

Op-ed

Divorces fewer in tough times

The economy has been the source of much controversy and now another 'death' has been blamed on our country's poor financial status. Well, maybe not death, but certainly gravely ill.

Divorce! Divorce lawyers say during hard financial times, fewer people decide to break up because they don't have the money. In some cases they do divorce, but continue to live under the same roof as there is no market for the family home in the current real estate environment.

Recently a friend and I were discussing marriage and divorce over lunch. We both agreed there were probably times we would have wanted to leave our spouse and certainly times they wanted to leave us, but we didn't have the money. Money isn't always the answer to every problem, sometimes it is the problem...not too little, but too much. When a couple is forced to work through

Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



these problems they discover they may have more in common than originally thought.

Years ago I remember my mother reading about a judge who determined the children were the ones suffering in a divorce as they were moved from mom's home to dad's every other week or weekend. The judge decided since it was the parents' decision to break up the family home, the children should be able to maintain some stability in their lives.

She granted the divorce with the condition the children would remain in the home and the parents would be the ones to alternate weeks or weekends living in the family house. This allowed chil-

dren to remain in their own home, in their own school and with their friends.

Of course, this isn't the answer with abuse, physical, mental or substance, but I sometimes think divorce is too easy. Sometimes people need to look back and determine what it was that initially brought them together.

I have known many who later regretted their decision to separate or who remarried someone with the same personality traits. In addition to this is the fact that many couples would not have even seen divorce as a solution if polled six months earlier.

During a recession (if you have a job) or a depression (when you don't) perhaps we worry about the truly important things such as jobs, food, healthcare and housing.

A plunging economy forces us to let things such as new golf clubs or a name brand purse become just what they always should have been, truly insignificant.

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Challenge: reach out to people

One of the things that recovery and counseling has taught me is that everyone has an interesting story to tell. So often we get focused on what the "stars" and famous (or infamous) people are doing that we overlook the people next door or down the street. Recovery has taught me that you cannot judge a person by the way they present. Cars, clothes, and jewelry do not reflect how healthy someone is emotionally, mentally and spiritually. It doesn't reflect how much they may be hurting. At Valley Hope, I see a lot of people come in our doors that appear to have everything life has to offer, yet are falling apart at the seams.

One of the beautiful things about recovery is that we are taught to sit with others and LISTEN to their stories. I'm not talking about the 'war stories' (reliving of using days) but of the story of how they became who they are. What they have lived through, how they have succeeded and failed, and what their hopes and dreams are. Often, that is all that is needed for someone to begin the healing process. Most of us (addicts and non-addicts alike) respond well when

Where There's Hope

Carla Moore

we feel we have been heard.

When was the last time you actually took time to listen to your neighbors? I have to admit that I am one of the first to come and go in my life and not spend time talking to the people who live right next door to me. I do know that one of our neighbors lost a daughter at the end of last year, another has had some health problems, another celebrated a 90th birthday and another has had to make some difficult business choices. When you think about it, that's not much knowledge for a year of living in the same block. So often, we find people have difficulty sharing who they are and what they are going through because they don't think others feel the same. I have yet to work with

a patient or another recovering addict and heard something that I haven't either done, or thought about doing. I can still remember the sense of relief when I sat in my first AA meeting and heard people talking about the pain of addiction. I couldn't believe other people had experienced the same feelings I had. I also heard quite a bit of hope those first few meetings, but I wasn't ready to accept it at that time. That came with more meetings in which I sat, listened, and shared who and where I was. What a blessing!

So, my challenge to you is to reach out to the people who live close to you. You know, the ones you see next door, or at the grocery store, the post office and say "hello". Ask how they are doing and really listen. It's amazing how so many of us have the same experiences and need to know that we can live and grow through them!

(If you have any questions or comments, contact me at cmoore@valleyhope.com.)

School board

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found. Architect Mort Plunkett presented the specifications for the capital outlay projects, adding a wheelchair accessible bathroom to the Stull Gymnasium, installing an air lock at the the south end of the hallway at Eisenhower Elementary and putting in aluminum doors at Stull Gymnasium. The board decided to combine the two door projects into one bid, and approved the plans.

• The decision on whether or not to continue with the Parents as Teachers program was postponed until the April 13 meeting.

• Summer school plans, as presented by Eisenhower Elementary Principal Corey Roy, were approved.

• The board accepted the resignations of Eisenhower Elementary and Norton Junior High School Counselor Melissa McClain, Eisenhower Elementary Speech Pathologist Janet Porter for the

Country-of-origin labeling: No!

