

# Opinion



## Other Viewpoints

### Capitol revamp a runaway train

The runaway train known as the Statehouse renovation project just keeps barreling along.

Fueled by shovels full of taxpayer dollars, the makeover is expected to crash through the \$300 million barrier before it's done.

State officials won't even stop it to ease a projected budget shortfall.

Oh, they tapped the brakes some, announcing they had discontinued plans to build two staircases connecting the basement with the first floor.

But even that news left us shaking our heads. The cost of the staircases was \$1 million each, which goes a long way toward explaining how a project that originally was expected to cost as little as \$90 million has ballooned so high. ...

But despite cries of outrage from Kansans and even some lawmakers, government officials keep on funneling money into the project.

Although the staircases were cut, officials said last week they had no plans to halt the work.

That's an outrage, considering a new budget estimate that says the state could face a deficit of nearly \$1 billion by the end of June 2010. ...

Leaders say halting the work now would cost taxpayers extra in the long run, because inflation will continue to drive up construction costs. Plus, they say, parts of the building are torn up because of all the renovation work.

But at a time when many Kansans have lost a substantial share of their retirement savings because of the financial crisis, or have been laid off because of the recession, or are being forced to go without wage increases while facing price increases for basic consumer goods, state officials are out of touch in continuing to merrily pour money into the Statehouse. ...

The nation is in a recession. A budget shortfall is on the horizon. Spending cutbacks are needed.

It's time to get a handle on the runaway train.

— *The Topeka Capital-Journal, via The Associated Press*

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**U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124

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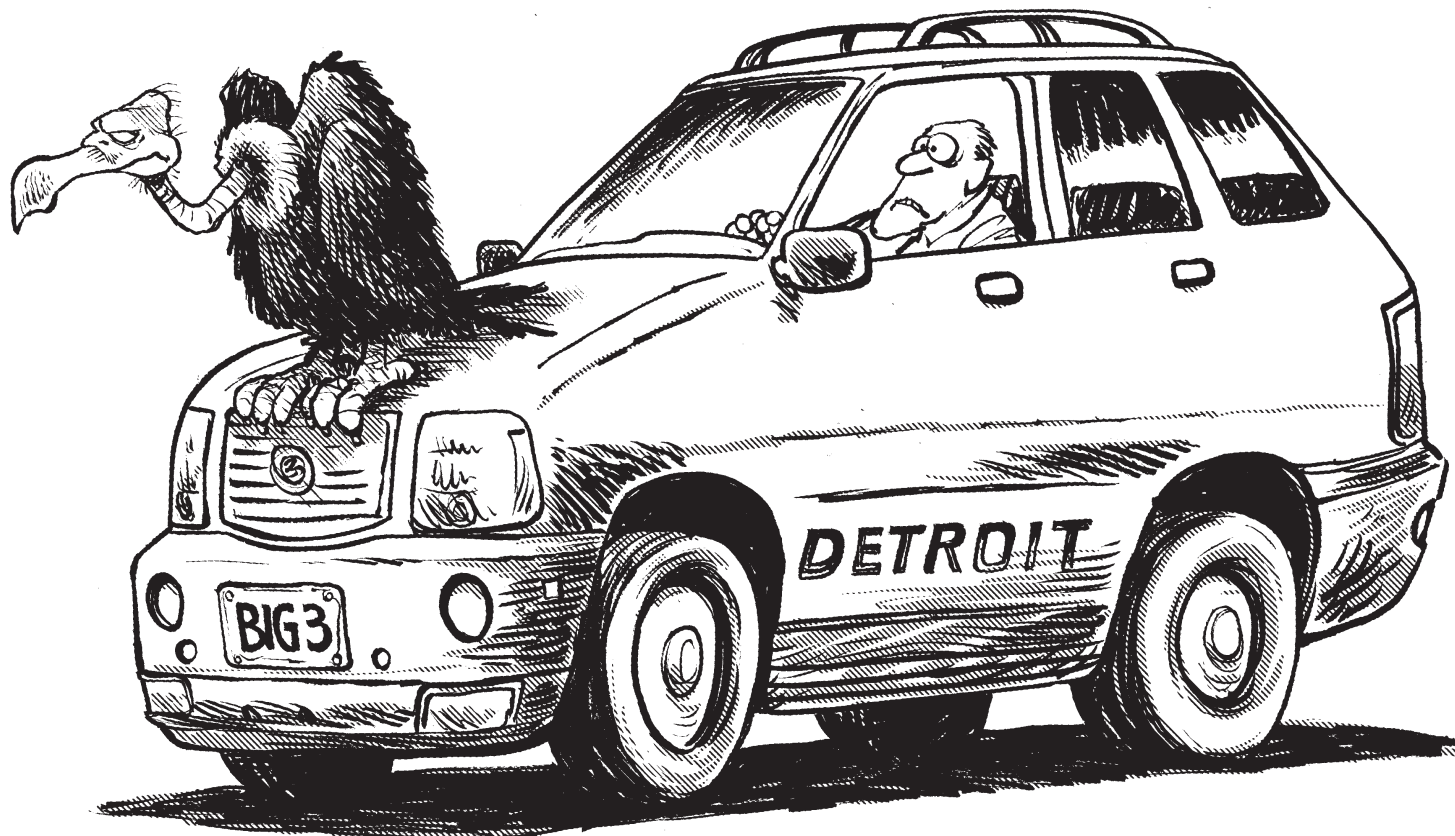
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*Brookings* RICHMOND TIMES-DISPATCH 1/10/08



### HOOD ORNAMENT

## Empathy enriches us all

If there's one thing that's missing in this crazy world, it's empathy.

