

Editorial Opinion

Naples Daily News

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Kudos & Kicks

Reviewing the good, the bad and the questionable

Kudos: With the school year winding down and summer luring children outdoors to cool off in the water, the designation of May as Drowning Prevention Month takes on additional importance.

Enter the NCH Safe & Healthy Children's Coalition of Collier County.

The Naples City Council this week and Collier County Commission last week honored the work of the organization, which is supported by various nonprofits, health care providers and government agencies in the area. Among its leading supporters is the Naples Children & Education Foundation, founder of the annual Naples Winter Wine Festival.

A proclamation issued by elected leaders underscores why this deserves attention:

More children drown in Florida than any other state. From 2000-15, drowning was the leading cause of death in Collier for children ages 1 to 4.

The coalition has addressed this by providing more than 28,000 water safety lessons. Swim Central, a series of 30-minute water safety lessons started here in 2012, has worked with more than 3,000 children so far in a county with abundant waters.

Of particular note in Naples has been great response for swimming lessons in River Park, where the city built a community pool.

In 2014, the coalition began a life-jacket loaner program with stations at various locations in Collier. It's called "Kids Don't Float, Give Them Something That Does" and there are plans for expansion in Marco Island, sponsors said.

"Everybody needs to take advantage of these programs over the summer," Commissioner Tim Nance said. "They (kids) will be fish before you know it."

A new initiative is being unveiled with a fun, instructional app for children that can be downloaded through iTunes. Information is at the coalition's website, www.safehealthychildren.org.

At various events this summer, you'll also see Collier's new drowning awareness mascot, Stewie the Duck.

Drowning prevention is just one of the coalition's initiatives "to improve health outcomes and prevent injuries among children within Collier County," its website states. It also focuses on child obesity and reducing sudden infant death syndrome, of SIDS.

Kudos: Behind the scenes at Southwest Florida International Airport is a top administrator whose work may go unnoticed by the public, unless something goes wrong.

But Robert M. Ball isn't going unnoticed by his peers.

Ball, executive director of the Lee County Port Authority, was selected as 2016 Airport Professional of the Year by the Southeast Chapter of the American Association of Airport Executives. He also earned the honor in 2011 from the nonprofit professional organization of airport executives that represents more than 450 members from 12 states, the Virgin Islands and the District of Columbia.

Ball joined the Port Authority in August 1993 as deputy executive director and was promoted to executive director in 1996.

