

# Opinion



## Letters

## We need your support

To the Colby Free Press:

Sexual assault and abuse, the often unreported and “silent” crime, effects every citizen in every community in Kansas. To increase public awareness concerning this issue, Gov. Kathleen Sebelius has proclaimed April as “Sexual Assault Awareness Month.”

Sexual violence has become an issue of epidemic proportions. Statistics from the Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence, and the Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault, state that 1 in 3 females and 1 in 6 males will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime. They also report that in Kansas a sexual assault occurs ever 8.5 hours, and at least three-fourths of the assaults were perpetrated by someone the victim knew.

During 2003, the Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence reports that more than 5,000 sexual assault victims were served by Kansas Sexual Assault programs.

The national average reports that only 15 percent of sexual assaults were reported to law enforcement. In Ellis County for 2003, it was stated that 7 sexual assault cases were reported to the Ellis County Attorney’s office, while the Kansas Attorney General’s office, in their annual crime victims report, stated that 60 sexual assaults had occurred. Ellis County’s average for 2003 of 12 percent coincides with the national average.

Please join with the Northwest Kansas Family Shelter, Inc., and take a stand against sexual violence in our communities. For more information contact the Northwest Kansas Family Shelter at (785) 625-3055 or 800-794-4624.

**Decide to end sexual violence:  
We can wait no longer!**

**Sue Merklein  
Northwest Kansas Family Shelter, Inc.  
Hays  
(Letter #20)**

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or you can e-mail [td@nwkansan.com](mailto:td@nwkansan.com), call (785) 462-3963, fax (785) 462-7749, or hand deliver your comments to the office. Please remember to sign your submissions and include a daytime telephone number and address. These are used for verification only.

## Addresses of elected officials:

**U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-4774

**U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-6521

**U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 1519 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715

**State Rep. Jim Morrison**, State Capitol Building Rm. 171-W, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7676 e mail: [jmorrison@ink.org](mailto:jmorrison@ink.org) web:<http://www.ink.org/public/legislators/jmorrison>

**State Sen. Stan Clark**, State Capitol Building Rm. 449-N, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7399 e mail: [sclark@ink.org](mailto:sclark@ink.org)

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## This Oreo is sweet, too

**Patty Decker**

● **Deep Thoughts**



When my children and I moved to Colby almost 13 years ago, we brought with us a little kitty named Tiger. I wanted to find the little guy a home in Idaho, but my children insisted that Tiger had to come too — after all he was a member of our family.

Within a month after arriving here, Tiger was diagnosed with leukemia and had to be put down. It was a tough time for all of us being in a new place, not knowing very many people and then losing our pet.

A few days after losing Tiger, a friend from the newspaper office found a six-week old kitten that almost got run over by a car. Actually, the cat narrowly escaped — rolling end over end under a vehicle. This friend witnessed the incident and immediately grabbed the small animal that was understandably shaken. If cats really have nine lives, it would be safe to say this guy had used up one of those lives that day.

Apparently our friend believed it was fate and remembering that we had just lost our cat, she brought the kitten to us. At first, I was unsure about the whole thing because none of us had really a chance to grieve Tiger's death. Still, in the end, it turned out to be one of the most loyal animals we have ever had.

After accepting the kitten, the next step was deciding on a name. It wasn't long before my children unanimously agreed that his name should be "Milo" and our small family instantly grew by one. In those earlier years, we lived in the Court Street neighborhood and back then there were a lot of cats wondering around.

Suffice to say it was a tough place for our young little Milo to break into. He was forever coming home beat to a pulp. For the first year, it was rou-

tine to see the veterinarian about once every couple of months. Along with all of his cuts and scrapes that he came home with, one area extremely vulnerable on Milo was his ear. It never failed that even with all his fresh wounds, the ear never seemed to have a chance of healing. The wear and tear eventually left Milo with only one good ear.

Looking back, I think the best thing that ever happened to Milo was when I remarried and the family moved to N. Lincoln. Whatever the reason, the neighborhood seemed to agree with him and he stopped coming home such a mess.

As the years went by, Milo became a very popular guy in Colby. There were a lot of people taking walks by the house who would talk to him. It never occurred to me until I spoke with some of the neighbors that Milo was quite the socialite. He wasn't shy with people and even with his mangled ear, people liked him.

We thought it was sweet that Milo had his own little routine after everyone went to work.

