

Opinion



Your Views Count

• Letters

Blood donors, volunteers needed

To The Colby Free Press:

The need for blood remains constant, while many factors strain the supply. Blood usage continues to rise every year as a large portion of the population ages and medical facilities, such as heart surgery units and cancer centers, improve techniques and technologies.

The American Red Cross is continuously working hard to ensure a stable blood supply is available for patients when they need it. If you wait until an emergency to donate, it is too late, as it takes 48 hours to test blood for safety and may not be available. We cannot stockpile blood and platelets to get through tough months — we wish we could, but blood only lasts 42 days. Steady, regular donations are needed to help area hospital patients day in and day out.

We need 500 blood donors each day in Kansas and northern Oklahoma alone.

Donating blood is a simple, selfless act that takes about one hour, with the actual donation only taking about seven minutes. Please make donating blood part of your community responsibility. Every two seconds someone in the United States needs blood. Donating regularly ensures blood is available at a moment's notice when it is needed to save a life.

Our blood drive will be from noon to 6 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 14, at the Colby Community Building.

Most medications are not cause for deferral. It is recommended donors drink plenty of water before and after their blood donation.

We are especially in need of volunteers to help unload the truck at 10 a.m. and help reload the truck at 6:15 p.m.

For donors wanting to make an appointment for the next drive, call 1-800-GIVE LIFE (4483-5433)

For questions or information about donating or learn how to volunteer, call Jo Cheney, 462-2082.

Jo Cheney,
blood drive chair in Colby
(Letter #69)

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 e-mail pjschief@nwkans.com or pdecker@nwkans.com.

Where to write, call

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

U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 2443 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715 or Fax 202/225-5124

State Rep. Jim Morrison, State Capitol Building, 303 SW 10th St. Rm. 171-W, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7676 e mail: jmorriso@ink.org web: www.ink.org/public/legislators/jmorriso

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Recovery, rebuilding takes time

People are complaining about how long it's been taking the feds to respond to the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and the rest of the southern states recovering from the storm.

The government might've been slow to get necessary resources into place but I didn't see the rest of the country hanging back.

Instead, as the week wore on, I heard more and more about people organizing drives for donations and more.

I went home for lunch on Thursday and turned on the television and there on one of the Wichita channels was one of their newscasters at a drive they organized and it was more of the same the next day.

Even here in Colby, our own Red Cross volunteers have headed down with training to start to send even more.

Such a response makes me proud to say I'm a Kansan and an American.

People are starting to come together when it matters most, when the chips are down, Americans are re-learning what it is to have compassion for their fellow man.

President Bush's brand of compassionate conservatism aside, normal average everyday Americans are the real heroes.

Movie director John Hughes once said people can live in the same neighborhood all their lives and never know their story.

There was an MSNBC blog commentary about how Bush's leadership in this case was non-existent and it's the president's place to "protect people and keep the order."

In his defense (yes, Hades is going to freeze over), I think people are definitely lobbying the criticism the wrong way.

We're dealing with one of the biggest bureaucracies on the planet. Not to mention the fact it takes time to mobilize resources, develop plans and decide who and what is going where.



Tisha Cox

• Off The Beaten Path

It's going to take time to restore order and infrastructure and first and foremost, deal with the thousands of people evacuated from the city of New Orleans alone.

Plus there are conflicting reports of how widespread flooding is in the city and how much damage has actually been done.

On a more personal note...

Images of what Hurricane Katrina has done to the Gulf Coast and New Orleans in particular have stuck with me this past week.

Thanks to this and an event earlier this year, I now have bitter-sweet memories of the trip I took to the Big Easy two years ago.

My father, Gary Cox, was working in Louisiana two years ago when my younger sister Chris and I drove down to visit. We took a day trip to New Orleans and did some sight-seeing.

One of the first things my dad pointed out when we reached downtown New Orleans was the Superdome.

