

# Opinion



## Another Viewpoint

### Give the gift of charity during the holidays

By Melinda Olson  
Executive Director, Thomas County Community Foundation

Almost seven years ago the Thomas County Community Foundation began: a new way to meet the needs of our community's nonprofit organizations, and a better way for people to donate to the well being of our community.

Today, not only are we serving our fellow nonprofit organizations, but we are also providing tax benefits to individuals in our community just like you. By giving to the Thomas County Community Foundation or any other local charitable organization, you can support our county and save money on taxes at the same time — and a gift to the Foundation in someone else's name can be a perfect gift for someone who seems to have everything already, since your gift can permanently benefit whatever cause the person whom you're buying for cares about most.

There is no better time for charitable giving than now. As part of the Pension Protection Act, an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) provision was signed into tax law in August 2006 that allows donors age 70 1/2 and older to make a charitable tax-free gift of up to \$100,000 from their traditional IRA and Roth IRA. Unfortunately this provision ends on Dec. 31, 2007.

Proceeds from an IRA can be taxed as high as 50 percent, so by gifting directly to a public charity, like the Thomas County Community Foundation, from an IRA account before the end of this year, donors can drastically reduce their estate tax. This Charitable IRA Rollover is intended to benefit all types of people, from high-income to low-income taxpayers, and especially those who don't itemize their deductions.

And if you do itemize your tax return and choose to give a gift of cash, stock, or real estate, you can almost always lower your income taxes, no matter what your income is. Giving stocks and real estate to the foundation provides a two-fold tax savings, since you can often avoid paying capital gains taxes on the stock or real estate's increased cash value, while simultaneously qualifying to deduct the full-market value of the real estate or stocks sold.

There is no easier way to get a 2007 year-end charitable deduction than to donate to the foundation. Please feel free to contact our office and your financial provider to find out how these options can benefit your individual circumstances.

If you choose to mail in your contribution, please be sure it's post-marked by Dec. 31, 2007. That way, your gift will count as a 2007 gift for tax purposes, even if it doesn't get to us until 2008.

Holiday giving helps us live up to the best of our shared ideals at a time of year when we're reminded of the things we love most about this area. And whatever its size, a charitable donation to the TCCF can make a BIG difference in the shared life of Thomas County. It really can be, as the old saying goes, a gift that keeps on giving.

#### Thomas County Community Foundation

The Thomas County Community Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to endow permanent funds to improve the quality of life for all citizens of Thomas County. TCCF has several funds established and has granted more than \$125,000 to 56 local nonprofit organizations and scholarship recipients since its inception in Feb. 2001. The Thomas County Community Foundation encourages all businesses or individuals interested making tax-deductible contributions to contact the foundation at 785-460-9152 or tccf@st-tel.net.

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## Whiskers



**Kevin Johnson**

• Tales from a Colorado import

get an interview?"

He turned to look at me with his beady eyes and bird-beak nose, grinned, and said in a high shrill voice. "No comment."

If there is one thing a journalist hates to hear it is "no comment." His words sent me into a fit of rage. I picked up a rock and threw it at his head, drawing blood just above his left eye.

"You Americans," he said, "and your rocks." He flung a stick at me, which I managed to avoid with ease. I ran at him, tape recorder running, hurling questions at him like bullets from a Tommy gun, but he was too cunning and too elusive, even for a reporter as skilled as I. I had him trapped on the edge of the cliff, he had nowhere to go and he swung wildly at me with a cane in the face of certain death. Surely this would be my greatest interview. His turban billowed in the wind, an insane grin flooded his face and it was then he said something to me I will never forget.

"A little known fact about Osama Bin Laden is that all of his close friends call him Whiskers."

"Explain," I said, holding my voice recorder closer and closer to his face. "Because he always lands on his feet." And with that said he jumped off the cliff and into the abyss. But somewhere deep in my gullet, I knew that he had somehow, somehow, survived.

"So we meet again, Mr. Johnson?"

"Hello Whiskers," I said, turning around to face pure evil for the second time in my life, but he was nowhere in sight. "So this is where you have been hiding? Show yourself you coward," I bellowed. He dropped from the courthouse

ceiling rafters, flipping twice in the air like an Olympic high diver and landing on his feet as softly as a cat.

"Silence infidel!" He shrieked at me like an angry woman. "I shall destroy you this very day."

"Wait," says I. "I believe you still owe me an interview... first question: how do you want to die?" I threw the rest of my Arby's Melt at his face and then lunged at him screaming like a banshee. A vicious fistfight ensued, a tornado of fists and teeth and nails. I had him in a full nelson, but my grip isn't what it used to be and he wiggled out and headed towards an open window that seemed to appear out of nowhere. He stood at the edge of the open window, preparing to jump once more, and with him my elusive interview.

"Osama, please... one question." He stroked his chin and squinted his already beady eyes.

