



Other Viewpoints

Specialty courts viable alternative

The Kansas Supreme Court wants to know how well a variety of "specialty," or "alternative," courts across the state are performing and whether state standards should be adopted to guide their operation.

Specialty courts that deal primarily with drug and truancy issues have been created by counties or judicial districts that operate under guidelines developed by those local jurisdictions.

Chief Justice Lawton Nuss, of the Kansas Supreme Court, has appointed a 13-member commission to study the specialty courts and determine whether it would be appropriate to standardize their operation.

We won't hazard an opinion on whether standardization is the right way to go until the commission finishes its work, but experience shows the local adult drug court, administered by Shawnee County District Court Judge Mark Braun, provides a viable alternative for the treatment of people charged with nonviolent felony possession of a controlled substance.

The court has graduated 156 offenders from the program over the years (those who don't graduate are steered into the regular judicial process) and has posted an enviable recidivism rate.

Of the 156 graduates, 23 were later arrested and convicted of a new crime. Seven graduates were later convicted of a drug offense. The 23 convicted on new crimes equates to a recidivism rate of 14.7 percent; add the seven who were convicted of drug crimes and the total recidivism rate is 19 percent. Law enforcement and corrections officials would say that's a very good record.

Programs that effectively treat nonviolent offenders and keep them in society and productive – as opposed to inside a costly jail or prison – are well worth the effort and cost. Studying those programs to determine what works and what doesn't also is worth the effort.

Standardization of the different specialty courts in Kansas may be a good thing, although allowing some room for local tweaking sounds reasonable. One size seldom fits all, and what works in one county might require modification in another.

Shawnee County's adult drug court is unique in Kansas because it collars offenders before they go to trial, a process they avoid by successfully completing the program, which emphasizes treatment and intense supervision. Drug courts in some other counties pick up offenders after they are convicted.

Should all drug courts deal with offenders before they are convicted, or after? How Nuss' commission would answer that question is unknown, but it makes sense to study the different courts to determine which programs get the best results.

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

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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.

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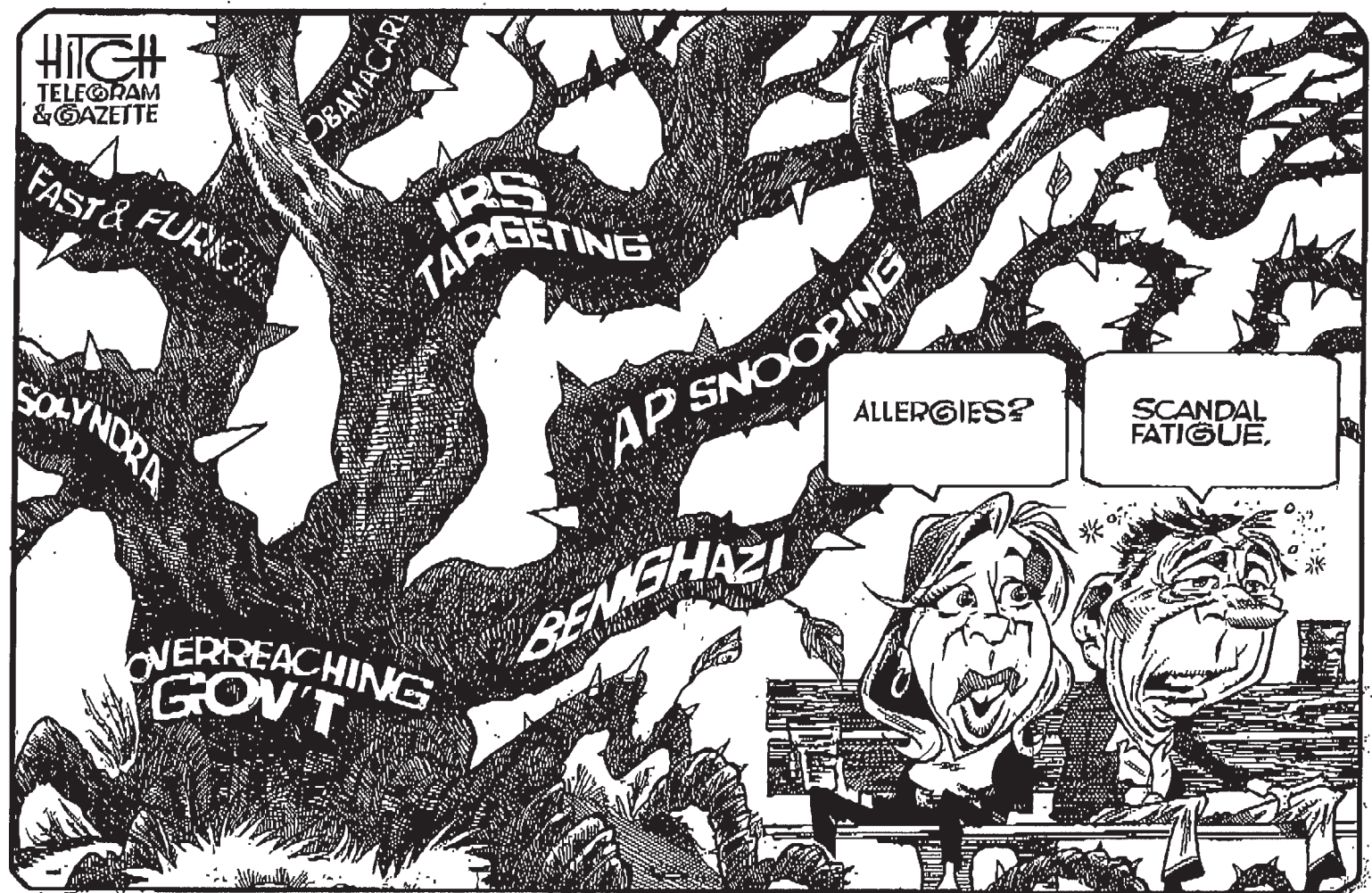
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"HOPE" SPRINGS ETERNAL

