

# Opinion



## Free Press Viewpoint

### Some crimes don't deserve jail time

From The Wichita Eagle

In 2003, the Kansas Legislature passed a major prison sentencing reform bill — Senate Bill 123 — under which drug offenders would receive addiction treatment instead of going to prison.

The change made good sense, both in terms of justice (why impose the harshest punishment on a nonviolent offender?) and cost-effectiveness (the average drug treatment costs a fraction of incarceration).

Most important, the bill enhances public safety by treating the root cause of criminal behavior, in this case drug addiction. And because offenders become productive members of society again, prison recidivism rates are reduced.

It's a win-win.

Still, there remains a missing piece in this reform.

At the time, SB 123 didn't apply retroactively to the estimated 1,000 Kansas Department of Corrections inmates who could potentially qualify for drug treatment under its provisions.

It's not too late for the Legislature to make that change.

Earlier this year, Rep. Bill McCreary, R-Wellington, sponsored HB 2231, which would allow about 500 inmates now incarcerated for drug-related crimes to petition for release.

Despite the promised benefits, some Kansas lawmakers have been reluctant to back the bill, Peter Ninemire of Families Against Mandatory Minimums said. The problem is largely perception, he said: "Politicians are worried about appearing soft on crime."

But this isn't a "get out of jail free" pass. There are strict guidelines to ensure public safety: Inmates have to meet KDOC eligibility requirements. ...

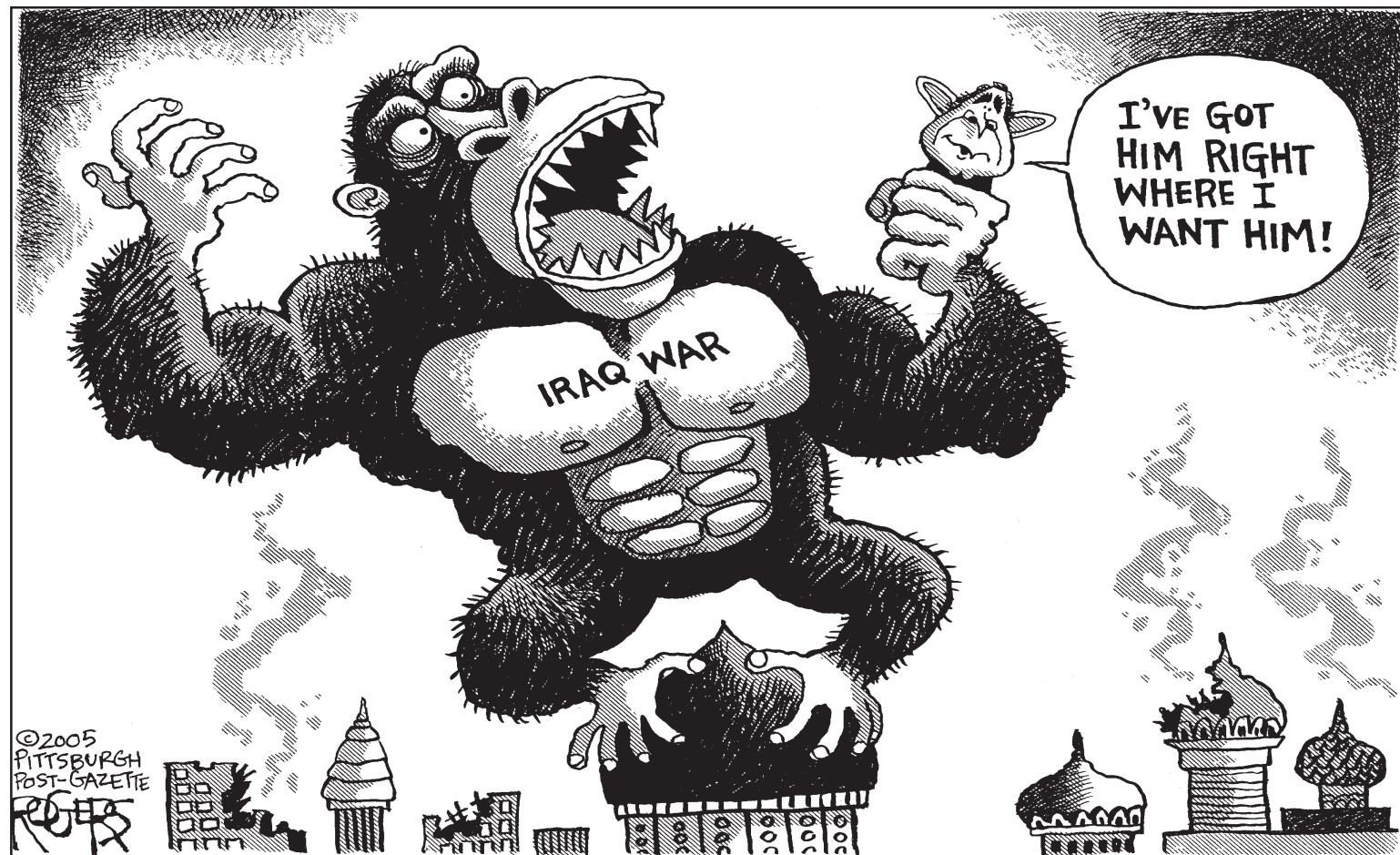
Granted, a full KDOC report on outcomes of SB 123 treatment programs is still pending. But initial reports look positive: Of the 735 clients in treatment between July 2003 and December 2004, only seven failed the program and were sent to prison, according to KDOC records.

