



Other Viewpoints

Underage drinking has lifetime impact

Underage drinking – it sometimes seems like the stuff of many people’s “good old days” lore – but it isn’t harmless fun or a joking matter. It’s a serious problem that in the worst circumstances can lead to deaths and lives changed in an instant. Over the past five years, 196 people have been killed and 3,405 people have been injured in alcohol-related crashes involving teen drivers in Kansas, according to Kansas Department of Transportation figures cited in a recent report by the Kansas Leadership to Keep Children Alcohol Free committee, coordinated by the Kansas Family Partnership.

That’s why we’ve got to remain tough when it comes to enforcing laws to prevent minors from obtaining and consuming alcohol. While it’s true that young people intent on drinking often will find ways to get their hands on alcohol one way or another, we must make it as difficult as possible. Too many bad decisions are made under the influence.

The case currently in the news is sad for all involved, with one young woman having lost her life, a young man now a paraplegic and another young man severely injured. Hunter Hillmer, 19, was convicted last week of reckless second-degree murder in the death of 15-year-old Madison “Maddie” Naill, who was a passenger in his car March 19 when it crashed into a utility pole and a tree on S.E. 45th Street in Topeka. Hillmer is now a paraplegic. Another passenger, Blake Hanvy, 20, was badly hurt. Hillmer also was convicted of aggravated battery (great bodily harm) in the injury of Hanvy, driving while under the influence of alcohol, possession or consumption of alcohol by a minor and reckless driving.

Hillmer testified during his trial that he had purchased a bottle of whisky at Murphy’s Liquor Store the weekend before March 19. A surveillance video from the store showed him and another man buying alcohol without showing identification. Two clerks from Murphy’s have been charged with one count each of furnishing alcohol to a minor, which is a class B misdemeanor with a minimum \$200 fine.

While ultimate responsibility for the choice to drink and drive that night rests solely with Hillmer, state law is clear that sales to minors are illegal. In recent weeks, Safe Streets, the state Alcoholic Beverage Control division and the Topeka Police Department have conducted controlled buys at local businesses, citing establishments and those conducting the transactions where alcohol was furnished to minors. These operations aren’t simply to catch people breaking the law but to remind those that have become lax about the consequences. Retailers must take seriously the law banning sales to minors and the responsibility to train employees in this regard, as well.

When it comes to carding, the state has made it easy to identify minors without even having to do any math. Kansas drivers’ licenses for those younger than 21 are vertical, rather than horizontal.

Parents and older friends also must realize the prohibitions on “social hosting.” Kansas’ “social hosting” law, adopted in 2004, imposes penalties on hosts who permit underage drinking on their property. The minimum fine is \$1,000.

Working together, we all can do our part to reduce access and promote responsible decision-making.

– The Topeka Capital-Journal, via the Associated Press

COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth St. (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

Send news to: colby.editor @ nwkansas.com

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout, Columns, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography. Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

Sharon Friedlander - Publisher
sfriedlander @ nwkansas.com

NEWS

Kayla Cornett - Sports Reporter
colby.sports @ nwkansas.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor
mballard @ nwkansas.com

Sam Dieter - News Reporter
colby.editor @ nwkansas.com

Christina Beringer - Society Reporter
colby.society @ nwkansas.com

ADVERTISING
colby.ads @ nwkansas.com

Kathryn Ballard - Advertising Representative
kballard @ nwkansas.com

Janene Woodall - Advertising Representative
jwoodall @ nwkansas.com

Kylee Hunter - Graphic Design
khunter @ nwkansas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE
Office Manager

Melissa Edmondson - Office Manager
medmondson @ nwkansas.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator
support @ nwkansas.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Richard Westfahl - General Manager
Gary Stewart, Foreman

