

YOUR OPINION

“What does one call a person living in Wisconsin who hasn’t driven drunk? A recent arrival.”

BILL SUMNER, Views

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A10

IEWS: DRIVING DRUNK

Hike fines and fully enforce them

Wisconsin needs to get tougher on drunken drivers. There should be earlier and stiffer penalties, but more important, the penalties already in existence must be fully enforced.

If someone loses their driver’s license, the law should be all over them to be sure they don’t drive even once. If they do, more penalties and closer supervision should be imposed. People have a right even to get falling-down drunk, but they don’t have a right to drive after drinking too much.

After a second or third conviction, one’s license should be permanently revoked. The offender should have to adjust his or her life to accommodate not being able to drive. When someone is killed or injured by a drunken driver, the victim and family have to make accommodations.

— Ruth E. Wagner, Madison

Motives of enforcers questioned

As someone who lives above a business establishment which serves alcohol, I can afford to be flippant regarding drunken driving. All I have to do to get home after tipping a few brews is to step out the door, take two lefts then climb stairs until things look familiar. It’s my 23-step program.

Let’s be honest about drinking and driving. Seriously, what does one call a person living in Wisconsin who hasn’t driven drunk? A recent arrival.

When I reached my late teens at the end of the 1960s, cars didn’t have beverage holders because we had upper thighs to handle that chore. The small town police would ask us to leave town and not come back until we were done drinking so as not to embarrass them. That was our reality.

But American life is different now. Politicians and policy makers have targeted drunken driving for the following reasons, in descending order of importance:

- To enhance an income stream of fines at a time when no politician dares raise taxes.
- To subject more citizens to the legal system to intimidate and force docility upon them.
- To increase the profits of insurance companies.
- To reduce the number of drunken driving injuries and deaths.

Do I long for “the good old days” when drunken driving was the rule instead of the exception? No, not really. What I really miss is my liver. And what I really fear is that the crackdown on irresponsible behavior is only just beginning.

— Bill Sumner, Madison

Try confiscating the vehicles involved

The person behind the wheel driving drunk is just as much a killer as someone waiting in a dark alley with a gun in their hand.

When a police officer comes upon someone who has just killed someone with that gun in the alley, does he arrest that person, take away his gun and take him to jail? Or does he arrest him and arrange for someone to come and take care of the gun until the trial takes place? He confiscates the gun and locks the person up.

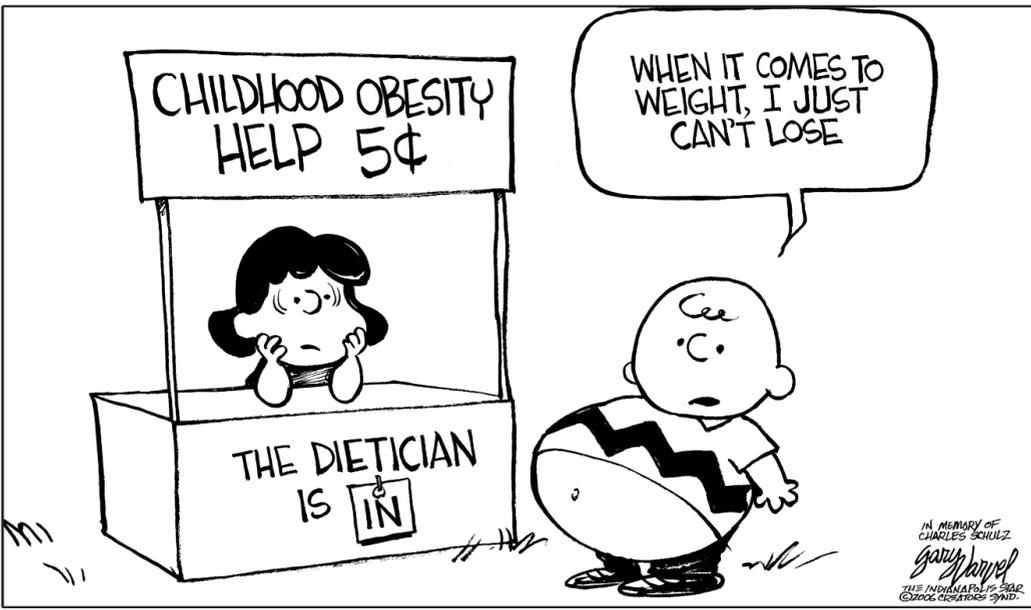
If a person drives drunk and kills someone with his or someone else’s vehicle, does the officer confiscate the vehicle until after the trial? No, especially if it is someone else’s vehicle.

I believe the solution is to treat the object used to kill as a deadly weapon and get rid of it. If you are arrested for driving drunk and killing someone with a vehicle, the vehicle should be impounded until after the trial is over and judgment is made.

