

from our viewpoint...

Moving cold pills helps cut drug labs

An idea which seems to have worked in Oklahoma is coming to Kansas, and unlike most of the war on drugs, it might just work.

Oklahoma forced drug stores to move the cold remedy pseudoephedrine behind the pharmacy counter. Police officials say it's reduced the number of meth labs found in the state by more than 80 percent in a year.

That's remarkable for such a simple change.

Sudafed, as the brand-name version is known, is still available over the counter, but purchasers have to sign for it. Pharmacists get a chance to size up the buyer. Meth freaks with a lack of sniffles might wind up talking to the cops.

Pseudoephedrine is a key component of meth manufacturing. The tiny red (or white) tablets provide the main feed-stock for the chemical process of "cooking" meth. Take away the supply, and you make the task immeasurably more difficult.

We suspect that meth use hasn't declined by 80 percent in Oklahoma. That would be too much to ask for. But the state is nearly free of dangerous, smelly labs and the residue which litters roadsides, pollutes houses and endangers children.

That's a clear victory that's all too rare in the battle against drugs, even if it means the labs just move to the next state. Kansas would do well to follow suit. Drive the labs to Missouri or Arkansas, for all we care.

Drug enforcement is a difficult game. Most measures simply hamper the drug trade without really reducing it. Making drugs illegal guarantees nothing but jobs for drug agents and drug smugglers.

The real answer, of course, is teaching kids the dangers of drugs and hoping they have sense enough to listen. There's evidence that is working in America, too, at least, working better than border interdiction or profiling smugglers on the highway.

But if a law can put any kind of a dent in the meth trade, we're all for it. Of all the illegal drugs, meth comes closest to alcohol in its destructive power. Meth ruins lives, wrecks bodies, rends families, leaves relatives crying and victims destitute.

It's a wicked substance. We probably cannot drive it from the face of the earth — since you can make it in the kitchen — but if we push the labs out of Kansas, we'll have succeeded in cleaning up the place.

It's worth a try. — *Steve Haynes*

Letter Policy

The Goodland Star-News encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, and must include a telephone number and a signature. Unsigned letters will not be published. Form letters will be rejected, as will letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and good taste. We encourage letters, with address and phone numbers, by e-mail to: <star-news@nwkanssas.com>.

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People love Christ; not all or in the same way

My column regarding Christmas was not a tirade against Christianity. I'm glad people love Christ, strive to turn the other cheek and attempt to live up to the teachings of a great man.

I don't want to take that away from anyone. I was and still am simply trying to show that not everyone believes the same thing. Not everyone celebrates the birth of Christ.

In my column, I mentioned separation of church and state and how Christmas carols don't belong in schools.

Why do we still argue this point anyway? The courts have traditionally ruled on the side of keeping religion out of school. It's not an issue anymore, because learned judges and constitutional scholars can look past their own beliefs.

A letter to the editor expressing the opposite opinion included the mention that the Founding Fathers were Christian.

Yes, they were, but being Christian didn't stop them from understanding that not everyone believes the same thing.



kathryn burke

• commentary

I think maybe some people just can't see past what they believe.

I tried to use the Muslim or Jewish religions as examples.

Would the author of the letter be OK with reciting a Muslim prayer in school? Muslim teachings express good morals, but I'm sure she would agree they don't belong in our schools.

I'm not pushing to include a Jewish prayer into the curriculum, because I understand some people don't agree with the Jewish religion and that's OK with me. Why can't the letter writer see that not everyone agrees with her beliefs?

At the foundation of our country, the very

first Americans came here to escape religious persecution. Maybe they weren't the most open-minded group, but the idea that they came here to worship how they pleased is still pertinent today.

America has a long history of allowing freedom, and that includes freedom of religion for everyone, not just Christians.

Our constitution is set up to protect the rights of the individual, and that means even if the majority is Christian, people of all religions are free to do as they please.

I'm also a little bit offended that the letter writer assumes that only two choices exist, Christian or bad. Christians do not own the rights to morality. I can be against crime, hate, murder, teen pregnancy, divorce and disrespect without believing in Christ. Schools can teach kids to do the right things without including religion. If you look at the teachings, almost all religions teach love and understanding.

I thought Christians were supposed to be accepting and loving of everyone.

The economy of hunger



prairie writers circle

• richard manning

One of the many ironies of our time is that no news is strictly local. Corporate culture's homogenization leaves me free to tell a quirky little story about my town and be fairly certain it is relevant in yours, even if yours is Palencia, Guatemala.

The poor, and therefore the hungry, have always been with us, so it would seem there is no news in this matter. Nonetheless, a group of well-meaning folks assembled recently in my town, Missoula, Mont., with the straightforward mission of eradicating hunger here.

One would think it to be an easy enough task. Missoula has a lively economy, affluence and a deep-seated progressive streak immune to the smear of red that has so stained the rest of the region. So in true progressive tradition, we saw this as simply a matter of rolling up our sleeves and getting on with it.

After all, most of us have seen the hungry, the shuffling homeless under the Interstate bridges. There didn't seem to be all that many of them, and they didn't look as if they would eat all that much.

But the people who had been doing the actual work of collecting and distributing food to the poor for years in this town were quick to tell us that stereotypes are simply wrong.

It has become increasingly difficult to work at small-town food banks because often the staff knows the client not as a beggar from beneath the bridge, but as a neighbor or colleague. Food banks today cater increasingly — and a sociologist's survey of our town bore this out — to people who are employed, the class we now call the working poor.

These people earn so little they barely get by. Catastrophic medical bills or Missoula's escalating housing costs, can chew up their inadequate paychecks so that by the end of the month there is no money left for food.

If we are to really do anything about the shameful matter of hunger in our town, we must address these larger issues. What at first

looked like a little hole to plug now appears to be a bottomless chasm, ever widening.

There is something fundamental buried in all of this: where these people work. Many of them, report the food bank people, work full time for minimum wage and no health insurance at the ring of chain stores that has suburbanized this once-unique mountain town.

The big-box retail business has exploded in Missoula, making us a regional market center, part of the cause of our prosperity. That is, hunger is increasing in our town not in spite of our healthy economy, but because of it.

Hunger in America is no longer a matter of falling through the cracks, of happenstance and misfortune. Hunger has been institutionalized as a part of the economic fabric, including especially the business of selling food.

where to write

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