

Opinions

What would you give up?

SHEDDING SOME 'LIGHT...

"Shedding Some Light" is a regular feature on the Opinions Page that will consist of our spin on local, state and national issues.

VMC a legitimate candidate for community center

The city of Tracy, while lacking things like retail shops and multiple gas stations, does have a hidden gem. It's the Veterans Memorial Center.

The VMC is home to a spacious gymnasium, and that, in and of itself, is one reason it should be considered as a destination for a new community center.

Once known simply as "The Armory," that space, which, of course, was home to the local National Guard unit, was at one time considered a mecca of sorts for major high school sporting events. And while those halcyon times are now only memories, the rejuvenated VMC is once again a hotspot for youth sports.

The City of Tracy would do well to continue to capitalize on that, and the iron is hot right now, as talks continue over where the best place would be to put a community/senior center.



THE VETERANS MEMORIAL CENTER in downtown Tracy has been talked about as an option for a new community center. Photo / Per Peterson

At a recent meeting concerning the future of some kind of community center, the word "underused" was used to describe the gym at the VMC. That's an understatement.

Consider this: Back in the 1980s, that space — then known as the Tracy Municipal Gym — was home to, get this, rollerskating. Think about that. The activity was sponsored by Tracy Community Education, and during Christmas vacation that year, skating sessions were offered to teach people how to rollerskate. Rollerskating. Kind of puts things into perspective, doesn't it?

Times have changed, to be sure, but the point is: The gym at the VMC can be used today for a multitude of activities, even outside of organized youth sports — just like it was 40 years ago.

As we all know, the City, in its effort to relocate seniors from the Multi-Purpose Center, initially concluded that the second floor of the VMC would be a good option. That idea conjured up images of townfolk gathering in front of City Hall with pitchforks and torches. Needless to say, that plan didn't go over well with the masses, especially the more senior ones, those most affected by getting the boot from the MPC. But that doesn't mean the VMC should be written off, because it does have a lot to offer, and if we're looking for a win-win-win scenario, this just might be the way to go, as long as we're talking about the ground floor.

The City and Tracy Area Public Schools have worked together in the past to make sure the VMC can continue to be used at its fullest for youth sports, and that's something that shouldn't be underestimated and taken for granted. Youth tournaments, whether Junior Olympics volleyball, basketball or wrestling, attract thousands of people each year, and the City should do what it can to continue to build on that. In that respect, the group that has been assembled to determine the fate of a new community center should strongly consider the VMC as a viable option.

We're glad a committee has been formed to tackle this very important issue, because we need multiple voices to chime in. But it's now time to come up with a concrete idea to present to the city council so this city-changing project can move forward with the momentum needed to get something done in the coming year.

The election is over ...

It's time for the political signs to come down, please.

Trump supporters all over the country clearly aren't happy with the result of this year's presidential election — which was confirmed Monday by the Electoral College vote, but it's the middle of December, and there's no reason why the signs are still out.

This is part of moving on in our country, something the president is having a very difficult time doing. But it is what it is, and just because Trump won't move on doesn't mean we shouldn't.

Joe Biden was the clear winner in November, and Republicans needs to accept this. So, for better or worse, the signs have to go. We're sure we'll see them up again in a few years, and that's OK — it's part of what makes election years so interesting. However, the election season is over, and the signs have to come down — better now than when there's a foot of snow on the ground, right?

Editorials are the opinion of the editor and do not necessarily reflect those of Tracy Area Headlight Herald employees.

We got the announcement last week that we were all waiting for: A vaccine is coming. We were also subtly warned to temper our optimism, as the vaccine should be viewed, not as a panacea, but as a step to potentially protect us from the coronavirus.

Whatever, it was good news and we all could use as much of that as we can get.

In last week's announcement, the government broke down who will get the vaccine first — it will be administered in phases, with front line workers first in line. This got me to thinking: What if there were only a finite number of doses available to us? And what if you desperately wanted to get the prescribed doses in your hands, whether it be for yourself or a loved one? What would you give up?