Jim Jackson, Jim Bowker, Pressmen

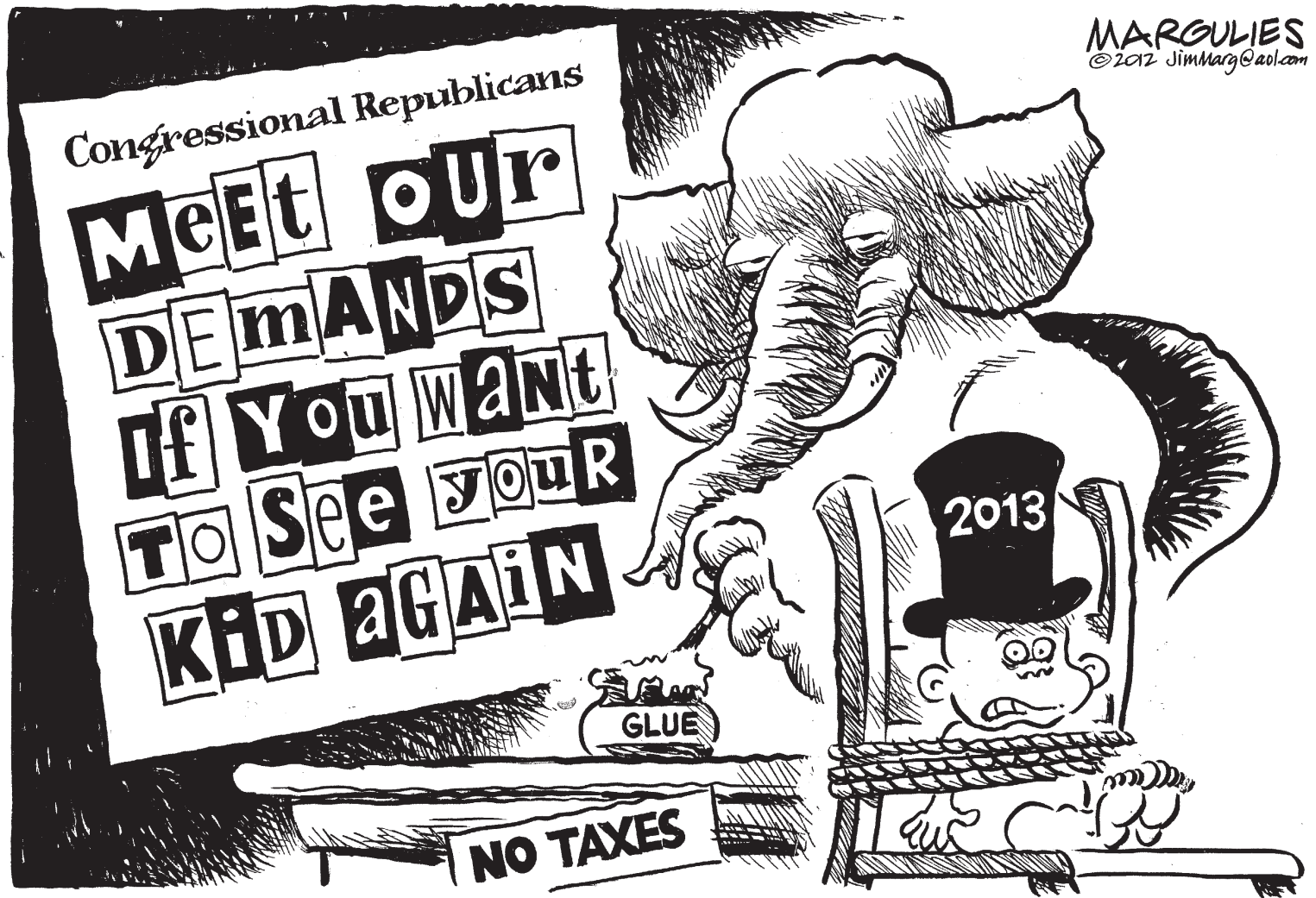
Kris McCool, Judy McKnight, Tracy Traxel,
Sheri Arroyo, Mailing

THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72.



Ape in red sports car ‘just biology’?

So, if your husband decides all of a sudden to buy a little red sports car and cruise around with the top down, scientists say, it’s not really his fault. It’s just biology.

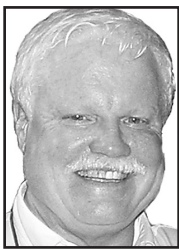
And not the kind that might prompt him to seek a younger blonde to ride around with him. That’s just poor taste.

No, the authors of a recent study say maybe that’s just the way we are. Others have shown that people tend to show a low ebb in emotional well-being at midlife. And now at least one study shows the same is true for apes.

It’s not that apes start leaving their mates for younger females or go out and buy a red Ferrari. In fact, one of the authors hastened to add that there was no proof an ape ever bought a red sports car.

