get me used to musicals — but I think opera is on a much higher level.

I'm curious to know how Ramey thinks a first-time listener should approach opera.

Even if you don't like Christian contemporary music or opera, we need to be supportive of Colby people who eventually become celebrities and do something positive.



### John Van Nostrand

#### • Line in the Dust

Schultz is changing people's lives. Some opera critics say Ramey has mastered the art. One critic even said, "If dark chocolate had a sound, it would be Ramey's voice."

All it takes is for someone to ask either Schultz or Ramey where they are from and when they answer Colby, those people might be curious to know if there is anything unique about our town to help those people get started.

What really helps is when those celebrities are liked more as people than what they are known for.

In Iowa, I worked for the brother of the late Hugh Sidey. Hugh wrote a column about the presidency for Life magazine for decades. Some Washington D.C. journalists say Hugh's respect and dignity for the presidency through his work can not be matched. Hugh was invited by the Reagan family to be with them on the private

plane that took Ronald's body to California for the funeral. Hugh died last year.

In Colorado, I heard then pro football player Greg Myers give an informal speech to a bunch of promising Little League baseball players in the town he was from. Myers' speech was after his first year in the National Football League.

Myers shocked those kids showing he only had like \$20 on him — not the thousands they were expecting — and said he drove a car as old as some of the kids in the audience. Myers said he was more emotional about being accepted to medical school than he did getting drafted by Cincinnati. One medical school said they would always reserve a spot in class for him.

Myers played football long enough just to help make medical school payments easier.

If Schultz is not in your CD player and you don't think you can spend a couple of hours hearing Ramey sing loud, long notes while telling a story at the same time, that is OK.

Just don't be afraid to support that child, or his parents, down the street. A talent that kid might have might be something everybody needs to have later on.

*John Van Nostrand is publisher of the Colby Free Press*

## Something to think about

Not supporting the war on terrorism is not the same as not supporting the troops. If the activity in Iraq is war on terrorism, we are losing the battle big time. Not only in Iraq, but around the world.

If, as the administration thinks, Iraq is not in a full blown civil war, then the terrorism is worse than it has ever been. Citizens are killing citizens instead of a dictator killing citizens. Is that an improvement? Iraq has no government! What is being represented as a government is without support from the majority of the governed.

The facts seem to indicate Iraq is in a religious war and that war will never be won, unless one of the three major factions completely annihilates the other two. The presence of U.S. troops will only prolong the agony, unless we take sides and join in the ethnic cleansing. Physical power or force is the least efficient way to make genuine and lasting change to the heart of man. Threat of future punishment, alone, does not convert the heart. It only activates our evasion tactics.

### Ken Poland

#### • Ken's World

You never completely change the heart by beating on the butt. Until the hearts of those people change, there will always be conflict between themselves and between them and the rest of the world. It does no good to spank a child, if the child feels no pain. The death penalty is not a deterrent, if physical life is not sacred to the murderer.

The war in Iraq is not about protecting us, the United States, from terrorism or weapons of mass destruction.

If this administration actually believes that it is, then, God help us! It actually scares me to think of the possibilities of the truth behind our involvement in a family feud that can only be

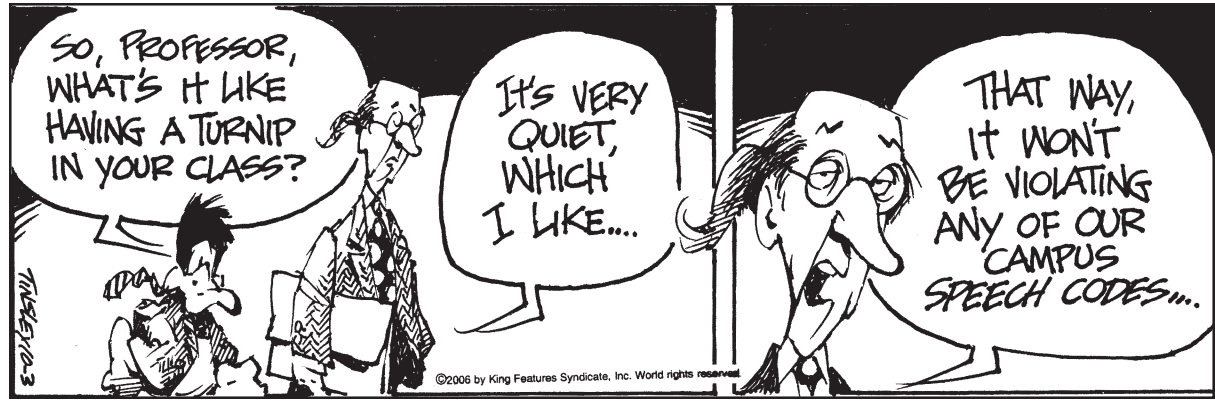
settled by the family itself. If it is about compassion, then what of the carnage in the streets? If it is about protecting ourselves, what do they have to strike us with? We have given them, and the rest of the world, the most powerful weapon man can use, hatred. The belligerent "damn the torpedoes" attitude that put us in Iraq certainly did not endear us to the world.

A very good friend of mine was expressing both fear and anger over global warming — Fear of the consequences and anger that the powers to be were doing nothing. However, to my amazement, that friend will defend the present administration to the end and will very likely vote Republican. Perhaps, that friend should question this administration's close ties to the fossil fuels industry. It is a free country, we are all free to vote our conscience. Sometimes we forget that our conscience is trained and doesn't always depend upon rationale or reason.

*Ken Poland occasionally contributes to the Colby Free Press.*

#### About those letters . . .

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.



### Mallard Fillmore

#### • Bruce Tinsley