Not everyone believes in vaccinations; some people would never even dream about injecting some foreign body into their body. But for those of you who get a flu shot every year and will opt to get a vaccine when it becomes available, think about what in your life you would trade for a couple of doses.

Think about it for a second.

Would you give up your cell phone for a month?

Would you give up the Internet for a year?

Here's my point: As much as you think you need technology, you probably don't.

Remember life before cell phones? We did OK. We got along. We survived. Now, they've become an extension of us. Cell phones are like a Mastercard — we don't leave home without it, and when we do forget it on our night stand, we freak out because we feel naked without it. It's kind of sad when you think about it.

Can you go a day without texting?

What about the Internet? That's even worse. Imagine, for a minute, your life sans Internet access.

Can you go a day without it? *Gasp!* Life without Facebook? Perish the thought. Oh my God, I can't post something?

Think about it. No Facebook. No social media of any kind. Could you do it?

I hope the answer is yes, but I fear many of us are such slaves to technology that some of us might not be able to give these things up — not even for a vaccine for a killer pandemic.

Nice gesture by school district ...

Because of COVID-19, there will be no Christmas party this year for employees of the Tracy Area school district — more than 140 to be exact — from teachers and paras, to cooks and bus drivers. But the Grinch won't be able to steal Christmas from them this year. People like Sheila Siebenahler-Holland have been working to put together gift bags for all employees; the school district has been soliciting gifts from local businesses, and from what Siebenahler-Holland says, the area is responding.

"I've been in tears because of the generosity of our businesses and people wanting to support our teachers and staff," she said. "Everyone's bag is gonna be worth at least \$15. I've been at places and they say, 'No, I won't give a five-dollar gift card, I'll do a 10-dollar gift card. I'm just so overwhelmed by this — it's totally amazing. It's just been unbelievable.'"

It's disappointing employees — especially ones who work hard for our youth

— to not be able to go out for a party this holiday season, so we commend the school district for coming up with some way to say "thank-you" to all of these essential workers.

What if ...

It's been 60 years since Tracy was one of the cities that were being considered to be home for a new, four-year university. Can you imagine our small town today, had the committee chosen Tracy instead of Marshall for the new home of what is now Southwest Minnesota State University? There's no doubt we wouldn't be having the downtown issues we have today. And it's likely we would have more than one gas station.