For those of you who aren't familiar with this word, empathy is the ability to identify with another's feelings.

It's a precious gift that many people seem not to have or are unwilling to use. We seem prone to thinking only of our own problems. And even when we do go out of our way to help people, most of the time we help people that look like us, have the same faith as us, have the same beliefs as us, or live in the same country as us.

But there are those few who empathize with people from all walks of life. They empathize with the Iraqi mother whose son was killed in a U.S. airstrike, and they shed tears for the father of a U.S. soldier who was killed in a suicide bombing. They are saddened by the homelessness in America and heartbroken over the number of people in Africa dying of AIDS.

They believe all human lives are of equal value, whether they be Muslim, Jewish or Christian. We are familiar with some of these remarkable individuals. Most of us have heard of Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi. But there are so many other selfless individuals who we will never hear



**Andy Heintz**

• Wildcat Ramblings

about.

The social worker who keeps a troubled youth from going into a life of crime, the soldier who gives his own life to save the lives of his buddies, the aid workers who deliver food to the most dangerous areas in the world because they feel it is their duty to help those who can't help themselves, the high school student who walks away from his popular social group to befriend the kid nobody pays attention to, or the fireman who runs into burning building to save the life of someone he has never met.

Most of these people will never be lavished with attention. They will not be enriched by the market or idolized by the masses. But they are the best this world has to offer. If we are smart, we will follow their lead.

We need to stop embracing exclusivity, religious fundamentalism and self-absorbed greed. We have been down that road before. It

only leads to disaster.

For one reason or another, people seem more drawn to the powerful than to the empathetic. People doing the bidding of the powerful and narcissistic is a tale as old as time itself. When you look at some of the most sinister acts in history, from the Holocaust to Sept. 11, it's clear the people involved felt no empathy for those they killed. It's hard for me to understand how people can become so brainwashed.

But I think in the end, it comes down to people's tendency to choose the safety of the group over the loneliness of being on their own. We are way too willing to forfeit our empathy in order to be accepted into the latest clique.

This is just as true for adults as it is for adolescents. Choosing to do the right thing is hardly ever popular and it will rarely win you any popularity contests. It won't make you rich and it won't get you on the cover of any magazines.

But the only way this world is ever going to improve is if more people choose to go down this path.

*Andy Heintz, a K-State journalism graduate, is sports reporter for the Colby Free Press. He says he loves K-State athletics and fishing, sports and opinion writing.*

## Are corporate bailouts contagious?

To the Editor:

Mort Zuckerman, editor of *The New York Times*, was talking with Geraldo on Fox News and didn't seem to think the U.S. government should give a bailout to automobile companies.

In essence, he said that when other countries began making cars that sell for less than those manufactured here, that should have been the cue for U.S. manufacturers to start making improvements that equaled or exceeded those in foreign products.

Instead, they dilly-dallied, knowing from past experience that Uncle Sam would bail them out if finances started to plunge.

When I was attending Colby High School umpteen years ago, I had a date with a fellow who told me that a man in Denver had invented an apparatus that would run a car without

### Letter Drop

• Our Readers Sound Off

gas, but the oil companies were against such a thing, so the inventor could not get it on the market. He explained it in detail and was so adamant in his belief that I felt it was wise not to express my opinion. I simply thought he was cuckoo — that no car was going to run without gas. But now in 2008 we know better!

My first car was a Plymouth Arrow. The supervisor of my teacher at the California Driving School bought it for me at an auction.

I was pleased with it and didn't realize until later that it was made by an automobile manufacturer that about 20 years before had gotten money from the U.S. government because the corporation was going bankrupt.

I thought about it from time to time, because there had been an outcry from the citizenry that automobile manufacturers should not go on welfare — that welfare was for people, not corporations.

It looks as though during the last half century that getting bailouts for corporations is as contagious as measles, and it has criminal aspects as well. As a matter of fact, these bailouts have been used as a war against the middle class. Reform is inevitable if we fight this criminal activity!

Edna A. Hatcher, Colby

## Adoptive parents needed for thousands of kids

To the Editor:

In the United States, more than 129,000 children are in foster care awaiting adoption. In Kansas, more than 3,900 children need adoptive homes, eight of them in Thomas County.

Many of these children are victims of child abuse, neglect or abandonment and have been permanently removed from their homes, friends and family members they have always known.

November is National Adoption Month — a time to celebrate adoptive families who have dedicated their lives to helping Kansas kids. This month and throughout the year, St. Francis Community Services thanks adoptive families for their commitment to children.

Adoptive parents are the catalyst for rebuilding and strengthening a life. We invite

you to please consider opening your heart and home to a child in need. Becoming an adoptive parent not only celebrates the strength of your family, it helps your family grow and gives a child a loving, nurturing and safe environment in which to thrive. This act will make a difference that lasts a lifetime!

We encourage comments on opinions expressed on this page. Mail them to the *Colby Free Press*, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701, or e-mail s.haynes@nwkansas.com or colby.editor@nwkansas.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the *Free Press*, its staff or the owners.

For information about becoming an adoptive parent, call (866) 999-1599 or visit www.st-francis.org.

Thank you for your support of Kansas kids!

Judy Hawk, Salina  
Director of adoption and kinship  
St. Francis Community Services



### Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

