

VIEWPOINTS

LETTERS FROM READERS

Letters to the editor are not fact checked by the Aitkin Age and should be considered matters of opinion.
The deadline to submit letters to the editor has been changed to 5 p.m. on Thursdays.

To the Aitkin School District

As a lifelong member of the Aitkin community and a graduate of Aitkin High School, all I can say is I'm ashamed after watching the school board meetings, when brought to my attention.

We are a small community, community being the key word. At what point did we lose the ability for formal debate and human civility toward our fellow citizens? We need to stand united and strong for the good of the students! The state and the federal government set guidelines to help guide us in a direction deemed to fit a much larger region than just the Aitkin School District. They are nothing more than guidelines, not laws, not rules, but guidelines!

Let's put things back in context, the teachers are hired to teach the students, they are hired by the administration. The administration is hired by the school board. The school board is elected by the community, to be a representative of the com-

munity. This is the chain of command and if any part has a problem, they should go through the chain of command to find a solution. Parents, students, teachers, all should have a voice and should express it through the chains of command.

The political separation of our country has gone way too far and seeing it flood our wonderful school district sickens me! The school board's job is to debate, listen, respect and vote on the best way forward, ultimately for the greater good and education of the students, using their best judgment and input from the administration and the people who elected them.

We need better, this includes everyone involved, the school board, the administrators, the teachers, the parents and the students. Fighting, arguing, bickering and attacking other members during meetings, in the paper, on social media, or through emails, should be beneath any member of the school board, administration,

school employees, parents or students.

Strength comes from respect, unity and formal debate with facts and proof, not opinions and arguments.

We can do better, this community is strong and proud and any student should be proud to be an Aitkin Gobbler! We owe it to them, to have that heritage, the same heritage that I received, the same heritage that we celebrated every year with the All Class Reunion. We can't all always be right, sometimes we need to practice humility. We have to do better, we need to do better, we will do better!

Chris Dotzler
Aitkin High School
graduate, class of 1989

What is left unsaid?

In reading about Rep. Dale Lueck's eye-opening tour of Eagle Mine, I'm interested in what's seen and what's not seen, what is spoken and what is left unsaid.

I also visited Eagle Mine

this month. Rio Tinto/Lundin tore a 10-mile roadway through pristine wilderness to get to its 150-acre facility. This escaped Lueck's attention when he spoke of the small footprint of the mine. Rep. Lueck talks of the "relative quiet." This "relative quiet" comes at the cost of silence. Neighbors, as far as two miles away, talk of the constant noise of the mine.

Lueck said the only time he saw the ore outside was during the loaders' drive from the mine opening to the transfer station. Open eyes would, in fact, see ore dust everywhere - on the asphalt from the mine to the transfer facility, in the buildings - covering American flags in the hallways and eye wash stations in the mill and the workers themselves. (Matt Johnson, Eagle's PR person claims that employees' safety is paramount.)

Lueck fails to mention seeing the tailings pit (called the Humboldt Tailings Disposal Facility, (HTDF) by Eagle). He did not miss it - it's not part of

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MY VIEW

My heart's in his pocket



SHARI HORTON
Columnist

I am a M.O.M., mother of multiples.

I have twin boys who just turned 21. I often wonder how on earth that can be! In these sometimes tumultuous times for them as they make decisions, chart new paths and follow their dreams and passions, I often find myself longing for the simpler days. I miss the predictability of them hopping off the school bus at 3:47, bounding in the door - backpacks slung, starving for a snack, the house filled with chatter, dinner around the table, bedtime routines and prayers. I mostly miss knowing they are safely nestled beneath our roof dreaming their dreams. Life is anything but routine these days.

One son is attending college and lives an hour from home. He juggles two jobs. The other works in construction and made the bold and brave decision to join the National Guard. I did not see him for six agonizing months while he went through training. The days when they are both home and sleeping soundly in their beds at the same time are few and far between. When it happens, my heart is full of contentment and peace.