"You've got grapes kid," he said. "O.K. one question."

"How did you end up in Colby?"

"I took the bus."

"Nice. Greyhound, or..."

"Yea, dropped me off at the McDonalds out there on Range... pretty nice place... had a Big Mac."

"Sweet. Sweet. So do you..."

"No more questions?" And with that he jumped out the open window and landed without a sound. The last I saw of him, he was riding off into the distance on a hairless burrow. And once again he was gone, out of my life, not for the first time and certainly not for the last. I vowed then and there in the courthouse attic to hunt down that fiend Osama until the marrow leaks from my bones, or until I happen to run into him again; until I get that elusive interview that has haunted me since that fateful afternoon in Afghanistan. "Whiskers!" I screamed dramatically, shaking my fist, rage and anguish showing on my face.

"Whiskers!"  
— Kevin Johnson is a reporter for the Colby Free Press

While on recent assignment to take pictures of the leaky roof of the Thomas County Courthouse, for a story that will no doubt earn me a Pulitzer, or at the very least a Newberry Medal, I found myself face-to-face with one of my oldest and most despised archenemies.

What took place is a tale so full of vial and intrigue that I felt I owed it to you, my faithful reading public, to relate it as part of my column today. Perhaps two awards in the same paper; a Nobel Peace prize is another possibility, but more than likely I will just receive another Golden Globe.

So there I was stomping loudly up the steps to the courthouse attic, armed with only my camera and half an Arby's melt that I had purchased for lunch. I got to the top of the stairs and looked around. The attic was shabby; old, wet, rotting wood and bricks laid in the early part of last century. I was scanning the drafty attic for the perfect photo opportunity when all of a sudden I heard a familiar high-pitched voice that has haunted my dreams ever since that one fateful afternoon...

The last time I had seen him I was on a freelance assignment for the *New York Times* in one of the more mountainous regions of Afghanistan. I had to pay for the trip out of my own pocket and was not ever "officially" recognized as a Times staff member, but when I proposed my story, "An interview with America's most hated man", the secretary for the editor of the Times laughed over the phone and said, "good luck".

It was then I asked for expense coverage but, alas, it was too late, she had hung up the phone. But the news doesn't stop when it doesn't get its expenses covered, and neither, I vowed, would I.

I had spent many months tracking the treacherous swine that had masterminded the most heinous crime ever carried out on American soil, and at last I had found him alone and unarmed on the edge of a cliff petting a shorn donkey. "Osama!" said I. "I was wondering if I could

## Quality role models



**Steve Haynes**

• Along the Sappa

Call it a crisis of immoral leadership.

It seems like the "heroes" of a big chunk of today's youth are not much worth worshipping.

That doesn't stop a lot of kids, who play gangsta rap, watch pro basketball and football, read about Paris and Brittany, watch these losers on television and try to act just like them.

We have rap "artists" shooting each other and pro athletes who want to live the same lifestyle, hang out at the same clubs. Then, everyone is surprised when a football or basketball player is shot after an altercation at some dive.

Part of the problem may be having young men with immense wealth and little education. Some come from backgrounds that just don't prepare them to be instant millionaires, but our kids still look up to them.

This is not a new problem, and it's not a problem with roots in race or cultural heritage. Hollywood has long been a hotbed of immorality, back to the earliest days. There may be plenty of entertainers who are perfectly normal, but there's always been a certain number who are not exactly good role models.

As today's "artists" identify with modern gangsters, Frank Sinatra notoriously hung out

with mob buddies and treated women poorly. Still, a lot of people worship him for his voice.

Babe Ruth and Ty Cobb were no angels, historians tell us, but the press of their time didn't trumpet their lifestyle to the nation's kids.

Today, television, magazines, tabloids and newspapers show us the stars' latest exploits day by day and week by week.

Sports stars today don't even have to pretend to go to college, with the basketball league drafting freshmen and even high school grads. There's no longer a pretense that many of these kids are going to get an education.

And why should they, some argue, when they can go straight to the big league, then make millions with their sport talent?

Because they would set an example for every kid who adores them?

I don't think most of them ever take time to think about that. Parents, agents, the press, the public just accept the idea that they'll leave school when the pros call.

Are teams responsible? Is the press? Or are we all contributing to the delinquency of our minors, every time we buy a ticket to see a drug user hit a home run and or a dropout play basketball?

Is Michael Vick a hero for his football skills, and a pioneer for his race as a prominent black quarterback? Or a disgrace for his adoption of a cruel sport as a hobby?

I personally don't think the football world misses him. He could make a comeback, if he admits his mistakes, and I'd support that. But not if, like so many athletes and entertainers, he's unrepentant.

I'm no prude. I know a lot of this is just human nature. But if we want a better world, shouldn't we be at least a little concerned about the quality of our kids' role models?

— Steve Haynes is president of Nor'West Newspapers including the Colby Free Press.

## Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

