

OPINION

TRIBUNE EDITORIAL



BE VIGILANT IN WATCHING FOR CAR BREAK-INS

As the weather warms up, so do the number of car break-ins reported around the city.

Over the weekend alone, there were more than a dozen reports of vehicles that were either rummaged through or that had items stolen.

The vehicles were all over the city of Albert Lea from as far south as Margaretha Avenue and Frank Hall Drive to areas in the middle and northern parts of the city, including Johnson Street, Bridge Avenue and Minnie Maddern Street, among others.

Though not always the case, the majority of recent car break-ins have been with unlocked vehicles.

Police remind residents to remove valuables from their automobiles, to lock their car doors and to park cars in garages or well-lit areas when an option.

Essentially, removing valuables from your car makes it an unattractive target for potential thieves.

If you see anything questionable near your home or vehicles, report it to authorities.

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Send letters via mail to Letters to the Editor, Albert Lea Tribune, 808 W. Front St., Albert Lea, MN 56007, or via email to letters@albertleatribune.com. Letters cannot exceed 500 words. They must have one author. Petitions are not printed. Letters must include address and telephone number for verification purposes — only your name and city of residence will be printed. Each author may write one letter per calendar week. Letters are published as soon as space allows. To request a guest column, contact Managing Editor Sarah Stultz at 379-3433. Feel free to call if you don't see your letter.

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MINNESOTA
NEWSPAPER
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2019: 12 state awards
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2017: 2 state awards
2016: 9 state awards

2015: 10 state awards
2014: 6 state awards
2013: 10 state awards
2011: 9 state awards

THE FIRST AMENDMENT: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Fundraising started again for holiday lights

Do I dare think about winter with summer finally here?

A few weeks ago, the committee raising money for downtown holiday lights in Albert Lea did just that as we officially began another year of fundraising.

Last year, we had great success in fundraising and were able to complete a large portion of our project, and this year, we are hoping to finish a few more elements.

While we have already raised enough funds for decorations at the splash pad area, along with new banners, wreaths and lighted garlands across a few intersections, we still hope to raise money for decorations at the Fountain Lake Park gazebo, garland wraps on the light poles on Broadway and other year-round accent lighting for downtown.

So far, we have talked about a few fundraising projects to go toward this cause, including a collaboration with the Daybreakers Kiwanis



Nose for News
By Sarah Stultz

Club on selling kettle corn at some of the Thursdays on Fountain events at Fountain Lake Park.

We were out with this group at the Thursdays on Fountain the same week as Eddie Cochran Weekend and plan to be there again July 18 and Aug. 15.

A big thanks to the club for being willing to work with us on this fundraiser.

We're also planning a burger basket fundraiser later in the summer and will publicize that event once it comes closer.

We heard a lot of nice comments once the lights and decorations ordered last year arrived, and we'd love to add even more to that this

year and make the downtown an even more festive place where people want to go during the holidays.

Personally, I'd like to see more lights all over several parts of the community, but we have to start somewhere.

Donations, like last year, can be dropped off or mailed to the Albert Lea-Freeborn County Chamber of Commerce at 1725 W. Main St. in Albert Lea.

Donations are tax-deductible.

Thanks to everyone who has contributed to this project. If your business is looking for a way to give back to the community, this would be a great project to consider that will provide light and holiday spirit for many years to come.

Also, if anyone else would like to get involved in volunteering for this project or has other ideas on raising money, please reach out to me. We'd love to hear your ideas.

Sarah Stultz is the managing editor of the Tribune. Her column appears every Tuesday.

PEN TO PAPER



"MAYBE NOW THE PRESIDENT WILL ACCEPT INFORMATION FROM US."

Standing up for American ideals is crucial

What I would give for politics to seem perfectly normal again.

This past week our president openly admitted he would likely accept hypothetical information from foreign powers to help him win re-election in 2020. Problem is, under the Federal Election Campaign Act, it's illegal to knowingly receive anything of material value from such a source. Trump also said he wouldn't go to the FBI in a situation like that, because "you don't call the FBI."

In contrast, FBI director Christopher Wray recently stated, "if any public official or member of any campaign is contacted by any nation-state or anybody acting on behalf of a nation-state about influencing or interfering with our election, then that's something that the FBI would want to know about."

Trump bluntly retorted that Wray "is wrong." He further rationalized, "The FBI doesn't have enough agents to take care of it," and, "But you go and talk honestly to congressmen, they all do it, they always have."

None of Trump's stance is normal or pro-American, and it's blatantly anti-law enforcement. It's a self-serving "cheat to win" mentality at direct odds with recent images commemorating Allied forces who selflessly wrested Normandy's heavily-fortified beaches from Nazi control 75 years ago this month.

American freedom depends on defending truth even when it's hard, not dirty exercise of power when it's a path of little resistance.

There's only one Republican in the entire Congress who is publicly defending the truth about the Mueller report at this point. Rep. Justin Amash of Michigan laid out the case for impeachment more concisely and clearly than almost any Democrat has. He is taking intense heat and derision from his party for it.