If you are found guilty, the vehicle should be sent to the crusher so it cannot be used to kill someone else.

If someone has loaned a car and it’s involved in injuring or taking someone’s life, it also should go to the crusher. If this sounds too harsh, ask the family of someone who has been involved in this “murder on the highway.”

— Phil Rygielwicz, Portage



YOUR VIEWS

School beverage choices will be improved

For any local business to succeed, it needs to be part of the community. We must provide our customers with quality products and services, but also contribute to a high quality of life in our community.

As a local Coca-Cola bottler, part of that contribution includes supporting the education, health and wellness of our youngest citizens. That is why the Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Madison embraces the beverage industry’s new School Beverage Guidelines, which will provide our students with more lower-calorie and nutritious beverage choices.

The guidelines were developed in partnership with the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, a joint initiative of the William J. Clinton Foundation and the American Heart Association under the leadership of former President Clinton and Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee.

We believe that limiting calories in schools is a sensible approach that acknowledges our industry’s long-standing belief that school wellness efforts must teach kids to consume a balanced diet and exercise more.

The guidelines call for lower-calorie, nutritious and smaller-portioned beverage choices, including 100 percent juice, low-fat milk and bottled water in elementary and middle schools.

High school students’ beverage choices will include the same beverages, with the addition of diet sodas, sports drinks and low-calorie teas.

Our industry works hard to contribute to a healthy environment for our children. We believe this is a meaningful approach to school wellness that will have real impact on the lives of children. After all, we’re parents, too.

— Lisa Harmon, sales center manager, Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Madison

Kudos to Goldberg, acting Overture director

While I wish the best to the new director of Overture Center, I feel a word of gratitude needs to be said to acting director Michael Goldberg.

Throughout my tenure as recording engineer for Wisconsin Public Radio and later, as co-owner of Audio for the Arts, I have had the pleasure of working with Goldberg on dozens of occasions, first during his tenure at the Union Theater and then at Overture.

During these past 20 years he personally introduced me to the likes of Yo-Yo Ma, the Tokyo String Quartet, Peter Serkin and many other great artists. I still smile when I recall our affable spats about microphone placement at the Union Theater — too much this way and they encroached on audience sightlines; too much that way and sound quality suffered.

Then as now, Goldberg has continually proven himself to be a man of extremely high standards, professionally, personally and artistically. He has been and continues to be a great asset to this area.

Because his style is not ostentatious, he has been somewhat of a “phantom of the arts.” It is doubtful that many of us are fully aware of the scope of his contributions, but we would have missed out had he not been there. I hope he will stay on. Those of us who appreciate the arts are much the richer for his efforts.

— Buzz Kemper, Madison

Retabulate to restore voter confidence now

The decision in Milwaukee to count the number of primary ballots, but to ignore who the votes counted for, is ridiculous.

There is evidence that the machines were not programmed cor-

rectly. Voters need to have confidence that the votes were tabulated for the proper candidates.

It may not be necessary to manually count the votes city-wide. For example, a manual count of all the votes in 15 percent of randomly-selected wards, plus in selected suspicious wards, would be a starting point. But what about the rest of the state? Unless it is investigated everywhere, we will never know.

The state Elections Board recently approved state-wide audits for November elections, but what about all our other elections? We need legislative action.

— Paul Malischke, Madison

Wisconsin’s support of veterans is appreciated

Thank you, Wisconsin residents, for the benefits you continue to provide to all veterans. The salute to veterans described in Friday’s guest column, “A tribute to Camp Randall’s real heroes,” is a result of the value that Wisconsin residents place on service by all statewide veterans.

And thanks to the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs and higher education for their leadership and support of Wisconsin’s GI Bill.

My dad’s motto was “learn as much as you can” after he had achieved only an eighth-grade education. He took UW Extension courses at night in the 1950s to become an electrician and plumber, thanks to the GI Bill. The Wisconsin GI Bill made the difference between working one job or two jobs for me while raising a family and taking college courses during the 1970s.

It is humbling to know that Wisconsin continues to offer these benefits, and now the salute. On behalf of all living and memorialized veterans, thank you.

— Bob Steffen, 1969 Vietnam veteran, Madison

GUEST COLUMN

Recruiters offer options to students

By LYMAN “WOODY” WOODMAN

Dave Hoppe is a social mooch. Hoppe, author of Tuesday’s guest column “Beware military recruiters,” lives and sleeps under the umbrella of safety that the very people he disdains provide.

I can say this, as I was a Navy recruiter in Madison for 12 years. He tries to camouflage his true feeling under the cloak of empathy for those who can’t afford college, or are losing their jobs.