When my boys were younger, we enjoyed countless walks together or they'd join me on bikes or skateboards. My now-military son and I would always keep our eyes peeled for agates. Over the years, we amassed quite a collection. My dear friend gifted me with her grandmother's antique turquoise canning jar, to which she had affixed a solar light lid. It is displayed in my kitchen window serving as a perfect nightlight and the ideal place to store our agate collection.

When my son was away for military training, I would eagerly await his letters. When the mail arrived, I would literally run to the mailbox. I read and re-read his words, which included a newfound appreciation for family, our time together and the memories we'd made. They were full of promises to slow down and spend more time together in the flurry we call life. I lived for his words and the reassurance he was staying strong and OK.

One day, as I excitedly opened his letter, I found an agate carefully folded within it. He explained he had seen it on the ground while doing push-ups and saved it in his pocket to send to me to let me know he was thinking of me. Tears welled in my eyes. I keep that agate in a very special spot.

Recently, I came across a Facebook memory. There was a picture of my young boys' pocket contents after a simply blissful summer day. Depicted was \$1.85 in change, a few agates and a piece of broccoli. The photo still makes me laugh and miss those days at the same time. The broccoli was obviously a result of me saying, "Try just one bite," which apparently didn't happen.

Now, my fellow agate collector is a man, working hard and willing to serve our country and defend our freedom. I washed his work pants this morning. As I transferred them to the dryer, I heard a rattling noise. Thinking it was a drill bit or coin, I unloaded the dryer only to find an agate. I was instantly transported back to a simpler time when my little boy tagged along beside me searching for agates. A tear rolled down my cheek as my heart warmed with his love.

A family visit in the heat of summer

This summer's July weather reminded me of years ago when I was sure the heat that year would melt fat and mine was ready for breadcrumbs and ketchup.

We had driven north to escape the stifling hot city only to find more of the same at the lake. In the city we have A/C, at the cabin we have a ceiling fan and ice cubes. We hadn't been up for three weeks so the garden was turning to dust, the grass was knee-high ('by the fourth of July,' which the corn wasn't) and the hummingbird nectar was drained dry. (Happy hour it wasn't, either.)

At first glance, I thought the garden had gone to seed so I started yanking out what looked like weeds until I had a sudden flash of memory that I had tossed in a wild flower mix to jazz up the blooms this year. Hastily salvaging a few of



JANICE KIMES
Columnist

the plants, I was digging them back in when the wind started to whistle.

Quickly dousing the garden, I snarled the hose back into sloppy loops when

the sky darkened, hustling me inside to microwave some leftovers before we'd possibly lose power, which usually happens before the Jell-o sets. We sat down to eat while thunder rolled over the rooftop, rain hammering the windows and soaking the garden with a welcome second gulp from the water flying in sheets over the lake.

As the furious storm flickered off into the night, my husband fell asleep in front of the TV, content that we'd arrived before

the crashing weather and we'd had time for a hot dish supper. To resist nodding off myself, I turned my attention and the grocery list to plans the next day when the family would appear, not too famished to cool off first. The kids would drop their backpacks, kick off their shoes, grab a pop, a handful of chips and head for the dock.

As expected, they did come in drips and drabs with endless appetites, a couple of friends in tow and boundless energy. Mint weather greeted them but by the time they left three days later, we'd completely run out of towels though the pleasure of their company was more than just what had piled up in the laundry basket.

In their wake, a screen door needed repair after one family's dog had pushed through it in pursuit of the high decibel

activity and a small wedge of watermelon and a half eaten sandwich survived in the fridge along with a swallow of milk for my coffee the next morning.

When I sat down in the new day to contemplate the quiet, cup in hand, I looked out to see a plump woodchuck circling the bunkhouse before he nipped off the tops of some tasty new blossoms fresh from the rain in the garden. After all, you had better visit the salad bar when the coast is clear, as early and as often as manageable and for the best choices before anyone else gets hungry.

Besides, the cook had dozed off and the kitchen was closed.

Janice Kimes sketches the domestic cartoon of life with its inevitable calamities, delights and vigor. She and her family enjoy their seasonal Aitkin County cabin.