



Other Viewpoints

# Privacy not enough for college students

The tragic story of Jason Wren, a 19-year-old University of Kansas student who died after a night of reportedly heavy drinking, exposed more than the dangers of alcohol. It also revealed a troubling conflict between student privacy and parents' access to information.

Just weeks before his death, Wren had been evicted from his dormitory because of multiple alcohol violations, according to his father. Although his father attempted to contact the dormitory, he was refused any information about his son. Wren said his son downplayed his behavior and convinced him the dormitory had treated him unfairly.

KU is more restrictive with information about student behavior than many other schools. Wren's death should be a catalyst for KU to loosen up its requirements so that parents can discern whether students may be in trouble.

The Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act limits the sharing of information about students. But the law has important exceptions: Universities can release information to parents if their students are claimed as tax dependents, or in cases of health or safety emergencies.

It's imperative that parents be fully and clearly told about the information access policies in place at a college and be offered privacy waivers with explicit instructions on how to access academic and personal information on their children.

Distribution of privacy waivers at student orientation without detailed discussion isn't enough. Parents should be encouraged to urge their students to sign the waivers.

Parents, who frequently pay the tuition bills, may mistakenly believe they have more access to information than they do.

For peace of mind, parents should check with university officials on privacy waivers. Student safety and well being should be a critical university priority. A better-informed partnership between universities and parents could help prevent more tragedies.

-The Kansas City Star, via The Associated Press

# Where to write, call

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# Depression is a long ways away

What kind of recession are we in for? How long? How deep?

I had the opportunity to lunch with Thomas M. Hoenig, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, at an Associated Press meeting a couple of months ago, and he compared the economic "meltdown," as the reporters were calling it, more to the 1980s than the 1930s.

Mr. Hoenig is a career denizen of the Fed, having started in 1973 as an economist after receiving his doctorate in economics from Iowa State University. He's seen every recession since then from the vantage point of an economist and banking regulator, and since 1991, as the top representative of the nation's central bank in the heartland.

When he arrived and was introduced around, an editor asked, point blank, if he had brought "any good news."

"No," Mr. Hoenig said flatly, though he later gave us some hope.

He talked about how we'd gotten into this recession and how we might get out of it. He said he expects the recovery to begin this summer, or in the worst case, by the end of the year.

A year before, he said, the outlook on jobs was positive. For the first nine months of 2008, the economy maintained a tiny bit of growth, about 1 percent, despite the bottom falling out front war and the Treasury projects a \$1 tril-



#### of the housing market.

But uncertainty works on confidence, and by fall, the failure of Lehman Brothers and other large investment houses caught up in the housing problem prompted the first government bailouts as the Bush administration was wrapping up.

Today, he said, a lot is riding on the new administration

As far as monetary policy goes, Mr. Hoenig said, there is a lot of liquidity in the system, if not much movement.

"And confidence is everything," he added. If the stimulus package takes hold, the government safety net does its job and the infrastructure is sound, he said, then we will see improvement in the first half of the year as the decline starts to halt. Things will get better when consumers start to spend, he said.

Government spending could become a problem, he noted, since we are still fighting a two-

#### lion deficit.

But if the stimulus works, the second half of the year should see some improvement. If not, then this could be a prolonged recession.

"We are nowhere near a depression," he said, noting that unemployment this year is 7 to 7 1/2 percent, while in the 1930s it was 25 percent.

"It's more like the 1980s," he said. "It could be about that serious.

"Is there hope? Yes, there is."

Like many people, Mr. Hoenig said he's concerned by increasing concentration in an economy dominated by bigger and bigger corporations and banks, and by the unfunded liabilities out there.

"Inflation is one of the great dangers," he said, adding that right now the country is seeing disinflation, with overall prices declining. "When you think three years out, the risk of inflation is there.'

The Federal Reserve is doing what it can with monetary policy, he said, but don't expect magic.

"It cannot save the world," he said.

Steve Haynes is editor and publisher of The Colby Free Press and president of Nor'West Newspapers. In his spare time, whenever that is, he like to ride and watch trains.

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# Red Cross gets vote of confidence

### To the Editor:

I was sitting on a flatbed trailer parked on Main Street in Greensburg, waiting for the president of the United States to drive by when it happened. Two ladies pushing a shopping cart full of boxes and bags came strolling up to me. We all three smiled in greeting, and they offered me a bottle of water. I was hot, thirsty, sunburned, sweaty and tired, so I gladly accepted it. Then they asked if I needed a tetanus shot.

Hundreds of people just like these two are volunteers of the American Red Cross, and they swarmed the streets of Greensburg in the days following the May 4, 2007, tornado when the world came crashing down around us.

When I was younger, I donated blood to the Red Cross, but I never thought I would be on the receiving end of its services. I never thought I would be faced with the possibility of sleeping in a Red Cross shelter, or accepting food and water from volunteers. But for all of this, I am so grateful.

Too often, people think the Red Cross equals blood drives and that's it. I have to admit it, until I was on the other side of a major disaster, that is what I thought, too. But I can tell you from experience that this organization is American Red Cross, and get involved.

Mallard

Fillmore

Tinsley

Bruce



#### so much more.

Volunteers bring food, water, smiles, compassion, shelter, energy, and more, a list that is too long to give here. Did you know that when a disaster strikes, such as the Greensburg tornado, survivors (I prefer this term over "victims") can apply for financial help to help buy food and replace personal items?

Now I have come full circle, as they say, and this 2009 storm season will be my first as a Red Cross Disaster Response Team volunteer. I am incredibly excited, as well as nervous and scared, to be able to give back to an organization that gave so much to me and my son, who was 3 at the time. I hope that others in the area will read this will be inspired by the stories of Greensburg and want to learn more about the

As I sat on the wheel well of the trailer that afternoon, it took me a split second to turn down the offer of a tetanus shot. But within another split second, my mom, who is a nurse, insisted that I get one. I begrudgingly rolled up my shirt sleeve and bared my arm, my face turned away and my ears concentrating of the sounds that were so constant in Greenburg in the weeks and months after the tornado: helicopters, tractors, back hoes, dump trucks.

I think of this moment often, especially during March, Red Cross Month. These two women, who had no idea who any of the residents of Greensburg were until they arrived to help, had taken their time, their knowledge, their skills and in all actuality, their hearts and spirits, to help us try to make sense of what was left. I am grateful for these two and so many others. I can only hope that someone will remember me one day in a similar manner.

To learn more about the American Red Cross and how you can help, visit www.redcross.org, or contact the Colby chapter at (785) 462-7161.

> Kathy Arendt, Colby Formerly of Greensburg

