

AN ECHO PRESS EDITORIAL

## Thumbs Up/ Thumbs down

### Keeping county fair traditions alive

**Thumbs Up:** The Douglas County Fair is in full swing with a jam-packed schedule of events for all ages and interests. This is an event that doesn't just happen on autopilot. It takes a tremendous amount of planning, coordinating, volunteering, promoting and creativity in presenting the Great Douglas County Get-Together. We salute the Fair Board, its hard-working volunteers and fair sponsors for putting on such a top-notch event year after year. The fair continues through Saturday, Aug. 21. The gates open at 8 a.m. daily. If you've never been to the fair before, take some time to have some fun. Take in interesting exhibits, see who won prizes, watch a kids' tractor pull, munch on a corn dog, dance to live bands, go on a ride, watch 4-H students show off their animals and projects, pull for your favorite performer in the Douglas County's Got Talent contest, or simply stroll the Fairgrounds and meet up with friends you've waited too long to see. Oh, and stop by the Echo Press booth under the grandstand for special membership deals or to pass on a story idea. See you at the fair!

### Long-time Legion members

**Thumbs Up:** Those who dedicate almost their entire lives to a good community cause, such as the American Legion, deserve a mountain of gratitude. Alexandria American Legion Post 87 Commander Allan Gerlach recently announced the names of Post 87 members that have earned plaques for continuous membership. Those who earned the 75 year plaques were Veron A. Olson and Larry N. Gasperlin. Those who received the 60 year plaque were Ralph L. Hornberger and LeLand C. Johnson. The following received the 50 year plaque – David J. Benson, Donald J. Borgmann, Scott W. Fee, James A. Meyer, William H. Schroeder, II and Franklin W. Swenson. The entire Alexandria area community should join in the American Legion Post 87's salute to these individuals for their continued service and dedication to the American Legion.

### Bad driving habits

**Thumbs Down:** Bad driving habits seem to be on the upswing in Alexandria. We've seen and heard many complaints recently about drivers who are

messing up the traffic flow. For starters, drivers who are exiting the Fairgrounds and making a right turn onto Third Avenue are failing to realize they have the right-of-way when the traffic light is green. Instead, they wait for the drivers turning left, which presents a problem for the left-turning traffic because they know they don't have the right-of-way. The result is kind of like a hesitant game of chicken, with no one daring to cross the intersection first. Another pet peeve are drivers who fail to signal when changing lanes; drivers who do not stop at uncontrolled intersections (when two vehicles enter an uncontrolled intersection from different directions at approximately the same time, the driver of the vehicle on the left is supposed to yield the right-of-way to the vehicle on the right); drivers who think they have to yield to traffic when making a right turn onto Third Avenue from Nokomis Street; and perhaps the number-one complaint – drivers who go too fast or too slow.

### Birthday deal letdown

**Thumbs Down:** A long-time Alexandria resident likes it when restaurants offer special birthday deals but not when they suddenly change the rules. He was looking forward to a birthday discount that takes a percentage off the bill equal to the birthday person's age but he said he only received half that amount this time. He said he later found out that others with birthdays were still getting the full discount. His point: A restaurant should explain to birthday celebrators when a change is made and the birthday deals should be consistent from customer to customer.

### Keeping museum attractions new

**Thumbs Up:** The Runestone Museum in Alexandria deserves a thumbs up for giving residents and visitors a reason to return to the museum by offering new exhibits and new looks. Last month, the museum replaced its wolf exhibit with one that contains fascinating information about the Ice Age. Museum-goers can learn about Ice Age "finds" in the region and how the era impacted the area. The new exhibit is in the Northwest Gallery. Check it out.

If you have a suggestion for a Thumbs Up/Thumbs Down, email it to [aedenloff@echopress.com](mailto:aedenloff@echopress.com) or mail it to Echo Press, P.O. Box 549, Alexandria, MN 56308.



Thalen Zimmerman / Echo Press  
A small crowd strolls "Calorie Lane" during the Douglas County Fair's soft opening on Tuesday. The crowds are expected to be a lot bigger as the fair moves on Wednesday through Saturday.

## Peace beyond the screen

Every once in a while, we need to step away, take a break from the online world and breathe; find some peace.

It was a cool, calm morning as the sun was just above the horizon when I stared at the white caps rolling across the cold blue body of Lake Superior and took a sip of my coffee. I closed my eyes to focus on the rhythmic roar of the waves crashing against the rocky shore. The view is breathtaking and the sound is hypnotic.

I look forward to coming to this place every year. In my family, we call it "the land." A couple of acres of property, home to a two-bedroom cabin, a bunkhouse, and a deck that rests on the edge of a cliff that towers 20 feet above a rocky beach located on the south end of Grand Portage. It is my family's land, and it's a sanctuary.

There is no running water, just an outhouse for the bit that requires you to sit and a designated tree for the thing you can do while standing. There is electricity and a TV but no cable or Wi-Fi. Yes, you read that right. There is no Wi-Fi on the land; there isn't even cell phone service. If you want to make a phone call, you have to drive a mile or so up the road where you might get enough service to send a text or make a quick call. If you want internet, you have to get a hotel room or sign up for a computer at the community center. Needless to say, it's a place where you can truly go to escape.

Growing up, I hated the isolation the land provided. But as an adult, I cherish it. This past weekend when my wife and I visited the land, I was able to shed the stress. To relax, clear my head, breathe and find peace. I never want to leave.