If the KDOC outcomes data is positive, as expected, lawmakers should fully fund these treatment efforts next session. ...

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 [jvannostrand@nwkansan.com](mailto:jvannostrand@nwkansan.com) or [pdecker@nwkansan.com](mailto:pdecker@nwkansan.com).

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### The season to give back

This time of year always makes me think of ways I can help make the world a better place. It's something I think about all through the year, but don't always take the necessary steps to actually do something.

Except this year, I've been a little more conscientious about taking small steps in the right direction, and have done several things to do just that.

I guess it started last year after the Dec. 26 tsunami that hit Southeast Asia.

I donated a couple of jars of change to Unicef to help with disaster relief, and also the American Red Cross after the fall hurricanes.

I know it's not much, but at least it's something.

I was taught that even doing something, no matter how small, can make a world of difference. You might never know about it, but at least you can try.

I believe everyone can make a difference, if they want.

We live in probably the most affluent nation on the planet and it's time to start giving back. And when I say this, I hope people know I don't mean to yell.

Find a cause you believe in. Help someone less fortunate.

Locally, there are plenty of ways to help. Volunteer for the Red Cross, the museum or call the local schools and see if they need help. Donate to Genesis of Thomas County or the Salvation Army.

The hospital, nursing homes, even local civic organizations need help picking up ditches or working the homegrown carnival at the Thomas County Fair.

Nationally, you can champion a cause. Cancer, AIDS, poverty, literacy, women's rights, animal rights, human rights.

Internationally there is Amnesty International, the American Red Cross, Greenpeace, Unicef.



#### Tisha Cox

##### • Off The Beaten Path

Pick one.

Pick one that sounds right, that feels right. Choose. Stand up. Be heard.

I read once the worst thing a man can do is see evil and do nothing about it.

Complacency and apathy are as epidemic as any disease.

Sign a petition online. Call, write or e-mail Congress. Donate \$1 to the Lance Armstrong Foundation, the One Campaign.

Supporting a cause doesn't mean giving up your day job. It can be as simple as signing an online petition, donating \$1 to a foundation, or any number of other small gestures.

I think that is the point — grassroots effort on a global scale. Many small gestures add up to much more. People can make a difference. Imagine if one person does something, then others follow.

That power lies within everyone.

Locally, Genesis of Thomas County needs donations year-round. Donations can be dropped off on Wednesdays between 10 a.m. and noon and 1 and 4 p.m. at the food bank, 350 S. Range, Suite 6; monetary donations can be sent to Genesis-Thomas County, Inc., P.O. Box 214, Colby, Kan. 67701. For information, call 460-7930.

For information on the Salvation Army, call 462-4596.

Donating blood, volunteering or giving a little money to the American Red Cross is another good way to give back. Several blood drives will

be held locally throughout 2006, and is a way to give easily of oneself.

For information, call 462-7161, or go online to <http://www.redcross.org/donate/donate.html>.

Globally, there are many ways to help others. Some of my favorites are:

The One Campaign, working to eradicate poverty and AIDS worldwide. On the Web, it's at <http://www.one.org>.

Another is the Lance Armstrong Foundation at <http://www.livestrong.org>. Along with it, the American Cancer Society ([www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)). This one also has local ties in the annual Relay for Life.

More human rights/relief organizations are Amnesty International and Unicef, at <http://www.amnesty.org> and <http://www.unicef.org>.

Information is available at <http://www.disastercenter.com/agency.htm> on relief organizations and how to find a reputable source to donate to.

And how can I not mention members of the military? They deserve recognition for their efforts on behalf of every American, an what they're doing to help the citizens of Iraq, Afghanistan and every other country where help is needed to restore order and protect freedom, and not just that of Americans.

People can send greetings online at [www.operationdearabby.net](http://www.operationdearabby.net), or send care packages through [www.anysoldier.com/](http://www.anysoldier.com/), or [www.treatsfortroops.com](http://www.treatsfortroops.com), where they have a "Foster-A-Soldier" program.