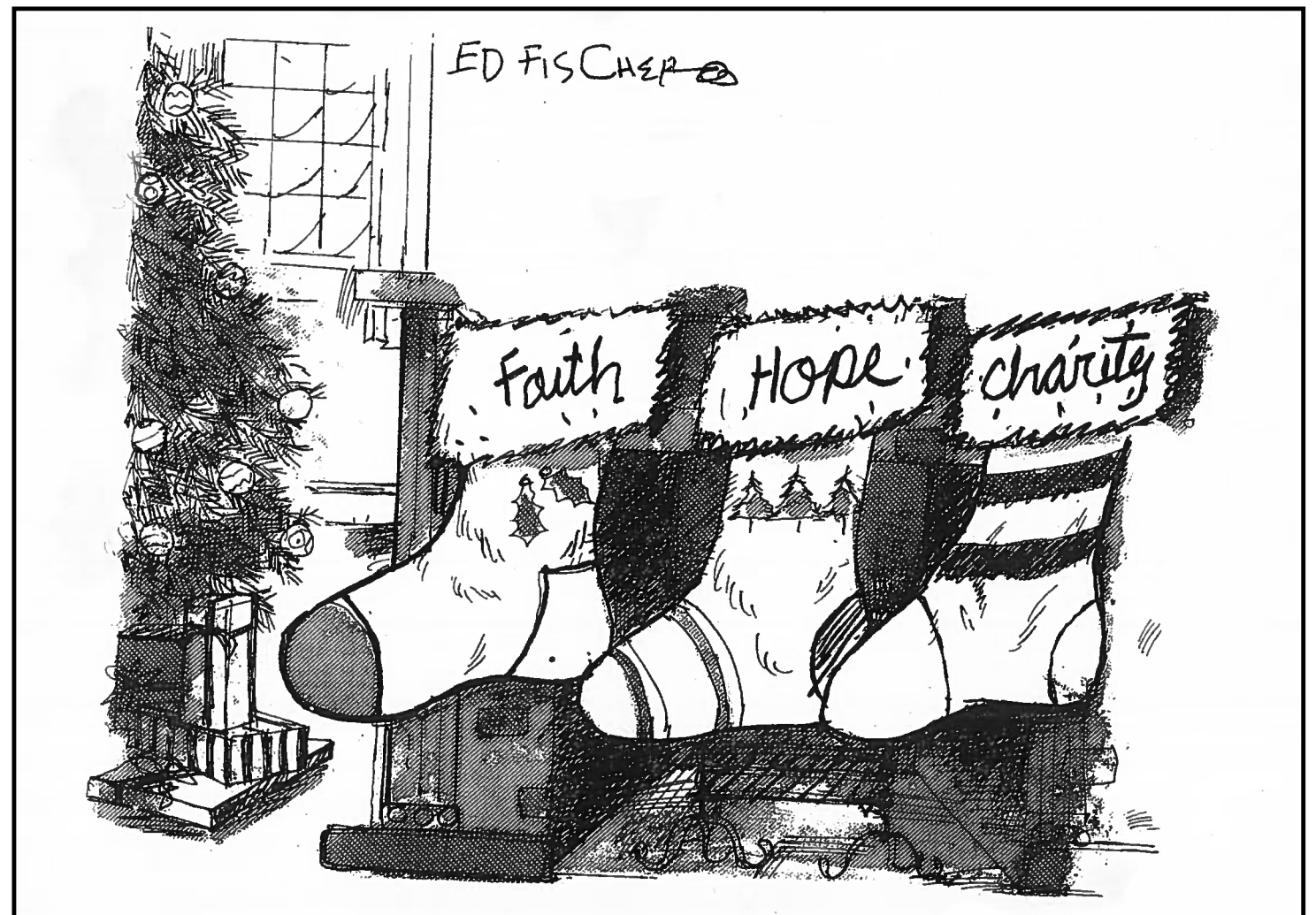
Then again, having the quaintness of a small town is pretty nice.

Trouble for Facebook ...

The federal government, along with numerous states, sued Facebook last week, alleging the social media bigwig has "abused its dominance in the digital marketplace and engaged in anticompetitive behavior," according to CNN. The Federal Trade Commission's desire appears to be to break up Facebook as we know it today.

I say, good for you, FTC, start breaking. Destroy it. We don't need it. The rich will always get richer in the cyberworld until the government does something to slow them all down. It's time for Facebook to go. Doesn't it bother all of you staunch Facebook users that your algorithms are being traced every time you go online?

Kind of creepy, isn't it?



It's OK to not be OK

The countdown is on. We are days away from Christmas and if you are a mom like me, this is when pure panic starts to set in. Every year I say I'm going to start shopping in July, I'm going to be organized and plan everything out. Every year, I say that things will go smoothly.

And every year, I am in the same boat I am now — still shopping, still wrapping, still trying to find dress pants to fit Ben in time for the recorded concert. Does anyone else's kid hit a growth spurt as soon as they have to wear their "Christmas best?"

When all of the pressures of the holiday season start to pile up, it becomes a lot. We are reminded to just sit back and enjoy the holiday season. However, if we did that, there wouldn't be a holiday season because we make the presents, the food, the magic happen. We can't even use the excuse to just relax with your loved ones this year. I've been relaxing with my kids since March! And we're not traveling to see loved ones this year.

Instead, the chaos of the season continues and as parents, and many people in the community, we spend our days working and helping with school and our evenings trying to check off a little portion of our "to do before the holidays" list.

This year threw an entirely new wrench into my holiday chaos world — and no, it wasn't the switch to three weeks of distance learning or the crazy COVID world we're living in. Instead, it was a

simple mole.