Our congressman Jim Hagedorn is following the path of



My Point of View
By Jennifer Vogt-Erickson

less resistance, and he claimed at his town hall in Truman in late May that the Mueller report didn't find evidence of Trump conspiring with Russia. He left it at that, ignoring Part II of the Mueller report, which doesn't exonerate Trump from the crime of obstruction of justice.

Mueller would have charged Trump if he believed that he had the authority to seek indictment of a sitting president. He handed that responsibility to Congress, which does have the power.

Hagedorn is in a tough spot because he wrapped himself in Trump's long red tie to win his seat. Are American principles, in the end, more important to Hagedorn than a magnetic presidential personality? He will likely face that history-making test.

Hagedorn also seemed uneasy discussing tariffs and trade deals at the gathering, which several farmers attended. He said he wants all sides to come together. The main (unspoken) obstacle is Trump, who keeps threatening tariffs by tweet, even over unrelated issues like immigration. The Star Tribune headline that weekend was "As Trump threatens Mexico, trade war fatigue sets in for Minnesota businesses and farmers."

Fatigue. Yes. How long can we keep doing this?

On a more pleasant note, when I sat at a bench with my copy of "It's Perfectly Normal," the sample curriculum from the comprehensive sex education bill that failed to pass the Minnesota House this year, I had nice conversations

with three people who showed up. We agreed on many things. A major point of departure was treating homosexuality in the regular range of sexuality, and objection to that is closely associated with religious beliefs.

The fact remains that church and state are separate, and public schools aren't confined to a narrow range of Biblical teachings favored by some Christians. Parents are responsible for their children's religious education, if any. (Incidentally, I read the Old Testament in my Good News Bible at age 10, and for a long time I had a distorted sense of what was "perfectly normal.")

Regarding students who have spoken up about teachers "infecting" Albert Lea High School with liberal bias, I would need more context in order to evaluate teacher response. For example, Aaron Farris and Alex Baerman quoted teachers' negative comments to their pro-Trump views, but were vague about what they stated first. Content matters.

As for CNN 10, calling it liberal brainwash gives away more about Aaron than it does about CNN. (Judge for yourself; it's available online.)

We should delve deeper into this conversation. I left teaching social studies a few years before Trump's rise, and I can see he has impacted the learning environment. Students, if we all used the same standard of truth that Trump does, society as we know it would break down faster than you can say "Lord of the Flies."

What is "perfectly normal" has changed over time, and that can be a good thing, especially in regard to extending human rights. Standing up for American ideals like truth and transparency and rule of law, though, must remain normal if we are to preserve our democracy.

Jennifer Vogt-Erickson is a member of the Freeborn County DFL Party.



BE AN
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WHEN YOU CAST YOUR VOTE.

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OPINION

TRIBUNE EDITORIAL



KEEP PETS SAFE DURING HOLIDAYS

The holiday season can be one with a lot of excitement for all members of the family — including the furry children. But there are many things pet owners should be cautious of at this time of the year to help their animals stay safe. According to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, be sure to steer pets clear of certain unhealthy treats, toxic plants and dangerous decorations. The animal agency advises people to make sure their Christmas trees are secured in place, so they do not fall and cause injury to pets. The water on live Christmas trees can also be a problem for animals because it can be a breeding ground for bacteria, which can cause a pet to end up with nausea. People should keep plants such as mistletoe and holly out of the reach of animals, as these can cause nausea, vomiting and diarrhea if ingested. Some types of lilies can even cause kidney failure to cats if eaten. Tinsel may look pretty, but be aware that it can cause a lot of problems for cats if swallowed — including an obstructed digestive tract, vomiting, dehydration and even surgery. The agency advises people to be sure not to leave lighted candles unattended and to keep wires, batteries and glass ornaments out of reach of animal paws. It's a pretty common rule of thumb for pet owners, but don't feed pets chocolate at this time of year or any season. Also, avoid giving pets fatty or spicy foods. These are a few things you can do to protect your pets and have a happy and uneventful holiday season.

QUOTATIONS IN THE NEWS

"I incessantly have nothing other than scorn for humanity. I have been desperate to feel anything positive for someone for my entire life." — *Sandy Hook Elementary School shooter Adam Lanza in online communication with a fellow gamer that were recently released from Connecticut State Police. Lanza gunned down 20 children and six educators on Dec. 14, 2012. He fatally shot his mother before drivin gto the school and ultimately killed himself.*

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Honor passed loved ones now and always

My heart skipped a beat Sunday evening as I scrolled through my Facebook feed and saw a picture of a candle next to two photographs of a local child who died last year.

As I scrolled a little further, I saw a similar photo — this time of a candle lit by a mother I met from Wisconsin two years ago, who lost her son to an illness.

A little while later, I found another.

