

OPINION

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OUR OPINION

Toasts & Roasts

Barbecue bragging rights, one seriously cool school and city leaders offering a listening ear

Our occasional roundup of **Toasts & Roasts:** Our compliments to the chef goes out to S&T Pit Burgers for its grand champion win in the inaugural Big Axe BBQ Competition at the Texas State Forest Festival. Our own food critic is a big fan of the Paul Avenue restaurant, noting in her review last spring that the eatery, which scored zero demerits in its most recent health inspection, is so clean “you could eat off the floor.” As anyone who follows the restaurant inspections we frequently run in our weekend edition may have noticed, the same can’t be said of far too many restaurants around Angelina County in recent months. The S&T team bested 12 others during this year’s event, and we appreciate Ferrara’s Heating & Air Conditioning for sponsoring as well as competing in it. Everyone involved seemed to be having a great time, and we look forward to future barbecue cook-offs.

A gold star to St. Cyprian’s Episcopal School for its recent designation as a 2022 Cognia School of Distinction. The achievement highlights the quality of teaching and learning that takes place at St. Cyprian’s, head of school Sherry Durham said, validating “the practice of excellence in education that is a hallmark of our school that continues each day in our classrooms.” Anyone who reads Durham’s monthly columns on this page is aware that St. Cyprian’s constantly has some of the coolest activities and approaches to learning. We’re always impressed when we learn about what’s going on in their classrooms. The Cognia Performance Standards for accreditation are based on the latest research and understanding of learning,

teaching and leading expected in effective schools and systems. As such, it’s no surprise to us that St. Cyprian’s was awarded this distinction. Keep up the good work.

A toast to Councilman Robert Shankle and other city leaders for taking the time to listen to residents’ concerns about safety and infrastructure during a town hall meeting earlier this month.

Seems we’re not the only ones who think our streets are too dark, as we’ve complained about in a previous editorial and investigated in a recent story. A few citizens spoke up at the meeting to note public safety concerns due to poor lighting in some areas of town.

We appreciate city engineer Eddie Aguilar, who noted one of the streets and said he would look into it, and city communications director Jessica Pebworth, who told attendees they should report any outages to the city’s website, where there is a portal to document those issues.

An infrastructure concern regarding standing water at the corner of Raguet Street and Frank Avenue also was mentioned. Given the location of our office, that concern is one of which our employees are well aware. City manager Kevin Gee said it’s a shared concern between the city and the state and tasked Aguilar with finding the root and determining a solution. We’ll go a step further and include the area of Frank Avenue in front St. Luke’s Health Memorial, which routinely floods during heavy rains, sometimes stranding motorists.

We appreciate the city for attempting to address these concerns and look forward to seeing some of these issues resolved. Thanks for listening to our citizens.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Making choices

From the time I was a child, my mother taught me that the Holy Bible is the written word of God Jehovah (Psalm 83-19). It will teach us how to be wise (Prov 1-1-9). My mother said following God’s instructions were the best way to train your children (Prov. 6-20) (Prov 22-6) (Prov 23-13-14) (Eph 6-1-3). I was blessed to be born in a time when parents, church, school and the neighborhood were family. We called people aunt and uncle only to come to find out they were not kin to us. It was hard to get into any trouble with so many watching. Now with the Supreme Court, we have no choices, but God gave us

choices (Deut 30-19) (Josh 24-15) (St. John 3-16). His choice is to provide everlasting life to those who believe in Him. The Supreme Court has some power, but the supreme being has all power (Psalm 62-11-12). About abortion, ask W.W.J.D., then go to St. John 8-1-11. Those who are following man, please read in your Holy Bible (2nd Thess 1-17) (2nd Tim 3-1-17). A lie Jesus said is of the devil (St. John 8-44). Those making it hard to vote should be ashamed. I can’t get my mail-in ballot, but Councilman Robert Shankle took me to cast my vote. Please, everyone, go and cast your vote. Love always. Ann Shelton, Lufkin

TODAY IN HISTORY

The Associated Press Today is Friday, Sept. 23, the 266th day of 2022. There are 99 days left in the year. Today’s Highlight in History: On Sept. 23, 1952, Sen. Richard M. Nixon, R-Calif., salvaged his vice-presidential nomination by appearing on television from Los Angeles to refute allegations of improper campaign fundraising in what became known as the “Checkers” speech. On this date: In 1780, British spy John Andre was captured along with papers revealing Benedict Arnold’s plot to surrender West Point to the British. In 1806, the Lewis and Clark ex-

pedition returned to St. Louis more than two years after setting out for the Pacific Northwest. In 1955, a jury in Sumner, Mississippi, acquitted two white men, Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam, of murdering Black teenager Emmett Till. (The two men later admitted to the crime in an interview with Look magazine.) In 1957, nine Black students who’d entered Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas were forced to withdraw because of a white mob outside. In 1962, “The Jetsons,” an animated cartoon series about a Space Age family, premiered as the ABC television network’s first program in color.