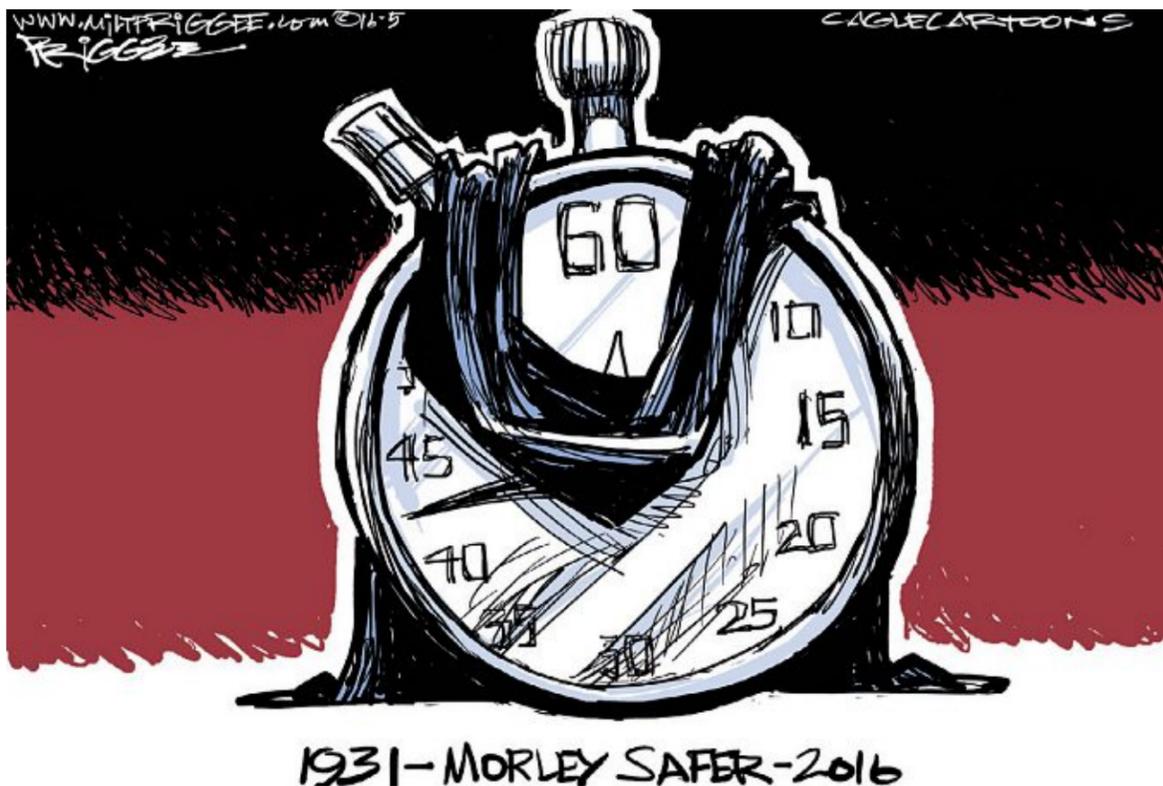
He offers his expertise on Florida Gulf Coast University's College of Business Advisory Council and is a board member at the School of Aeronautics of Florida Institute of Technology, where he earned his bachelor's degree.

Kick: Flags are to be symbols of honor. The way they are displayed can charge emotions.

So it was disturbing to see a flag that carries such a hostile meaning as a Nazi symbol unfurled in a neighborhood dispute. We trust other folks will find less offensive ways to air their disagreements with neighbors than to stoop to such a display.

By the same token, Collier is a county growing in its diversity that should be celebrated. The school district's website says students speak 80 different heritage languages and identify 114 different countries of origin.

Celebrating a nation's flag by wearing it on clothing is appropriate, such as Haiti's on Haitian Flag Day. But it should come with all the honor a national flag deserves, without antics disrupting a campus. This past week at Immokalee High School, several students wearing the flag on shirts were sent home to head off a repeat of a prior year's disturbance.



LETTERS

Flo Beckler, *Naples*

Apples to apples

David Bolduc's recent letter quoted the U.S. News & World Report's results for Massachusetts schools, naming Medfield High School in Medfield, Massachusetts, as the top-ranked traditional public high school in that state.

Then he contrasts it with our schools. I suggest we compare apples to apples.

According to Wikipedia, Medfield is the only high school in the town of Medfield, with a total enrollment (2011-12) of 898 students, who were 94.8 percent Caucasian, 0.8 percent Hispanic and 0.6 percent African-American.

Compare that with Barron Collier High School, with a student population of 1,623 students with 24.15 percent Hispanic, 5.8 percent black, 2.16 percent Haitian Creole, 2.03 percent Asian, and 0.99 percent Indian and Pacific Islander.

Add to that 29 percent are disadvantaged (needy) students.

All of these are the challenges of a very diverse global community, challenges unknown to Medfield High School.

Barron Collier enjoys a 92 percent graduation rate.

Donald G. Doherty, *Fort Myers*

Refusal to support

The political class in this country has betrayed its citizens, and the participation of the GOP in this is especially egregious because we have been told for years that Republicans protect conservative values by fighting against the destructive socialistic policies of the Democrats.

To help thwart the relentless assaults on the Constitution, personal freedoms and conservative beliefs, Republicans have told us they needed a majority in the House and Senate, which would enable them to beat back the Democrats' attacks.