In late October while getting ready for work, I noticed a mole on my back that seemed to be weeping a little. It also seemed bigger. But I'm a mom

Tara's Takes

Tara Brandl
Publisher



and I don't have time for this. I chalked it up to probably hitting my back on something and not even noticing it. I had Per look at it a couple days later at the office and it looked fine, just a slight scab on one side. However, as a member of the Relay For Life leadership committee for years, I knew different signs that many ignored. So despite my feelings of blowing this out of proportion, I scheduled a doctor appointment. During the week from the time I called to the time I went to the doctor, I picked up my phone three times to call and cancel the appointment. Let's be honest, as a mom, I always make sure my kids go to the doctor when needed, they get their flu shot, they go to the dentist. Mom goes if and when it works in my schedule or is desperately needed. It takes a lot for me to take that time. But for some reason, I kept the appointment. Even while I sat in the doctor's office that Friday morning and she was running late, I was texting Per that this was a waste of time and I had so much work to do.

That appointment was short and sweet and ended with, "Yah, I want that checked out with the dermatologist right away. I'm going to put a rush on this."

OK, so I need to have it looked at, and

they'll call with a time. Back to work and life I went. By that Monday morning, I was getting a call from the dermatologist and by that afternoon I was sitting in her chair. The dermatologist was great and I knew that prior to my visit. I worked for her dad while in college and she and her sister were the only two high school kids that babysat my boys when I lived in Marshall. Now she is a doctor! I trusted her completely as she said, I'm sure it's nothing but we're going to take that off and send it out.

It was a quick — although not painless — process, and by 3 p.m. I was picking my kids up from school. Yes, the healing sucked because of the location. But it was done and over and my kids are fantastic doctors all taking turns changing bandages. And that was it, time to get back to the chaos of my own life just moving a little slower, with an ugly scar on my back.

A couple weeks later, I was standing in the Ampride gas station in Marshall trying to get Natalie to pick out her treat after her haircut so we could hurry up and get to Brady's last football game of the year. It was a Monday evening, Ben was at a virtual knowledge bowl meet, I still had to write my column for that week's paper and I just wanted Natalie to make a decision so I could get across town before kick off. That's when my phone rang and the number for Avera popped up on my screen.

TARA'S TAKES
CONTINUED ON PAGE B3

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Tara's Takes

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Expecting a nurse to be on the other end, I quickly answered it so I could have my results and move on. Instead, I heard, "Hi Tara. This is Dr. Gregoire." Crap. I don't like it when doctors make the call themselves. Suddenly all the chaos of the day stopped as she said, "We've had two pathology reports on your mole. It is melanoma. We need to schedule an appointment with the surgeon to take a larger section. It was caught early, you did the right thing by coming in. We'll do surgery and hopefully get everything there. If not, we'll have to look at the next steps."

Next steps? My next step is paying for whatever chocolate Natalie picked out and watching Brady play football. My next step is picking up Ben from his meet and hitting a drive through. My next step is helping to put out this week's paper. I don't have any next steps that involve cancer.

Again, because of my work with the Relay For Life, I am also very aware of the different types of cancer and I knew that melanoma is not the skin cancer you want to get. Not that you ever want any type of cancer. But as mom, I plastered a smile on my face. I watched football and cheered like that phone call had never happened. I helped with homework and fed kids and did everything I needed to do.

Over the next couple weeks before my procedure, I did a lot of Christmas shopping to get it done, I told each of my kids individually what was going on at their level of understanding. I told my ex-husband the basics so if the kids said something to him, he would understand. I told a few close friends and my staff. And of course my immediate family,

because you know I have that amazing 90-year-old grandma who prays the Rosary every day and while I already knew she prayed for me, I thought I could use an extra Rosary a day for a while.