We walked up and down the entire length of Bourbon Street, meandering in and out of shops and bars from the Absinthe Bar, over 200 years old and one of pirate Jean Lafitte's favorite hang-outs to Marie Laveau's House of Voodoo.

The three of us even paid a visit to St. Louis Cemetery No. 1, where the Voodoo Queen is buried in one of New Orleans' cities of the dead. On that trip we learned for ourselves they don't bury people in the ground in New Orleans. In-

stead they use crypts.

The French Quarter was amazing, many of the old buildings having been converted to hotels or other business, many of them with verandahs overlooking the street.

We also saw Lake Ponchartrain, going over it on the I-10 causeway.

It has to be one of the biggest bodies of water I have ever seen.

I've been thinking a lot about that trip since the first warnings about the hurricane came out. I wonder if I ever go back if those places will still be there or gone because of the storm and flooding.

I know it won't be the same. Everything changes. Nothing ever stays the same.

If we ever go back, our father won't be going with us. He died in May, of colon cancer.

As I said, my memories are now bittersweet, but not sad.

They could never be sad and they've been made all the more precious because of an event that no one could have prevented.

Maybe someday I'll go back, when they're done rebuilding.

I know when it's all said and done, many lives will be lost and many more will be changed forever. But that's the important thing — the living.

They'll have to keep on living, moving forward, making new memories.

And when the rebuilding is complete and people's lives are back to normal, they will have made memories of all that has happened, good and bad.

They will have risen above. I hope that's what people remember the most.

Tisha Cox is a general assignment reporter/photographer for the Free Press. Her column appears on Mondays. tcoc@nwkans.com.

What is emergency management?

I am Jim Engel, your Thomas County Emergency Management and 911 director. I live in Colby and have previously worked for the Thomas County Sheriff's Office for over nine years. I have a lovely wife, Tammi, and two wonderful kids, Justin and Jared.

There have been many people that have asked what I do. When I say that I am the director of Emergency Management, they say "like EMS, right?"

Thomas County Emergency Medical Service is its own distinct and separate entity directed by Kathi Wright. Emergency Management works through an integrated emergency management system that is a conceptual framework that increases emergency management capabilities by networking.

That increased capability would not be readily available, especially in a disaster, without establishing prior networking, coordination, linkages, interoperability, partnerships and creative thinking about resource shortfalls.

The system should address all hazards that threaten a community, be resourceful in all four phases of emergency management, seek re-

Jim Engel

• Emergency Management 911 director

sources from any and all sources that are appropriate, and knit together all partnerships and participants for a mutual goal. During times of disaster and grief, emergency management has been working either behind the scenes or on the forefront of managing logistics of emergency operations. Emergency Management is made up of four, specific and overlapping phases: Mitigation, Preparedness, Response and Recovery. As all of you have heard lately, Hurricane Katrina has dealt quite a blow to the southeastern United States and to a much lesser amount, the whole country. It seems that everybody is affected in some way by catastrophic natural disaster. Citizens can prepare themselves for the

worst in several different areas. You can start at home by trimming trees from around power lines, elevating utilities, taking steps to reduce your basement to the effects of flooding, keeping a disaster kit and preparing yourself and your family by taking CPR courses and first aid courses and volunteering for agencies like the American Red Cross, Salvation Army or other non-profit organizations that help people in time of need.

You can even get involved by becoming a trained weather spotter and/or becoming an amateur radio operator. Amateur radio can be a fun hobby that can turn into a lifesaving need for some people. The Salvation Army Team Emergency Radio Network is made up of amateur radio operators that relay health and welfare communications to the regions of the world affected by disaster. Donations are graciously accepted by organizations such as the American Red Cross. If anyone would like to talk to me, my office is located in the basement of the Thomas County Courthouse at 300 N. Court. My phone number is 785-460-4516 or e-mail me at tcm@st-tel.net

Doonesbury

• Gary Trudeau

