

Viewpoint

The Jasper Newsboy

Established in 1865

Texas Oldest Weekly Newspaper, Continuously Published Under the Same Name
702 S. Wheeler, Jasper, Texas 75951
USPS 273-140 • ISSN 0764-2824

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Our Viewpoint Editorials

Answers needed to solve two crimes

Two Jasper families are in need of answers with tragic situations that have marred their lives.

Martin Byerly went missing Sept. 28, 2007. As the new year opened, no news on Byerly's whereabouts was forthcoming as Jasper Police make a second blitz in the news media to keep this topic alive with the public.

More recently, a hit-and-run driver struck Kendall Larkin Saturday, Jan. 5 as he walked home from a shift at McDonald's. Larkin was taken to Christus St. Elizabeth's where at last report he was listed in serious condition.

As of press time this week, both of these crimes are unsolved by Jasper Police. Family and police are seeking answers to these crimes.

For the Byerly family, they seek an end to a long nightmare that started more than three months ago. Police believe Byerly's fate met with foul play and the family is just seeking an end to this chapter in their life.

For the Larkin family, a long road to

recovery awaits this young man as he attempts to recover from very serious injuries as a result of the accident.

In both of these cases, there is someone out in the area that knows something about these cases.

They have either heard something or saw something about the incidents and the time is now to step up and let that information be known to the Jasper Police Department.

These cases need resolution. These families need closure.

Roses go to....

▼Jasper's boys' basketball squad for starting the district campaign 3-0. The hard part of the schedule waits ahead.

▼To all the candidates who filed for the March primaries. Thanks for letting democracy work.

▼The Spotlight Players who are beginning rehearsals for the "Wizard of Oz." Let's see, Jessica Alvis as Dorothy, JISD's Chris Coleman as the Scarecrow and Bill Barabas as the Cowardly Lion... there is no place like home, right?

In Jasper County

First baby of new year...



Courtesy photo

CHADWICK SMITH JR., son of Chadwick Smith Sr. and Kandace Johnston, was born at 8:01 am, Jan. 2, 2008 making him Christus Jasper Memorial's New Year's Baby. Chadwick weighed eight lbs. seven ounces and was 18 inches long. He was delivered by Dr. Richard Pham. The family resides in Woodville. The Christus Jasper Memorial, Spiritual Care Committee, presented the family with a basket comprised of baby goods that included diapers, wipes, stuffed Teddy bear, baby lotions, shampoo, powder and other necessities.

Capital Highlights A summary of the week's significant events in Austin

Federal court upholds 'moment of silence' law

AUSTIN - A Dallas federal court on Jan. 2 upheld a 2003 state law that allows Texas schools to set aside time for students to reflect, pray or meditate in the classroom.

Plaintiffs David Wallace Croft and spouse Shannon Kristine Croft filed the lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas.

The Crofts' children are students in the Carrollton-Farmers Branch school district.

In their lawsuit, the Crofts alleged the Texas moment of silence law is unconstitutional under the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment.

At issue were parts of chapter 25 of the Texas Education Code, which say:

(1) A school district may provide for a period of silence at the beginning of the first class of each school day during which a student may reflect or meditate; and

(2) A public school student has an absolute right to individually,

voluntarily, and silently pray or meditate in school in a manner that does not disrupt the instructional or other activities of the school.

A person may not require, encourage, or coerce a student to engage in or refrain from such prayer or meditation during any school activity.

The Legislature revised the moment of silence provision in 2003, adding the word "pray" to the list of designated options as well as "any other silent activity that is not likely to interfere with or distract another student."

The federal court held that "...the addition of the word 'pray' directly furthers the purpose of encouraging students to engage in individual contemplative activity."

The court also concluded such "thoughtful contemplation" is a "valid secular purpose" and that "the primary effect of the statute is to institute a moment of silence, not to advance or inhibit religion."



Ed Sterling
Texas Press Association

After the court rendered its decision, Attorney General Greg Abbott, a defendant in the lawsuit along with Gov. Rick Perry, said, "The court's ruling ensures that Texas schoolchildren are free to begin each day by voluntarily reflecting, meditating, or praying before school each morning."

"Particularly in an age where children are so frequently confronted with violence and disorder, 60 seconds of quiet contemplation at the beginning of each day is not too much to ask. ..."

Gym operators must be certified

Secretary of State Phil Wilson recommends that Texans first check to ensure a gym or health spa is registered with the Secretary of State before becoming a member.

Under state law, a person must obtain a health spa operator's certificate of registration from the Secretary of State before operating a

health spa or selling a membership in a health spa.

An operator's certificate of registration is required for each health spa location.

Unless the person qualifies for an exemption, a security deposit for each location must also be posted with the secretary of state to protect members of the club who suffer actual financial loss as a result of a closing.

"As Texans begin to work on their resolutions for 2008, it is important that they do the research to make sure they will be protected if their gym shuts down," Wilson said. "A gym membership can be a significant financial commitment and I would urge all Texans to visit my Web site to check their club's registration status and review the steps to recover membership fees of closed gyms if applicable."

