



Limit protestors; don't shoot them

It's a scary thing that a lot of people, especially veterans, came to the support of a Marion man caught following members of a dissident Topeka church around Mulvane with a couple of guns.

At first, Ryan Newell, 26, who lost both legs in Afghanistan, told sheriff's officers he was providing security for members of the Westboro Baptist Church. They let him go. Then someone asked church members about their "security detail."

Later, Sedgwick County sheriff's officers found him parked in a garage across the street from where church members were meeting with Wichita police officials about security. He had guns and ammunition with him.

Members of the church have a decades-long campaign against homosexuality that began with pickets of those they considered "enablers" of gay rights. Later, that morphed into protests at the funerals of more than 600 servicemen and women killed in action in Iraq and Afghanistan. The church believes these deaths are God's punishment for America for tolerating homosexuals.

It goes without saying that this group is about as popular as mud with veterans, veterans groups and other patriotic organizations. Groups including the American Legion Riders have organized to peaceably block Westboro protests and keep them away from the family at funerals. Emotions run high.

After Mr. Newell was arrested and charged with misdemeanor counts including stalking, people across the country began to call and offer to pay his legal expenses. That's admirable, we suppose, but we hope these "patriots" weren't in any way condoning his actions, planned or actual.

The ex-soldier was, after all, lying in wait for the Westboro group with three weapons, a combat rifle, a pistol and a revolver. We can only guess what he intended to do.

Worse yet, after state and federal officers searched his home, he was charged with a felony count of conspiracy, which implies that others helped him or put him up to whatever misdeeds he had planned.

No one in Kansas is proud of the Westboro gang or its cause. They are an obnoxious wart on the pretty face of our fair state. But nothing more.

They express an opinion that, while grossly unpopular, is theirs to hold. Few agree with them; fewer still support them. But under our Bill of Rights, they are allowed not only to have their weird thoughts, but to express them.

The right to freedom of speech and assembly, protected by the First Amendment, is among those we're told our veterans fight to protect. It's part of the American Way.

We never felt that mayhem or murder were among the rights veterans fought for. You have to believe in this case, those could have been the outcome had not a few sheriff's officers asked some pointed questions.

One thing we do believe in is that Mr. Newell is innocent until proven guilty. Anyone who wants to help him defend himself, that is their right.

We hope just none of them means to endorse his actions, which pretty clearly go beyond the pale. — Steve Haynes

Write us

The Colby Free Press encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of general interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the phone number of the author.

COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth St. (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

Send news to: colby.editor @ nwkansans.com

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout, Columns, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography.
Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

Steve Haynes - Publisher
s.haynes @ nwkansans.com

NEWS

Kevin Bottrell - News Editor
kbottrell @ nwkansans.com

Andy Heintz - Sports Reporter
aheintz @ nwkansans.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor
mballard @ nwkansans.com

Vera Sloan - Society Editor

Shelby Pulkrabek - Society Reporter
colby.society @ nwkansans.com

ADVERTISING

Andrea Bowers, Kathryn Ballard, Tammy Withers

Advertising Representatives
abowers @ nwkansans.com kballard @ nwkansans.com twithers @ nwkansans.com

Kyle Hunter - Graphic Design
khunter @ nwkansans.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Robin Tubbs - Office Manager
rtubbs @ nwkansans.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator
support @ nwkansans.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Richard Westfahl - General Manager
Lana Westfahl, Jim Jackson, Betty Morris, Jim Bowker, Judy McKnight, Kris McCool

THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72



Christmas season really just beginning

The Christmas shopping season is winding down and the religious season is getting started.

It seems that many of us don't realize that Christmas Day is the start of the season, not the end.

Out in the world of commerce, busy shoppers are picking up those last-minute presents for friends and loved ones. Those same shoppers, in the Christmas spirit, are putting money in Salvation Army kettles, getting gifts for those on "angel trees" and donating to the 101 charities that have their hands out at this time of year.

In church, though, the season of Advent is winding down.

Advent, the season before Christmas, is not just a calendar with a piece of candy behind each day leading up to the big present party on Dec. 25. It's supposed to be a period of prayer and reflection on the birth and life of Jesus.

While manger scenes go up in churches all over the country, many don't put the Christ child in his makeshift crib until services on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

This is when the real Christmas season begins.

Cynthia Haynes

• Open Season

As Santa Claus takes off his coat and boots and the elves feed the reindeer and put the sleigh away, Christmastide is just getting started.

This is a joyous time of year, a celebration of birth and renewal.

The angels have sung their song, the shepherds have checked things out and Mary and Joseph have settled down to feed, change and care for their new baby.

But there are still people coming in to see this new little one.

Some were probably like us. They just want to see a tiny, new human being and congratulate the parents.