THE FIRST AMENDMENT

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

View different from bottom of hole

Try to imagine being at the very bottom of a very deep, dark hole. Maybe some abandoned well, or whatever. Try to sense how it feels being in a spot where no one can reach you. Maybe there’s someone at the top trying to help and maybe they’re letting you know there’s a rope up there perfect for helping you climb your way out of the pit.



GARY STALLARD

But if you’re the one down at the bottom, you probably already know about what’s up on top. You probably already know there’s help awaiting. You likely can see the light way, way up there.

The problem? If you’re at the bottom of a pit of depression or other mental health crises, you probably don’t care.

September is National Suicide Prevention Month. It’s a beautiful, genuine effort to create awareness and an awesome attempt to possibly save someone who may feel he or she is at the bottom of one of those accursed pits.

I’ve been there. Right at the very bottom. I’m talking about being at the point where I didn’t feel there was any point in trying to go on with whatever life meant. It’s truly a bad place to exist, even for the short time I dealt with it. Unlike others who deal with severe, chronic depression and other mental health issues, mine was situational and temporary. Others fall into those holes as a regular part of their lives. It seems their entire existence is a series of constant battles just trying to climb their way back up again.

At my lowest, I knew there were

forms of support. I knew all about the Suicide Hotline. Thanks to some good people with Veterans Affairs, I had a number and email for various contacts who would have been willing to help me work my way through some stuff.

But what some folks don’t seem to grasp — especially if they’ve never been down inside the pit — is that no matter how much help lies outside, the truth is the ones huddling at the bottom just don’t have the strength, or will, to do any reaching.

Try thinking of it this way: Someone up top has the rope and all the other tools ready to save someone. But they’re waiting for the person in the hole to reach up for help. “Hey, here’s a rope. Just reach up and grab it.”

It doesn’t always work that way. So often, by the time one has sunk in and settled to the bottom, he or she wants to stay there until the end. Until whatever pain they’re feeling finally goes away — by either leaving or by taking the person with it.

Yes, it sometimes means a person has just given up.

I’ve lost people close to me — friends and other loved ones — because of suicide. Some of them offered signs of trouble — the same warning signs publicized in an effort for us to understand when someone is sinking. It hurts to know I missed those signs from the friends I lost. In hindsight — the curse of any tragedy — I can see what I should have seen then.

But not everyone displays any outward sign of giving up. One day they’re seemingly happy and perfectly fine, and the next day we’re wondering what could possibly make them want to give up on this life.

They were buried in a hole, and none of us could see it. They’re the

ones leaving us wondering “Why?” for the rest of our own lives.

I hear the multitude of “reasons” outsiders give when someone gives up. Those attempts at explanations range from fear of how others would view them — the mental health stigma is real and damaging — to “selfishness.” Seriously. As if the idea of being a burden and wanting to remove said burden from others is selfish.

In recent years, there have been efforts to erase the stigma. Some pretty well-known people have gone public with their struggles, letting others know there’s no shame in the battles.

Using a month to shine a bigger light is another way to help. Surely, there’s at least some comfort in knowing one isn’t alone.

Are these efforts enough? Not for everyone.

From my one experience, I learned a valuable lesson. Buried down inside those walls means one can’t see anything else. Saying “It’s going to get better” is a great effort, but those well-meaning words don’t exactly break down walls or fill the holes enough for one to walk out safely.

What I’ve seen help even more than words is for the concerned ones to reach out with a loving hand rather than waiting on the one suffering to do all the reaching.

At some point, a person truly wanting to help may have to do something way more uncomfortable than standing outside the hole.

A person hoping to help another might just have to climb right down inside the pit themselves.

Those helping hands can be even stronger than words.