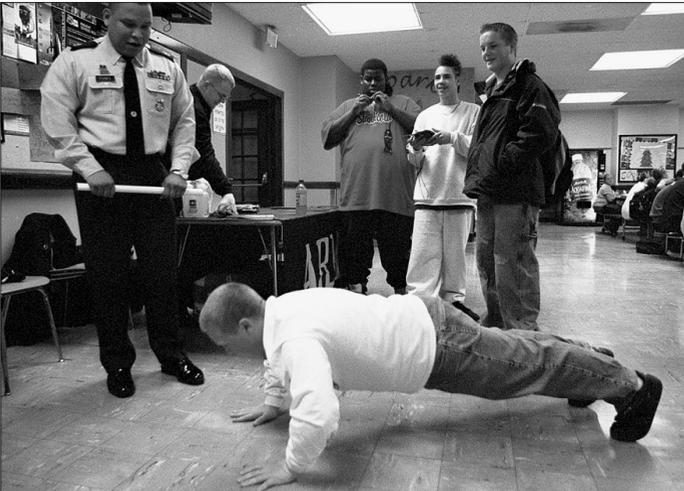
Hogwash!

There are more educational opportunities than ever before. If Hoppe was really knowledgeable about his own profession, he would know this.

The reality is that he doesn’t want to know. He prefers to lament the fact that the armed forces are offering potential enlistees excellent programs for education. There is no mystery about the purpose. It is an incentive for enlistment. And what is wrong with that? After all, didn’t people want an all-volunteer military? Now they are upset because people are volunteering.

Hoppe’s upset because our recruiters strut? What does he have to strut about, hidden behind his cozy, safe desk. He knows nothing about the armed forces.

Who does he deem suitable to be



A student does pushups to earn a poster from an Army recruiter at Park High School in Racine. Allowing military recruiters to disseminate information in high schools is a topic under much discussion.

in the military? Only those who can’t get a job at a fast-food restaurant or another menial job. In his view, the military should be the employer of last resort.

Hoppe must hate the military. He used his position as a counselor to

misguide the students who trusted him to be unbiased. If this counselor wants to debate this in an open forum, I am ready, willing and able.

Woodman, retired from the U.S. Navy, lives in McFarland.

GUEST COLUMN

Today’s students are socially isolated

By JEFF EHREN

My 10-year college reunion is next year. I attended a small college and my generation was on the cusp of several societal changes.

I lived in a dorm that was divided into three major sections. Each section had its own lounge on the main floor. Each lounge had one television set, and ours also had a dart board.

Television was not common in dorm rooms, so a chalkboard was placed by the entrance of each lounge. If you wanted to reserve the lounge for a television show, you had to write your request on the board. Otherwise, whoever was first in the lounge got to pick what to watch.

Why is this important? By having just one central location, we could gather together at any time, sit down, watch television, throw darts and talk. Yes, talk.

It was not uncommon to watch the news or sports in the morning after a lounge party. As people wandered in, they sat and talked about what happened the previous night, national and global news and upcoming events.

However, that all changed as soon as the dorm rooms got cable outlets and kids brought their own television sets.

Fewer and fewer people stopped in the lounge to watch television, chat with someone or play darts. As time went by, students became less and less interested in sitting down and conversing about life. Instead, they began to stay in their rooms and became less social.

And when I was in college, I saw no cell phones at all. People walked and talked to each other. Students who interrupted a conversation were considered rude.

Now we’re lucky to have a conversation with a student and not have them answer their cell phone in mid-sentence. While walking on campus, I’ve observed about three out of five students talk on their cell phones while walking.

What’s my point? In a span of just 10 years, students have gone from being able to hold intellectual conversations and pursuing social development to being unable to talk about one topic for five minutes. Technology can be wonderful, but we shouldn’t let it keep our students from being so.

Ehren lives in Whitewater.

MAIL

Put Darfur back on world’s front pages

Sunday, Sept. 17, is the day grass roots organizers picked to raise awareness of the genocide in Darfur. Rallies will be held in New York City, San Francisco and other major cities. Why? Because the 400,000 dead there, plus 2 million refugees, echoes the 800,000 deaths in Rwanda in too-recent memory. “Never again” applies directly to Darfur.

What is needed? U.N. Peacekeepers to replace the departing African Union forces which will leave the Darfur people with no protection. We must hear the laments of those in Darfur and pressure our government to support U.N. Peacekeepers in the region.

If you see blue hats on Sunday, it’s not just a fashion statement. The blue hats remind us that blue-helmeted U.N. Peacekeepers are needed to keep more red from flowing on the ground. For more information, check the Web site www.savedarfur.org

— Sherry Caves, Middleton

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