Others probably heard about strange doings the night this kid was born and are really curious to see what all the fuss was about. They

probably went away still wondering who would make such a fuss about a nobody family staying in a stable, for goodness sakes.

The Christmas season continues through Epiphany, which commemorates the day wise men from the East came to see the new king of the Jews and do him homage.

Then, those busybodies really had something to talk about, but they still probably couldn't figure out what the heck was going on.

The liturgical Christmas season doesn't end until the baptism of Jesus by his cousin John the Baptist in mid-January, about a week after the Epiphany.

By then, it would probably have been a good idea to take out the real tree and put the blow-up Santas away.

So Merry Christmas to you!

And you thought the season was almost over....

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor'West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes @ nwkansans.com

Stroke prevention starts with you

No two strokes are exactly alike.

Public radio's Garrison Keillor described his experience of a stroke last year like this:

"You're talking on the cell phone and suddenly your mouth goes berserk and your speech becomes very slurred and mushy, as if you had had four martinis. And it's numb, as if you had been to the dentist and had four martinis."

To Jill Bolte Taylor, a brain researcher who was stricken by a massive stroke at 37, it began with a pounding pain behind her left eye, she said. Soon she lost her balance, and then her right arm became completely paralyzed.

While this was happening, Taylor said to herself, "I can no longer define the boundaries of my body. I can't define where I begin and where I end."

For my mother, who had a "mini-stroke" more than 10 years ago, the event began with an unusual weakness in her left arm and leg. She felt dizzy and had difficulty standing up.

Each year, about 795,000 people in the United States experience a new or recurrent stroke. Millions more have one or more "transient ischemic attacks" like my mother had, events that cause no permanent damage but serve as a warning for more serious strokes in the future.

Stroke is our state's third-leading cause of death — after heart disease and cancer — accounting for one in 16 deaths in Kansas each year. It is one of the leading causes of long-term disability, and is thought to cost the U.S. economy more than \$73 billion a year.

Strokes occur in two ways: Either there is a blockage in the flow of blood to the brain, or there is bleeding into brain tissue. In both cases, the result is the death of innumerable brain cells, death which causes a sudden loss of movement, speech disturbance, vision problems or other serious impediments to everyday activities.

With help from experts in rehabilitation, full recovery of normal function after a stroke is sometimes possible. Often it is not.

Prevention of the damaging effects of stroke occurs at two levels. One is to get people to learn the signs of having a stroke and to take action immediately to get to a hospital. The other is to prevent strokes from occurring in the first place by helping people eliminate the root causes of stroke in their lives.

Although the ways that strokes unfold can vary a lot, there are some common signs and symptoms that should prompt an immediate call to 911:

• Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg.

• Sudden confusion or trouble speaking or understanding others.

• Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes.

• Sudden dizziness, trouble walking or loss of balance or coordination.

• Sudden severe headache with no known cause.

Unfortunately, surveys show that less than a quarter of adults correctly recognize these tell-tale signs of a stroke.

In Kansas, more than half of stroke deaths occur before transport to a hospital, largely because time is wasted at home before an ambulance is called. Emergency treatments to dissolve blood clots in the brain can prevent long-term disability from many strokes, but they must be administered within three hours.

Here is the bottom line: After a stroke hits, every minute counts. Time lost is brain lost.

To reduce the chances of being hit by a stroke at all, everyone can take proven steps to lower their risk — starting today:

• Keep your blood pressure under control. High blood pressure doubles a person's chances of stroke compared to having normal

Jason Eberhart-Phillips

• Kansas Health Officer

blood pressure. Roughly a third of Kansas adults have high blood pressure, and many don't even know it.

- **Watch your cholesterol level.** About a third of Kansas adults have cholesterol levels that are too high. High cholesterol is associated with blocked arteries in the brain, just as it is linked to blockages in blood flow to the heart.
- **Be physically active.** Moderate activity, like walking for half an hour most days of the week, can have a dramatic effect on lowering stroke risk.
- **Limit alcohol consumption.** More than one or two drinks a day increases the risk of a stroke, along with heart and liver disease.
- **Avoid cigarette smoke.** Smoking reduces the amount of oxygen in the blood, allowing clots to form more easily. You can get help to quit smoking by calling the 24-hour Kansas Tobacco Quitline at (800) QUIT-NOW (784-8669).

Every 40 seconds, someone in the United States has a stroke. Learn all you can now about how to prevent strokes and what to do if you think you're having one, and chances are good that it won't happen to you.

Dr. Eberhart-Phillips is the state health officer and director of health in the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. He can be reached at jeberhart-phillips@kdheks.gov. Go to his blog at www.kdheks.gov/blogs/dr_jasons_blogs.htm.

Where to write, call

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

Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