Talk to cattlemen, livestock auction market operators and cattle buyers about the mandatory country-of-origin labeling and you'll probably receive a less than warm reception.

The purpose of country-of-origin labeling is to label products grown or raised in the United States. It also gives U.S. shoppers an opportunity to "buy American." Country-of-origin labeling is required on meat, fruits, nuts and vegetables.

There are some problems this issue is creating in the trade relationships among the United States, Canada and Mexico. That's according to Keith Miller, a Barton County cattleman who also serves as U.S. Meat Export Federation vice chairman. Some are calling COOL (country-of-origin labeling) the worst thing that's ever happened to the North American cattle

So why is it being viewed so negatively? Why have the Canadian and Mexican governments filed recent complaints claiming the United States is violating the North American Free Trade Agreement because of the country-of-origin labeling?

It seems the major problem is not with the labeling, but with the segregation of cattle — especially at the point of processing. At this point country-of-origin labeling adds significant production costs with little or no recognizable benefits.

"It is difficult to keep carcasses separated in the packing plants," Miller says. "As a result, only a handful of plants are used to process livestock that are imported. This has caused a price difference for livestock that are imported into the United States."

And Mexico and Canada buy

Insight John Schlageck

a lot of product (livestock) from the United States. These two countries combined to account for about \$2 billion in U.S. beef export purchases last year.

That figure is approximately 60 percent of the worldwide 2008 total. While the United States doesn't import a large volume of processed meat from these countries, it does import large numbers of live beef and pork.

Any disruption in trade between these three nations could have serious consequences for U.S. cattle producers. The end game for U.S. grain producers would also be impacted.

Meat exports are good for grain producers because they are able to market more grain to feed more cattle being shipped out of this country, Miller explains.

If the United States were to lose the North American Free Trade Agreement export markets, cattle producers could lose \$50 to \$60 per head, U.S. Meat Export Federation economist Erin Daley says.

The United States exports a large volume of variety meats to Mexico which are used with their basic food staples like the tortillas. Rounds are also a popular item in the U.S. export market. These rounds also make up a large portion of the U.S. exports to eastern Canada.

"It would be difficult to absorb these products into our domestic market," Miller says.

The Barton County livestockman recently met with Mexican officials. Here's how these gov-

ernment representatives explained their dilemma.

Mexico typically ships 400-pound feeders into the United States. Recently, while Miller was meeting with the Mexican officials, feeders were selling for \$375 to \$400. Paperwork and health processing cost \$40 a head. Buyers of those calves are discounted another \$60 to \$80 each for being imported.

The reason — only certain plants will process these animals and that limits the places the animals can be marketed.

"Our rules are costing the Mexican farmer in excess of \$100 per animal to export to the United States," Miller says. "If I lived in Mexico, I would be upset too."

The Barton County livestock producer and U.S. Meat Export Federation vice chair believes the only way trade can continue with, and among the three nations of Canada, Mexico and the United States is to have a North American label to include all three.

Coming up with a workable solution for trade among these three nations, must become a priority for the Obama administration, Miller says. If not, there will be consequences.

"The Mexican officials I spoke with are talking about shutting down all trade with the United States," Miller says. "We can't have that. We must find common ground and find solutions everyone can live with."

(John Schlageck is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. Born and raised on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas, his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.)

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Airport funding

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and aeronautical survey.

The Kansas Department of Transportation will contribute \$3.54 million in funding for the projects and with local matching funds of approximately \$2.57 million the total infrastructure investment will be \$6.1 million.

The projects will address maintenance, runway, facility and equipment needs at non-primary public use airports in the state. These are airports that are classified as having less than 10,000 passenger boardings per year.

"In 1999, one in four airports in Kansas had a pavement condition of poor or failing," said Kansas Department of Transportation Director of Aviation Ed Young. "Now, less than one in 20 runways in Kansas is in poor or failing condition, thanks in large measure to the 244 projects conducted at 97 different airports in every part of the state in the last 10 years."

Among the 37 projects selected, there are 18 maintenance projects, 17 equipment projects, one geometric project and one planning project. According to Young, nearly eight percent of the program's allocation is spent on crack seal, joint repair and other basic maintenance projects. Those investments have helped the pavement condition of Kansas airports receive an average pavement condition rating of 77, up from 49 in 1999.

Under guidelines of the program, project sponsors are required to pay a minimum of 10 percent of the total project costs, up to a maximum of 50 percent based on population.



~ Dana Paxton ~



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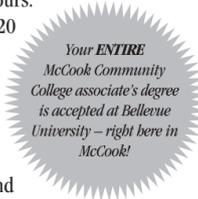
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