Gary Stallard is a regular contributor to the Opinion page of The Lufkin Daily News. His email address is garystallard@yahoo.com.



Celebrate recovery in September

September is a month known for many things, and the Alcohol & Drug Abuse Council of Deep East Texas would like East Texans to know September also is Recovery Awareness Month.

During this month, ADAC highlights the recovery community and aims to show those in the community that hope and recovery is possible.

The national message this year for Recovery Awareness Month is “Recovery Is For Everyone: every person, every family, every community.” ADAC wanted to put its own twist

CONNOR GILBERTSON GUEST COLUMNIST

on that message for the month of September and Recovery Day at the Park, which is “Normalize Recovery.”

The purpose of ADAC’s Recovery Day at the Park event is to recognize and celebrate those in recovery.

Individuals can share their stories with others and build support around recovery. Those in recovery seek to grow in the community, therefore the public’s support is valued as an ingredient in building

new and lasting relationships.

Individuals have come onto ADAC’s podcast “Give. Get. Grow.” to share their story and their journey of recovery. Several others have come forward to share what recovery means to them and their stories have been published on Facebook. Multiple testimonies and messages reveal recovery is possible

ADAC has made recovery awareness efforts and hosted events promoting recovery for more than 10 years. The reason for holding events like these, along with others, is that ADAC is a community-based organization that strives to impact the communities it serves.

If you or anyone you know are in need of ADAC’s services, please call 1 (800) 445-8562 or (936) 634-5753.

Let’s come together in support of friends, family and community members by showing them we are here for them through their recovery journey.

Join us in celebrating Recovery Awareness Month at Recovery Day at the Park from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday at Kiwanis Park.

Connor Gilbertson is the public relations coordinator for the Alcohol & Drug Abuse Council of Deep East Texas’ Region 5 Prevention Resource Center.

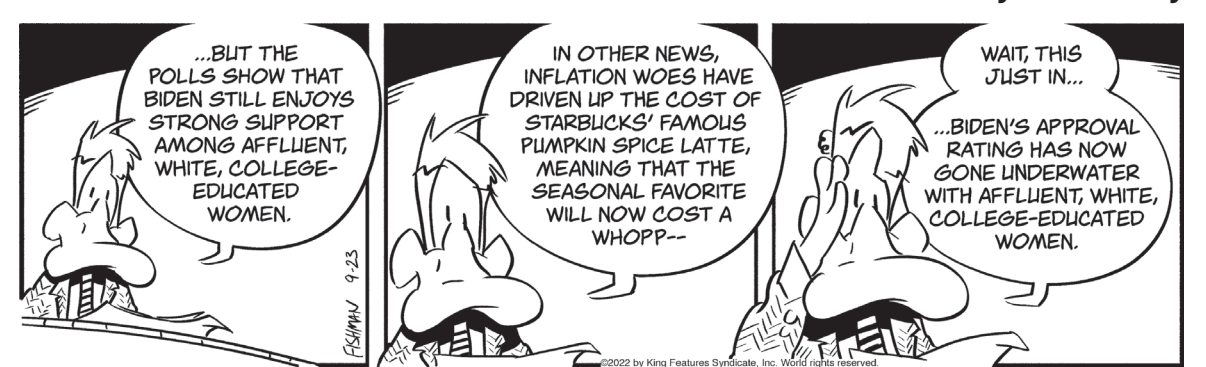
HEADLINES IN Local HISTORY

- SEPTEMBER 23**
Five years ago
 ■ United Way Campaign kicks off fundraising. Agency sets 2017 goal of \$315,000.
 ■ “Fire Show” leaves searing impression at Forest Festival.
Ten years ago
 ■ Longview Lobos erupt for a 45-14 win over Lufkin. This was the first home loss in the last 15 meetings between the two teams.
 ■ Lufkin Purple Squad cheerleaders win Division I junior varsity title at Texas Forest

- Festival. Lufkin Gold Squad cheerleaders win Division I varsity title.
Twenty years ago
 ■ Lufkin Panthers overcome 22-8 halftime deficit against Aldine Eisenhower, the state’s No. 1-ranked football team, to take a 36-29 win.
 ■ Sylvia Brooks, president & CEO of Houston Urban League, speaks at Long Chapel Church.

From the pages of The Lufkin Daily News, compiled by The History Center, TheHistoryCenterOnline.com.

MALLARD FILLMORE



By Bruce Tinsley