Sunday was the annual worldwide memorial candle lighting by The Compassionate Friends, an organization that seeks to provide comfort, hope and support to families who have experienced the death of a child.

Each year, the event aims to honor the memories of these children, whether through a formal event through Compassionate Friends or from the comfort of your own home.

I have not attended a meeting through this organization, so I was not aware this event was happening until I saw the photos appear on my newsfeed. I would have liked to have participated, though I didn't have a candle in the house.

This will be our family's third Christmas without our daughter, Sophie, who died in July 2016, and though I think it's fair to say I try to cope with her death through faith, family, friends and service as best as I can, that sting of her physical absence



Nose for News
By Sarah Stultz

still resurfaces often, whether it's when I see a photograph, watch a movie that reminds me of her or run into one of her friends I haven't seen in a while.

This time of year for anyone who has suffered a loss of a close family member or friend can sometimes be a challenging season.

I'd like to tell those of you who have suffered recent losses that the pain will go away, but I can't. Yes, I can say that after 2 1/2 years the pain has lightened, but it is still there, and likely will be to some degree for the remainder of my life — even though I have comfort knowing I will see Sophie again.

If you want to be sensitive to anyone who has suffered a loss, I encourage you not to forget about those loved ones or tiptoe around their names. Speaking for myself and other parents I've known who have lost a child, the last thing you want people to do is forget your loved one or to be afraid of saying his or her name in

your presence.

It doesn't mean the loved one has to be the subject of every conversation — or even most conversations — but don't make it feel like that loved one never existed.

Our family continues to talk about Sophie and feel comforted when our friends and family speak about their memories with her occasionally, too.

As we decorated our Christmas tree this year, we made sure to proudly include the handmade ornaments Sophie and our son have made over the years, along with others that marked their birthdates and other occasions.

Sophie's stocking is hung on our fireplace next to the others and will continue to hang there in the coming years.

Even though Sophie is not physically with us now, we feel her love often.

Though I loved seeing all the flames burning Sunday in honor of the children who have passed on, I hope we can keep those flames burning symbolically year-round.

These children have changed our lives for the good forever, and now it's our turn to light that fire within someone else.

Sarah Stultz is the managing editor of the Tribune. Her column appears every Tuesday.

PEN TO PAPER



Caucus or presidential primary in Minn.?

The 2020 presidential election cycle started at 8 p.m. Tuesday following the first Monday in November of this year — it actually was well on its way by then.

The 2016 presidential cycle was a wide-open affair since President Obama was in his second term and not up for reelection again. I am not sure how many candidates had their hat in the ring during the cycle, but it was a lot of them. The first debates of the cycle in 2015 had, as I recall, five candidates on the Democrat side and 17 candidates for the Republicans. Then just for good measure, Donald Trump was one of the candidates, and his presence in the group just added extra media coverage. All this produced the environment for excessively high attendance at the 2016 caucuses for both parties. And, at least for the Republicans, it was the first time the results of the presidential poll was binding for the first ballot at the national convention.

Turnout in Freeborn County for the Republicans was twice the previous high and about six to eight times normal. Even though it was a bit chaotic at times, we vacated Southwest Middle School by 9 p.m. with all caucus activity completed and results of the presidential poll transmitted to the state by 8 p.m. Not all



My Point of View
By Ebenezer Howe III

precinct caucuses in 2016 went that well, and we could have been smoother, which ended in a push to get legislation passed to switch Minnesota from a caucus state to a primary State for presidential years. It did pass, for a state-run primary, which I feel is unfortunate, and now some folks are starting to get heartburn over some of the implementation plans.

This will be the fourth time Minnesota has tried the presidential primary route. There is a good chronological history of this by Dr. Eric Ostermeier called "A Brief History of Minnesota Presidential Primaries." When the resolution in support of the state-run presidential primary came up at our county convention, my "Nay" was loud enough to cause a rising vote, even though by a wide margin, I lost. All of this setup was so I could start rubbing salt into the wounds.

One thing that might cause issues for Minnesota voters is that you must declare what party you will be voting for

in the primary and that declaration is made public. This will not sit well with our voters, and I am thinking it might chase away as much as 10 percent of them.

There are 4,113 precincts in Minnesota and \$4 million a year to pay for the election costs. I don't think you could accomplish the training for that amount. Now if that is \$4 million per calendar year so that you had \$16 million each presidential year, then maybe. Since there were not enough funds set aside to administer the presidential primary election in the manner as past elections, the idea of mail-in balloting has been suggested. This will not sit well with the folks who want to go to the polls between 7 a.m. and 8 p.m. in person, of which I am one.

If we do not have some dynamic candidates come forward in 2020 who bring folks to the polls (even if they are mail-in) in droves, Minnesota's excitement with presidential primary voting will fizzle, and by 2024 or 2028 we will again be a caucus state. And, of course, I will be rooting for that to happen.

Alden resident Ebenezer Howe is chairman of the Freeborn County Republican Party. His views do not necessarily reflect the views of the local party members.

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