Commission chair passes away

Ric Williamson, 55-year-old chairman of the Texas Transportation Commission, suffered a heart attack and died Dec.

29.

A resident of Weatherford, Williamson served as a member of the Texas House of Representatives from 1985 to 1998.

He was appointed to the commission by Gov. Rick Perry in March 2001 and was named the chair in January 2004.

Agency boosts war on smoking

The Texas Department of State Health Services reports it is more than doubling its resources dedicated to free smoking cessation services provided through the American Cancer Society's Quitline.

This year, the agency plans to provide \$550,000 for the service, up from \$250,000 provided in 2007. The toll-free telephone counseling service at 1-877-YES-QUIT is available to all Texans trying to quit smoking or dipping, the state health agency said.

Ed Sterling is director of member services for the Texas Press Association in Austin.

Guest Commentary One person's viewpoint

White lung syndrome

Trying to understand the writers' strike is genuinely problematic.

There are only about 10,000 entertainment writers along the New York - Hollywood axis, and while some actually are on strike, others of the brothers/sisters/comrades are cutting separate deals with Big Media.

And for what are some of (not all) the writers striking? A reduction in job injuries from paper cuts? The issue appears to be the arcane matter of residuals from internet reproduction or re-broadcast of movies and television shows.

This makes some sense - when a movie is re-broadcast, income from the advertisements and sales of tickets means that someone is making money from the exhibition, so the writers and actors should receive some part of that.

Where the argument falls apart is that the concept of residuals does not obtain in other fields of endeavor.

Consider the modest little Ford Escape owned by an aging and not very successful writer.

Once upon a time auto workers in Michigan assembled the little car, for which labor they were paid.

The aging and not very successful then bought the little Ford Escape, and enjoys driving the machine around.

The workers who built the car do not enjoy residuals every time the car is driven, repaired, or re-sold.

Several years ago, following Hurricane Rita (which never happened because it had nothing to do with New Orleans), the aging and not very successful writer hired a roofing company to re-roof his hurricane de-roofed house, and a good job it was.

Every time the rain falls or the cold winds blow the aging and not very successful writer enjoys the benefits of his excellent new roof, and yet the roofer and his crew receive no residuals.

If the guy who scribbled "Take my wife - please!" receives residuals for the rest of his life based on a one-time effort, why not residuals for auto workers and roofers?

The nice lady who cuts the hair of the aging and not very successful writer does not receive a residual every time some



Mack Hall

lissome lass coos "Ooooooh, look at the geriatric hottie with the great haircut!"

The Writers (sic - that should of course be "writers'") Guild of America forbids actors to cross their picket lines and has forbade Jay Leno to deliver his own monologue made up of his own jokes that he thought up himself.

One gathers that the WGA is not exactly a hotbed of freedom and individuality.

Now the WGA, somehow involved with SAG in striking against NBC and HFPA (Where Have All the Acronyms Gone, Long Time Passing...?), is threatening not to write for the awards shows.

Does this mean that awards shows had writers in the first place?

Does it really take a professional writer to create the babble issuing forth from the heavily-lipsticked and decidedly foul mouth of some aging starlet receiving some sort of plastic award for having had a hit show in the 1960s and now peddling medications? "I just...oh, gosh...I mean...I just wanna...like, you know...um...you know, like...um...thank all my briefcase holders...um...and all the, like, you know, other little people...not that you're really little...I mean, like...um, and you little people all over America...like, you know, in flyover country...like, you little people who worship me...because, like, you know...I bring some meaning...like...into...your pathetic little lives because you can't read a freakin' book or newspaper, and you just stare into that stupid glowing tube all the time...and...like...(BLEEP) that evil (BLEEP)ing George Bush and his (BLEEP)ing colonialist imperialist running dog capitalist war against the, like, you know, South Africans or something, like...you know...those funny little people in Argentina or somewhere like that...gosh, ain't I cute!"

Residuals for writing jokes? Maybe. But first let the writers argue for residuals for miners and linemen and other people whose jobs keep us safe and warm and fed, and which involve more risk than dry-air allergens from an air-conditioned office atmosphere.

Mack Hall is a resident of Kirbyville

Your Viewpoint Letters to the Editor

Letters to editor criteria set

The Jasper Newsboy would like to publish your thoughts and concerns about issues that are important to you.

All Letters to the Editor should be accompanied with the writer's name and daytime telephone number for verification purposes.

Phone numbers will not be published, but the author's name will be.

Under no circumstances will the author's name be withheld.

"Thank You" letters will not be published and will be transferred to the advertising department for an advertise-

ment. Any letters thanking businesses also will be not published.

All letters are subject to editing for newspaper style and clarity, without changing the meaning of the content.

Letters should be limited to 300 words.

Letters endorsing or opposing political candidates are considered political advertising and will be forwarded to the advertising department.

Deadline for letters is 10 a.m. Monday to be published in the following Wednesday's publication.

Mail letters to:
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75951-1419 or e-mail to:
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