I say it could have happened. Several chimps made it to start status in Hollywood in decades past. Today, of course, it’s frowned upon to use chimps in entertainment. And the SPCA would most likely give the producer a ticket if anyone allowed an ape to be filmed smoking a cigarette, and that used to happen in Hollywood, too.

But we know the midlife crisis is staple in Hollywood, and who’s to say that one of those chimps making the big bananas years ago didn’t go out and buy a flashy car. Heck, he



Steve Haynes

- Along the Sappa

might have had a blonde or two to run around with him for all we know.

It could have happened.

But back to the study at hand, which shows that the great apes are just as susceptible as the rest of us to midlife depression. Captive chimps and orangutans show a remarkably human tendency to midlife decline that could have been passed down through evolution.

So in scientific terms, you might not be “a monkey’s uncle” – technically, as the forebear on the evolutionary tree, wouldn’t the monkey be your uncle, anyway? – maybe you and the monkey are depressed for the same reason.

Your old car’s a clunker. Younger females no longer turn and watch you walk by. Midlife is just no fun without a sports car.

None of this scientific malarkey is going to help you, however, when the wife finds out how much that car really did cost, however,

and I’m supposing for most of us, it won’t be a Ferrari. Maybe an old, used MG or a nice little Mustang.

“You paid what for that? We could have had the bathroom redone and new curtains in the drawing room.”

Whatever a drawing room is.

And if there’s a blonde involved, well just forget about scientific explanations. She’s not going to want to hear about evolution or biology, let alone nature and nurture.

You might as well have hired the lawyer first.

Come to think of it, the depression that precedes your midlife crisis might pale beside the headaches you’ll have after you get the car and the blonde.

My suggestion is just leave the whole thing to the apes. Take up gardening or golf, and consider yourself lucky. Let them chase the younger females.

A midlife crisis is just going to be too much trouble.

Steve Haynes is president of Nor’West Newspapers. When he has the time, he’d rather be reading a good book or casting a fly.

Legislature prepares for January start

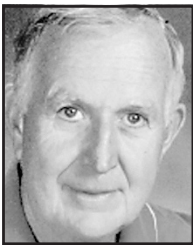
Monday, Jan. 14, the newly elected Legislature will gather in the Capitol for the start of the 2013 session.

This will be the first time in six years that all legislators will have an office in the Statehouse. Because I am now the Education Budget chair, I will have my own office. I will be in Topeka from Wednesday to next Saturday getting training on running a committee and setting up my office.

If you have an opportunity to travel to Topeka this session to see the Legislature in action, or if you would like to see the Kansas taxpayers’ \$340 million investment in the Capitol renovations, I would enjoy showing you around. If you could give me a few days notice prior to your arrival, it would help me plan my schedule to try to have a little more time to spend with you.

Although I disagree with much of the expense associated with the renovations, the fresh look, additional space and furnishings in the Capitol are impressive. The inside is now completely finished and the outside is to be finished by December.

There will be many bills discussed during the coming session, but it appears the headline issues will be taxes, government spending (the budget) and education finance. I would sincerely appreciate your thought and will post



Ward Cassidy

- This week in Topeka

my contact information as soon as I have everything updated.

Kansas Revenue Update: Tax-only revenues in November came in \$2.5 million above estimates that had been revised by the Consensus Revenue Estimating Group earlier this month. The good news is the amount of individual income taxes collected was \$3.5 million higher than projected for November, which puts the total to \$55 million more than was collected last year. A question we are all asking is what is going to happen when the income tax goes away?

Sales tax collections fell short of projections in November by \$29 million, but they were above last November. The sales tax is \$27 million ahead of what was brought in during July to November 2011.

Rep. Ward Cassidy of St. Francis represents the 120th District in the Kansas House of Rep-

resentatives, covering the northwest part of Thomas County (including Colby), plus Decatur, Rawlins, Cheyenne, Sherman and Wallace counties. In his second term in the Legislature, he is chair of the Education Budget Committee and vice chair of the Education Committee. Send e-mails to ward.cassidy@house.ks.gov.

Write us

The Colby Free Press encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of general interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise. Nor do we run form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous from this area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses not pertaining to a public issue.

Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