Drone strikes counterproductive

One important facet of the war on terror that doesn't get near enough attention is the people directly affected by U.S. policy.

When Americans are the victims of terrorism, we learn everything about their lives, but when civilians in predominantly Muslim countries are killed by U.S. counterterrorism efforts, the exact opposite is true. These victims are rendered nameless and their stories – with some rare exceptions – go untold, although, to their credit, the news media does usually mention that women and children were among those killed when this is the case.

The dehumanizing effect of this coverage on the U.S. public is exacerbated by the fact that the Obama administration egregiously considers all Muslims males of military age living in hostile or unstable countries like Yemen and Pakistan to be militants. Such a skewed outlook is bound to make average Americans apathetic about civilian casualties in these countries.

Two young men from Yemen did their part to help broaden the prism from which Americans – and our government – view the war on terror, explaining the counterproductive effects drone strikes were having on their country.

"The killing of innocent civilians by U.S. missiles in Yemen is helping to destabilize my country and create an environment from which AQAP (al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula) benefits," Farea al-Muslimi, a pro-American 22-year old democracy activist, said in an article published by the *Atlantic* based off his testimony before a Senate committee.



Andy Heintz

• Wildcat Ramblings

The effect of drone strikes was made all too real for al-Muslimi when his own village was targeted by drones.

"In the past, most of Wessab's villagers knew little about the United States," he said. "Now, however, when they think of America, they think of the terror they feel from the drones that hover over their heads, ready to fire missiles at any time."

What American policymakers need to understand, al-Muslimi told the committee, is that "Wessab first experienced America through the terror of a drone strike. What radicals had previously failed to achieve in my village, one drone strike accomplished in an instant. There is now an intense and growing hatred of America."

Ibrahim Mothana, a 24-year-old Yemeni writer and activist, made many of the same points in an Op-Ed piece for *The New York Times* last year, where he wrote that drone strikes were radicalizing Yemini, who were driven not by ideology, but a combined feeling of revenge and despair.

"Anti-Americanism is less prevalent in Yemen than in Pakistan," Mothana wrote, "but

rather than winning the hearts and minds of Yemeni civilians, America is alienating them by killing their relatives.... Certainly, there may be short-term military gains from killing militant leaders in these strikes, but they are minuscule compared with the long-term damage the drone program is causing."

Much to its credit, a Senate subcommittee invited Mothana to travel to Washington to speak about targeted killings and drone strikes in Yemen, but he was unable to attend, so he sent written testimony instead that was published in the Congressional Record.

Though some well-informed folks in the political cognoscenti still consider drone strikes to be the most feasible way to deal with terrorists living in hostile territories – they logically reason it's better than risking American lives by putting troops on the ground – this tactic may be creating as many terrorists as it's killing.

Mothana, in his testimony, wrote:

"Many of us ruefully repeat a line from one (of) President Obama's press conferences on Nov. 18, 2012: 'There is no country on Earth that would tolerate missiles raining down on its citizens from outside its borders.'"