No matter what a person celebrates this time of year, or doesn't, the need is always there, and there is no better time of year to remember that this is the season of giving.

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### Your turn

## Alzheimer's doesn't have to hurt holidays

Dr. Mary Beth Miller,  
St. Francis

During the holidays, as many of us are preparing to entertain family and friends, we may forget the season's impact on those with Alzheimer's disease.

Alzheimer's destroys brain cells that control thought, memory and language. Symptoms range from mild forgetfulness to serious impairments in thinking, judgment and the ability to perform daily activities. The patient eventually becomes unable to function independently.

It's sad that Alzheimer's happens, but with planning and communication, this disease need not dampen your family's holiday spirits.

Coping with Alzheimer's during the holidays Inform loved ones of the situation and what to expect when visiting. For the people with Alzheimer's, the following is important:

- Involve them in holiday preparations.
- Maintain their normal routine.
- Provide useful gifts such as easy-to-remove clothing, audiotapes, videos of family members and photo albums. Avoid gifts that could be dangerous, challenging board games, complicated electronic equipment or pets.

Coping with Alzheimer's every day

- Make sure those who have Alzheimer's are taking their medication to help treat symptoms (agitation, anxiety, depression and sleeping

problems).

- Provide a balanced diet rich in antioxidants.
- Urge them to exercise daily.
- Supply memory aids such as calendars, "to do" lists, and written directions for use of household items and safety measures.
- Encourage them to use identification bracelets (available through Alzheimer's Association Safe Return™).
- Consider advanced care planning, such as Durable Power of Attorney, for finances and health care.

If you have a loved one who is a senior, be aware of the warning signs of Alzheimer's disease:

1. Repeating the same question or story, word for word.
2. Forgetting how to conduct activities previously done with ease and regularity, such as paying bills or balancing a checkbook.
3. Getting lost in familiar surroundings, or misplacing household objects.
4. Neglecting to bathe or change clothes, while insisting they have bathed or that clothes are clean.
5. Relying on someone else to make decisions or answer questions they previously handled themselves.

Even if several of these symptoms are present, Alzheimer's may not be the cause. Re-

member, Alzheimer's disease is NOT a normal part of aging. Only 10 percent of people over age 65 have Alzheimer's disease. However, nearly 50 percent over age 85 have the disease. Most people remain alert and able as they age, although it may take them longer to remember things.

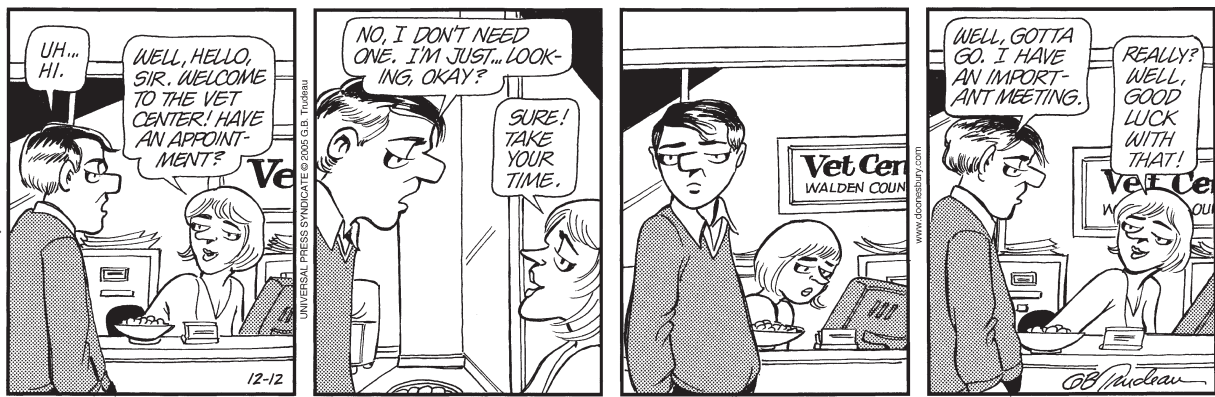
If there is concern, arrange for a physical, neurological and psychiatric examination. Start by making an appointment with your family physician. If you do not have one, go to <<http://www.kafponline.org>>[www.kafponline.org](http://www.kafponline.org), click on "Links" tab and select "Find a Family Physician in Kansas" for a list of medical doctors in your area.

Support for the patient, family and caregivers is important. The Alzheimer's Association web site, <<http://www.alz.org>>[www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org), includes valuable resources to educate you about Alzheimer's and answer questions.

Mary Beth Miller, M.D., is in private practice in St. Francis. She is a district director of the Kansas Academy of Family Physicians, the largest medical specialty membership organization in the State of Kansas. The mission of the KAFFP is to promote access to and excellence in health care for all Kansans through education and advocacy for family physicians and their patients.

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• Gary Trudeau



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