

A real concern raising ugly head

By Mary Kay Woodyard, Telegram columnist
I am a news addict and I willingly admit it, but something new is emerging which has me both troubled and annoyed. Either the news is geared to the fifth to ninth grade mentality or, God forbid, adults are completely enamored with stars and celebrities. Now don't get me wrong, I find it interesting to hear a little tidbit now and then about certain celebs (certainly not short for celibate) actions, but when day after day and story after story focuses on these few and questionable characters I am disgusted.

Do I really care what some star is giving his child for his fifth birthday? And, if Tom Cruise wants to jump on Oprah's couch...go right ahead. When we were teenagers we had our share of stars we followed, we often wrote for autographed pictures and read movie magazines, but as we got older we became more interested in everyday people with remarkable achievements. Now it appears, based on the number of stories either in print or on TV, a large number of youth don't outgrow the Hollywood stage. Do we have to wonder why our country is in the shape it is?

What effect does all of this have on the ordinary person? Although I am not a sociologist, certain facts seems pretty irrefutable. For instance, Hollywood has glamorized single moms, but does a single mom here in the middle of the country have the same life style as Angelina Jolie. Perhaps a ninth grader can be taken in by that, but surely the rest of us know better.

And, what about the multiple partners which seems to be the rule, rather than the exception? It may earn someone the status of highly desirable in Hollywood, but that is hardly the description of such a person here in Norton.

There is much talk about should these stars (sports, singers or actors) curb their actions because they are role models for children? But the problem isn't with the stars or even with the kids, it is with the adults who model their own lives after these stars.

There is no greater role model for a child than their parents. Parents owe it to their children to set the standard of behavior.

If parents and children discuss the actions of these celebrities and the consequences of such actions it strengthens not only the parent/child bond, but also the fiber of the community.

If we as adults honor individuals for their positive contributions rather than their lifestyle it helps children determine those factors upon which to base their own value. They can make informed decisions and thus enhance their feelings of self-worth, eliminating the need for a celebrity yardstick.

(Mr. Dreiling addresses this issue in part of his column today.)

Thumbs Up to . . .

√**Karen Reedy**, on your 48 productive years with the Sebelius and Griffiths Law Firm. Enjoy retirement. (e-mail)

√**Todd Zink**, *The Telegram's* top "Carrier of the Year," and to **Heaven Peters**, first runner-up and **Leif Carlson**, second runner-up. (*Telegram Staff*)

√**Jay Ryan**, for his advice to Rep. Moran. I could not agree more. (Don McClelland)

√**Larry Nelson** and **Joyce Quinn**, for the carriage rides every Thursday, and **John Kaus** for the sleigh rides during the holidays. (called in)

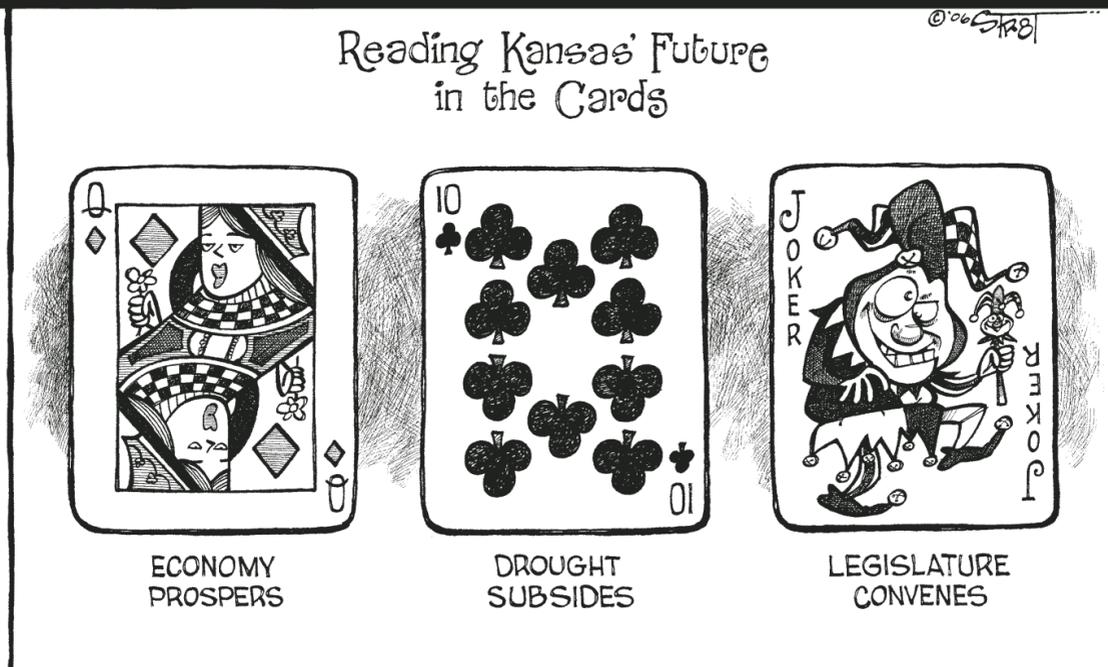
√**All the Prairie Land** linemen, for working around the clock to restore power. (called in)