I didn't spread it all over town or talk a lot about it for two reasons: 1. I didn't know exactly what was going to happen. If the surgery went well, it could all be done by Christmas and why get people all worked up over nothing. 2. There was a part of me that was scared to death that there would be more steps. Not so much for me, but I'm a single mom and a business owner. My kids rely on me. I laid in bed at night wide awake thinking if I have to do chemo every other week, what week do I choose? If I do it when they are home, they can be here to help me. But then they are also exposed to some of the awful side effects if I would have them. But if I do it on the weeks that they aren't here, I'm home alone. What if I get sick and no one is here? And I prayed, a lot. I went over every scenario in my head. I over thought and over thought.

Finally, Dec. 2 arrived. I went into this procedure, which I would be awake for the entire one hour it was scheduled for, thinking it's fine, it's going to be fine, couple little stitches and we'll be on our way. (My mom had come with me for the day as Per was delivering papers, we still have a business to take care of.) I almost passed out when he talked in detail of what needed to be done. After an hour and a half of laying on my side, they removed a two inch circle from my back all the way to the muscle. I was stitched up with two layers of stitches and sent on my way to wait another

week. The following Wednesday I was to return for a check up and results.

That week sucked. It hurt to move any part of my body. On Monday night, I was at my breaking point. After working all day, I ordered out. I had piles of laundry to do and a kitchen that looked like a tornado went through it. But just the act of changing from my dress clothes caused pain. That night was the first night I had my own pity party. I cried because I just wanted to do basic things without pain. I cried because I wanted to know my results, but not know my results at the same time. I cried because I was so mad at myself for crying. I was mad because my amazing friend Terry is fighting cancer and has already undergone so much. Here I am crying over a two-inch hole in my back. Yet I'm still going on about my life. I shouldn't be feeling sorry for myself, I should be happy I am where I am.

That night I emailed a friend in the Cities who is a breast cancer survivor. I told her how mad I was at myself for feeling sorry for myself. Her email back to me struck home. "It is OK to not be OK."

She reminded me that we have no idea what is going on in anyone else's life, whether we think it is better than ours or worse. And they have no idea what is going on in ours. No one's family is as perfect as the perfect family photos we see on Facebook. Whether it is a big issue or a small issue, every person is dealing with something. She reminded me that I had heard the words, "You have cancer." Whether that cancer was taken care of with a surgery or something else, I would have to process every emotion that was going through me.

My friend Terry was battling, but that doesn't mean I couldn't be scared for my own battle. She reminded me that it is fine to have yourself a pity party - as long as you don't stay there.

And I didn't. Tuesday morning, I was up with the kids and putting together the next week's paper. Wednesday at my appointment, I got the great news that my margins were clear and that they would not be doing any further treatment. I will go for another check on May 3, 2021 unless I notice anything else.

It was a rough month of a roller coaster of emotions. But it truly reminded me that it is OK to not be ok. It is OK to not have that perfectly decorated tree. It is OK to be wrapping presents at midnight on Christmas Eve because you're not done. It is OK to skip baking Christmas cookies this year if no one in your house eats them except the dog. It is OK to throw yourself a pity party that includes furry jammies, movies with your daughter and take out for supper.

It also reminded me once again of the motto I tell my kids often: Be kind, you have no idea what anyone else is battling.

I don't write my story for pity. I'm doing great. I write it as a reminder to listen to your body. If I had just ignored that mole, things could be much worse. I also write it to remind you that it is OK to not be OK, just don't stay there. Reach out. That simple email to a friend reminded me of so much. It's OK for things to not be picture perfect. It's OK to step away from some of the "expectations" of the holidays.

This year I will enjoy every part of the holidays, even if things haven't gone as planned.

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and concerns since her surgery and rehabilitation. The visits and food we received from relatives, friends and neighbors was so welcoming. A special thanks to Joleen Baumann for all the care packages we received from Operation: You're not forgotten. We appreciate the wonderful healthcare workers and ambulance service we have right here in Tracy. Everyone has been very pleasant and caring. May God Bless Everyone in 2021,
 Robert & Bonnie Boerboom
CARD OF THANKS: Thank you to the person who dropped off two large baskets of food - much appreciated.
 Jon Wendorff

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