Andy Heintz, a K-State journalism graduate and former Colby Free Press sports editor now living in Ottumwa, Iowa, loves K-State athletics and fishing, sports and opinion writing. You can find his blog at www.orble.com/just-one-mans-vision, or find him at twitter.com/heintz23.

Colby resort opens – in 1929

It looks like the city workers and volunteers are building a splendid recreation area where everyone, the people of northwest Kansas and our visitors, can spend hot summer days out by the new swimming pool.

However, some people might be surprised to hear that there was once a similar recreation area in Thomas County, even before the first cement public pool was built in Colby. It was on the property of Arthur Hemstrom just four miles north and a quarter mile west of Colby. Hemstrom's Pleasure Resort opened May 23, 1929.

When I visited the Prairie Museum last week, Opal Linville was kind enough to dig out information for me about that resort. It was in one of the "Thomas County Yesterday and Today" books printed by the Prairie Printers.

Linville also found me a wonderful little essay written by Kimberly Hazlett in 1987, when she was only 12. At that time, her parents owned that property. (I don't know who owns it now.) Kim became curious about the resort and gathered the information for her essay.

According to my sources, the resort contained a pool 12 foot deep at one end and four foot deep at the other. Kimberly reported that the bottom of the pool was laid with bricks. They covered the bricks with sand and made a sandy beach area around the pool.

She said the water was pumped from a well with a windmill and was pumped out of the



Marj Brown

• Marj's Snippets

pool by a large cylinder. There was also a wading pool and playground equipment for small children.

The adult pool contained both a high and low diving board. One drawback, Kim said: "You couldn't see to the bottom of the pool because the sand made the water cloudy."

Both sources reported that there were bath houses for visitors. The price to get in was 20 cents, the resort was open from morning to night in good weather and there was always a lifeguard on site. Kim added that the men bathed in their shorts and the women's bathing suits had straps. I'm guessing that the ladies suits pretty much covered their entire body, except maybe their arms. No bikinis.

Besides all this, my resources said, there was a dance hall north of the pool where dances were held on Saturday nights, holidays and special occasions.

"There was also a concession stand where they sold candy and soft drinks on weekends," Kim wrote. "Also several picnic tables for vis-

itors to eat their basket lunches."

Much like some young people of my day used to do at the old Colby pool, teenagers would sneak into the Hemstrom Pleasure Resort and enjoy a midnight swim.

I know the new Colby recreation area is going to be a wonderful place, but it will have to do a whole lot more to equal what Hemstrom's Pleasure Resort offered. Kim reported that Hemstrom's had places where you could play baseball and croquet, pitch horse shoes and that you could even go boating. To top all of that off, the place had a landing strip where a pilot from Goodland landed and took his customers on tours over Colby.

If you drive four miles north of Colby on K-25, then turn left on the road just south of Darrell Pabst's house, go about a quarter of a mile and then look to the right, you will see a small grove of trees where the resort once stood. Kim said she could find foundations of some of the buildings and parts of the old playground equipment.

I suggest that if you sneak in there at midnight, that you don't jump in the pool. I imagine it is dry and – most likely – filled in with dirt.

Marj Brown has lived in Colby for 62 years and has spent a good deal of that time writing about people and places here. She says it's one of her favorite things to do.

Thanks for generous giving to Genesis

To the Editor:

Amidst a busy weekend of college and high school graduations and Mother's Day activities, an awesome event took place, the National Association of Letter Carriers "Stamp Out Hunger" National Food Drive.

For the past 20 years, on the second Saturday of May, letter carriers in more than 10,000 cities and towns across America collect the goodness and compassion of their postal customers who participate in the food drive – the largest one-day drive in the nation and probably the world.

This drive is led by letter carriers represented by the association, with the help of rural letter carriers, other postal employees and



Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

many other volunteers. Over the past 20 years, the drive has resulted in collecting more than one billion pounds of donations to community food banks and pantries. The Colby letter carriers have been a part of this for about 10 years.

Our Colby carriers, with help from their

families, co-workers and even several retired carriers, collected over 3,500 pounds of non-perishable food for Genesis-Thomas County food pantry. This nearly doubled the total from last year and will make a significant impact on the assistance provided to our clients.

Colby has proven time and again that it is a caring and generous community as it continually provides support to Genesis through food drives, donations and volunteers. All the good that Colby and Thomas County citizens are involved in that makes our community one to be proud of.

Thank you!
Leisa Hansen and Wynn Duffey
Genesis-Thomas County board members