√**Larry, Lee Ann, Al, Troy, Kelly**, "Alvin and the Chipmunks and the Reindeer," and everybody else who put on the outstanding Country Christmas Concert. Great job! (e-mail, called in, and brought in)

√**All of our advertisers and subscribers**, for keeping us around for another year. May 2007 be your best year yet. (tomd)

√The people at the **Norton County Courthouse**, who come in for very little acclaim, for carrying out their duties professionally and with courtesy. (called in)

√**Karla Reed**, for all you do to keep the Norton Area Chamber up and running. (tomd).



Another positive for Norton noted

Dear Mr. Dreiling: You often ask the residents of Norton to focus on the positive things about our community. We recently had a wonderful experience. This summer I had surgery in Omaha for cancer. My husband stayed with me during the time of my hospitalization, coming home the day of my discharge to prepare for his every-other-week dose of chemotherapy.

After I got home, people brought in full, prepared meals, frozen entrees and side dishes. For three weeks neither of us did any cooking. The people who brought the food were people with whom my husband worked, members of the churches of which we are a part, and neighbors. In addition, countless people inquired about us and offered prayers, creating an ever-widening circle of concern and compassion. There were flowers, cards, and phone calls. The cards and calls continued throughout my own experience of chemotherapy.

We had no idea so many people cared so much. We were amazed and appreciative of all the expressions of care. And we certainly affirm that many good people populate this town we call home.

In the Christmas season, we are bombarded with requests to "help our neighbors." The expressions of compassion we received were simply the results of people who care and quietly found ways to express that. I think that is reflective of the people who live in this community.

Sincerely yours,
Rita Speer

(If you have an experience to share, send it in. It's always nice to read about the good things that make Norton a special place to live.)

I spent Christmas weekend in Hays with family and friends. Nice time. One of the lasting memories, however, came at midnight Mass at St. Joseph's Church, downtown, probably the community's

Good Evening Norton
Tom Dreiling



largest Catholic church. From the organist, to the full choir, to the instrumental accompaniment, it was beautiful. It took an hour and twenty minutes but I could sense, even then, a lot of people weren't ready to leave. And this is the first time I can ever remember being at a Mass that, at its conclusion, gave those men and women in the choir loft an ovation, with most on their feet. Well deserved. To me, it was a truly wonderful Christmas gift.

I wasn't supposed to be in Hays on Christmas weekend, I was supposed to be in Invesco Stadium at Mile High to watch the Denver Broncos and Cincinnati Bengals. But the Denver storm scared me off. My son had four box seat tickets for the game. He and three others did manage to get to the game that, before it ended, was locked in a snowfall. Aurora, where Todd lives, received an official 33 inches of snow. His development had to wait several days for city crews to carve out a driving lane on their street. I guess 33 inches of wind-driven snow would create driving hardships. And today we learn where the Denver area could be in line for another 18 inches as a new winter storm develops. That new storm could brush portions of western and northwest Kansas, according to weather experts. We'll just have to wait and see.

I know you all know who rap megastar Eminem is. Well, this *role model* (another laugh) and his high school sweetheart Kim Mathers divorced for a second time

Tuesday of last week, less than a year after they remarried. You are reading right. Eminem and Mathers remarried Jan. 14. He filed divorce papers April 5. They first married in 1999 and divorced in 2001. Role models set examples. That's why this *role model* has no further role to model — in my books!