Last year, though, Randy (my husband) started thinking it might not be a bad idea to have a second cat around for two reasons: (1) being a friend to Milo; and (2) lessening the sadness since Milo was getting very old.

The plan backfired, though, when our new cat was accidentally hit by a car. I wasn't aware that our newest family member was dead, though, until Randy told me that our neighbor saw what happened one Saturday morning and he didn't have the heart to tell me.

Two months later and on a sunny afternoon, Milo passed away. Obviously, there will never be another cat that will replace Milo. However, we did adopt another cat when a friend of my daughters said she couldn't keep the kitty she had.

Consequently, we now have a young, feisty little guy running around the house again and knocking stuff off tables and desks.

What's even funnier about this new cat is his size. He is nearly a year old and looks like he's only four to five months old. Seriously he looks like a toy cat and is so precious. Certainly he's no Milo, but he has a unique personality that the family enjoys.

Pet owners understand the sadness of losing a pet and although getting attached has its downsides, I wouldn't have traded the experiences with Milo or even the short life of Sabi for anything.

There's only one thing we plan to do different with Oreo, who is the newest member of the family, and that is he will be a house cat. After losing one that didn't understand the dangers of streets and cars, I just can't bring myself to tempt fate by letting Oreo run wild.

As for Milo, he was quite the trooper and we will miss him very much.

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*Decker is editor of the Free Press. Her column appears on Thursdays.*

## For better or worse

**Jay Kelley**

● **Speaking MyMind**



For another, there must be a standard, even if it is no standard. Man will always set a standard, even if it is arbitrary and caters to the lowest common denominator.

Marriage is one of our most fundamental institutions and as such has suffered greatly under our individualistic attitudes. When Jesus said man and woman were to be "one flesh" I don't think he gave a caveat for irreconcilable differences.

Marriage books abound, from the serious to pop-psychology, and they all have one thing in common. The most important thing, say the books, is taking care of your spouse. Yet struggling or divorcing couples often repeat the humanist mantra, "My needs aren't being met."

It is no coincidence to me that the rise in our divorce rate has followed our increasing departure from the Biblical pattern of serving and embraced humanistic theory.

Yet, as the rate continues to increase, we continue to look for the solution in the very system which has failed us so miserably rather than return to our roots.

We have embraced "non-traditional" families as though there is no difference between a par-

ent who loses a spouse to death or debilitating injury and those who simply chose to raise children alone because they cannot get along; those who chose to have children without the benefit of marriage..

We say the traditional family either failed or never existed, but define traditional as what we saw in the old television show "Leave it to Beaver." The Cleaver's fictional caricature is a convenient straw man to help us ignore the real traditional family.

What is the real traditional family? Two people who love each other, even during those times they don't like each other, committed to a common goal — a lifetime together and if they are blessed with children, so much the better.

Yes, there are sometimes events such as the death of a spouse which render the traditional family a little non-traditional, but the principle upon which such a marriage was founded remains the same.

Ultimately, the source of most of our inability to get along has nothing to do with needs or tradition. It has everything to do with selfishness. The founders of our country understood the need for compromise in everyday life.

They also understood the need for principles upon which there could be no compromise.

Most importantly, they understood the difference between the two.

That is something with which we are having problems.

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*Kelley is a local minister and writer who speaks his mind from time to time. His e-mail is [jkelly@nwkansan.com](mailto:jkelly@nwkansan.com).*

Our constitution is an interesting document. It has survived for more than 200 years with relatively few modifications, something to keep in mind in our increasingly legalistic society.

It begins with some simple, yet profound words, known as the preamble.

**"We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure (http://www.usconstitution.net/glossary.html) domestic Tranquillity, provide for the common (http://www.usconstitution.net/constmiss.html) defense, promote the general (http://www.usconstitution.net/glossary.html) Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our (http://www.usconstitution.net/glossary.html) Posterity, do (http://www.usconstitution.net/glossary.html) ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."**

Words like we, union and common don't seem to have as much effect in today's individualistic society. Perhaps that is at the root of many of our problems.

We have personalized checking, shopping and even pan pizzas. What happened to us? In fact, what happened to we, the people?

The thinking seems to be if it doesn't bother me, it cannot bother you and it must be good for society. Conversely, if it bothers me it must bother you and therefore must be bad for society.

In effect, we have personalized our society to the point where nothing is really wrong. Of course, that is not really true. For one thing, some things are wrong regardless of what we think.

## Doonesbury

● **Gary Trudeau**