And it was sitting there watching the mighty Lake Superior do her thing that I



THALEN ZIMMERMAN  
Thalen's Turn

was able to think and contemplate the worries I had in life, and I realized a lot of it had to do with media and technology in general. It's funny for a guy who works directly in media, but I could still see the harmful effects it has on me and, I am sure, many other people. Stress, anxiety and the viewpoint that the world is all bad.

With social media, there can be a lot of pressure for people who need to be constantly validated, checking the post they made every five minutes to see how many likes and comments it got. Or the obsession of stalking your favorite celebrity to see what they ate for lunch that day or who they are dating this week. Thankfully, that's not how I use social media. My problem is circling through my apps. I check Marketplace for deals, scroll through Instagram for dank memes, read stupid comments on Twitter, and fast tap through everyone's stories on Snapchat; I hardly ever watch them unless it looks like something truly interesting is happening in that split second I get before the next tap comes. And most of all, window shopping on Amazon. That's the biggest one. It is so easy to get sucked into the virtual world, and it can be a literal day waster if not used wisely.

The news can be scary; it is usually always scary. There is a saying, "if it bleeds, it leads." Meaning the more horrendous the story, the more people are going to want to view it. This has been the marketing plan seemingly since day one. That is why whenever you turn

on the news, most of it is basically saying evil is everywhere, and no one is safe. Now, it is important to know about the things happening around you; to stay informed. Even the bad, because recognizing the bad is how we learn from it to do our best not to repeat it. And it's not all bad, don't get me wrong. It is very easy to get sucked into hours of cat videos too. But there is another saying, "Ignorance is bliss." Sometimes not knowing, at least for a little while, can be peaceful.

Whether it's social media or news media, there can be harm. Now I am not saying shut off all your apps and quit watching the news for good. It is vital to stay informed on the happenings, but it is also important to escape it once in a while.

At my cabin, I had no contact with anyone outside of the land. I didn't know a thing that went down outside of my little slice of paradise, and that was just fine.

I think everyone should dedicate time out of their life, probably monthly, to unplug. Give your mind a reset, a detox. Don't get sucked into your phone, don't channel surf, live. Enjoy the natural world and the beauty that comes with it. Take a walk down your street and strike up a conversation with a neighbor. Go on a hike and discover something you never knew existed. Take up a new hobby or skill. You will start to see the good in the world. You will learn to appreciate the little things, you will be humbled, and realize just how big the world really is and that it isn't all evil and chaos. There is peace, harmony and love just beyond your illuminated screen and out the door.

"It's Our Turn" is a weekly column that rotates among members of the Echo Press editorial staff.

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### LETTERS

#### A response to letter about Critical Race Theory

**To the editor:**  
In a recent letter to the editor (Aug. 13), Don Dreher asked why there is so much fear about CRT. He then posited a definition: "CRT is just a new fancy word to describe American History." Well, to respond simply, no. A very cursory perusal through Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic's *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* will show Dreher's proposition to be demonstrably false.

On page 8, they posit two fundamental premises of CRT: "racism is ordinary, not aberrational ... the usual way society does business;" and, "the system of white-over-color ascendancy serves important purposes, both psychic and material, for the dominant group." Influenced by the postmodern philosophy of Michel Foucault and the revolutionary rhetoric of the Italian communist Antonio Gramsci, Critical Race Theory is an activist movement which seeks to both understand the history of the United States according to the Marxist dialectic of class struggle, and to change society.

Moreover, as Delgado and Stefancic themselves attest, CRT "questions the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law" (Delgado and Stefancic, 3).

In other words, racism is the central organizing principle upon which the United States was founded. Therefore, the liberal principles and the legal system they support are intrinsically racist and must be overturned. If, according to Dreher, "social studies class is to prepare all students with a background of information to live and interact in a diverse community," then a theoretical model that questions the very principles of our country's founding documents should not be the foundation of our social studies curriculum. If anyone is interested in alternatives to CRT/Antiracist pedagogy, I would refer them to the pioneering work of Robert Woodson and his "1776 Unites" project.

John Solheid  
Alexandria, MN

#### Grateful that Biden ended war in Afghanistan

**To the editor:**  
The scenes from the Kabul airport are gut-wrenching. Images of people falling off planes that they had been desperately clinging to in their attempts to escape, are eerily reminiscent of the fall of Saigon.

So sad – but this chaos was inevitable. Everyone knew from the beginning, 20 years ago, that our presence there was a mistake, especially Joe Biden. Once he was vice president, he made no secret of it, and had the gall to stand up to then-President Obama.

An Oct. 23, 2009, article from the New York Times read: "From the moment they took office, Mr. Biden has been Mr. Obama's in-house pessimist on Afghanistan, the strongest voice against further escalation of American forces there and the leading doubter of the president's strategy."

Biden's opposition to the continued war, 12 years ago, drew the ire of President Obama, who in essence, told him to "sit down and shut up."

History shows the right decision is often the hardest and most unpopular. Principled behavior is often only recognized and appreciated within a longer arc and context of history.

Any withdrawal from a country drenched in Taliban collaborators, corrupt officials playing both sides, and waffling, conflicted national security forces held the potential of spiraling quickly out of control.

I'm grateful that he ended this war. I'm happy that someone finally had the guts to pull the plug. I always knew that it would be pretty ugly once someone finally did, and if you are honest about it, you all did, too.

Perhaps you don't like it, or want to criticize a determined leader, who for once, chooses to act in the interests of our country. Perhaps you fail to consider the difficult position that he's acting from, that he didn't create and had done everything in his power to prevent.

Perhaps it's your turn to sit down and shut up.

Judd Hoff  
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