And how about the Kentucky reigning Miss U.S.A. getting to keep her crown — thanks to Miss U.S.A. Pageant sponsor Donald Trump — despite the rules she broke, rules that really raise questions as to her character and moral focus. Ditto Miss Nevada who lost her crown for pretty much the same reasons, but wasn't given a second chance. Both young ladies went before the cameras with tear-filled eyes and emotional pleas to the public to understand how sorry they are. Garbage! And these two are — or were — *role models* that our children are supposed to emulate. I hope our youngsters let well enough alone so they don't get tied up in this gaudy, ostentatious, conspicuous, impudent display of empty headed mentality.

And I noticed where one NBA team beat another 150-145 in three overtimes earlier this week. So what?! I couldn't care less. The big scores being recorded so often this season points out the fact that NBA basketball is no longer a game, no longer a sport. It's an arena where you learn little, if anything about basketball, but everything about showboating. Quite frankly, I'd rather watch our Norton Blue Jays. That's basketball I understand! Go Jays!

Happy New Year to you, my readers, the reason for my being.

Have a good weekend, and start out the new week and the new year with your presence at the church of your choice Sunday.

My readers are like a gift to me

Someone sent me a survey related to Christmas. One question was, "What was the best present you ever received?" In her answers she had a lovely story from her childhood about a "fur" cape.

I was stumped. I believe my presents have improved over the years, mostly because I get a catalog and circle the items I want and give it to the girls. They then make sure their Dad is on track.

One gift I remember very vividly from my childhood was a stage set. It was metal and cardboard. There were characters that you could move with magnets and a playbook of three fairy tales.

My sisters and I spent hours playing with this. We mixed up the props and backdrops and made up our own stories. I still have it. Many years later, a friend was describing a stupid gift she had gotten for Christmas. It was the same stage set. Truly, beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

Ah, the pitfalls of Christmas gift giving! My friend was a year or two older than I so if we got this present the same year, perhaps she was past the age where she could find anything interesting about it. Because she is one of the most creative people I have ever met, I cannot believe it is because somehow I was the only person with enough imagination to enjoy the thing.

The perfect gift! Does such a thing exist? My sister, God love her, must have

Back Home Nancy Hagman



been in the vicinity when I was grossing about not having wrapping paper last year. So, what did she send me for my birthday? Gift wrap! I love her thoughtfulness and really it was an inspired gift for someone with a December birthday!

Here's the rest of the story: I apparently picked wrapping paper up at every after-Christmas sale I saw in January. Then I bought a huge box of rolled wrap at an auction for \$2. Over the summer, the stuff began to breed in the attic. I know that sounds far-fetched but there is no other plausible explanation. Plus, I found a stash I must have overlooked last year! I now have enough paper to last till I die — even if I live another 50 years!

The gift wrap package from my sister did have another item which certainly qualifies as the most unusual gift I have ever received: her picture ID from work!

We figure as she was closing the box the lid caught on the ID and in it went! She did not even get a day off from work over the deal! Bummer!

This year I thought I found the perfect gift when the school kids came around selling greenery. You could even have wreaths mailed as gifts directly and not have to worry about anything. It worked four out of five times. My mother-in-law's was in her house long enough for her to have an allergic reaction.

I did something for my brother. Perhaps it was the way I told him about it, but he seemed to take offense. After thinking about it I talked to him again and said, "You know I was just giving you a gift. I know I may have given it poorly by trying to explain it, but I am a nice person and I was trying to do something nice, now what you are supposed to do is say, 'Thank you.'"

And he said, "You are a nice person and thank you!" That is the best thanks I have ever gotten!

Another question on the survey was: is it better to give or receive? Of course, the answer is give, right? But looking at it from both sides I do believe the correct answer is receive with an asterisk. And that asterisk would be **graciously!**

The older we get, the harder it is to just accept what someone gives. What they put their heart and soul and hard-earned money into. What they are capable of giving. What they truly want us to have.

So here is something I would like my readers who have responded to things I written to know. You are like a gift to me! HOW NICE! THANK YOU!

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