We gave the Republicans those majorities. The result? Spineless, whimpering responses to outrageous Democrat initiatives.

The American people are fed up to their eyeballs with the status quo, but members of the Republican establishment have been oblivious to that reality. Instead, they cling to the notion that the same tired platitudes they've been feeding us for years will be believed.

No more. Donald Trump has given voice to the incredible frustration of the people with the lies, ineptitude, indifference and smugness of the political class.

House Speaker Paul Ryan's pious pronouncement that he would not support Trump was typical of the lack of accomplishment, dishonesty and incompetence of Ryan and his colleagues. Trump, on the other hand, has a record of accomplishment that is to be envied by any thinking person.

Trump talks in plain English. He promises to halt the shameful weakening of our military, enforce our

Letter of the Day

Ann Richard, *Naples*

40 years

Thanks to Vin DePasquale for his 40 years of bringing the Great Dock Canoe Race to our community.

His effort, time and commitment to this event is recognized by spectators and participants alike. It was fun and will be missed. I'm hoping the paddle is picked up by another individual to continue this annual tradition.

borders, reduce government spending (something the Republicans have been complicit in) and create desperately needed jobs in this country. If Ryan can't support that, he needs to step down immediately.

John Zelahy Sr., *Naples*

QR codes

The Naples Daily News published an article originating from The Washington Post headlined "Cracker Jack replaces toys with QR codes, mobile experience."

Having no clue what a QR code was, I decided to read the article.

Throughout the entire article, not once did it explain what a QR code was.

I Googled it and found that it is today's term for a two-dimensional bar code, or a little square made up of a hundred or so smaller squares, that is chock-full of data when read with the appropriate reader.

Now, why didn't the writer of the article explain what a QR code was? Did the writer not take Journalism 101?

Even if the Daily News articles originate from somewhere else, at least the Daily News should edit them and clarify confusing terms. This seems to be the norm at the Daily News.

Joseph Doyle, *Naples*

LGBT agenda

For some time, many of us have been warned about Kevin Jennings, who was President Barack Obama and Education Secretary Arne Duncan's choice at the U.S. Department of Education for the position of assistant deputy secretary for safe and drug-free schools.

Jennings is the founder of Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) and was the director until 2008.

GLSEN is also the organization behind the Day of Silence in the public schools. Jennings promotes homosexuality in K-12 and is doing so under the guise of the "bullying" curriculum that is permeating our public schools.

The Obama administration is deliberately taking the Title IX federal law and distorting the verbiage

to include gender identity. Title IX does not include gender identity; it says that harassment based on race, color, national origin, sex or disability violates the federal civil rights laws. The Obama administration, however, has taken it upon itself to include lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender under the word "sex."

Now, the Obama administration is threatening public school educators with the U.S. DOE's misinterpretation of the Title IX law and making educators fear prosecution unless they promote the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) lifestyle as normal.

Yes, all students should be taught to treat others with dignity, and bullying is a terrible problem. But forcing students to accept a perverse lifestyle that leads students into sexually transmitted diseases and early death is not something that schools should be advocating.

Tolerance is a good thing to teach students, but educators should not be intimidated into forcing students to accept perversity.

Melanie Doyle, *Naples*

Common Core fails

Some scholars have been warning parents, educators and policymakers for years that Common Core would have dire consequences for students' college-readiness.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, or the "nation's report card") states that the 2015 NAEP scores of the nation's high school seniors show a decline in math performance, stagnation in reading performance and decline in college preparation in both areas.

The average math score for seniors dropped from 153 in 2013 to 152 in 2015, according to NAEP a "statistically significant" decline. The reading scores stagnated and came in significantly below reading scores from 1992 (down from 292 to 287).

In 2013, 39 percent of students were estimated to be college-ready in math, and 38 percent ready in reading. After two more years of Common Core training, the readiness scores were down to 37 percent in each subject.

These results are especially significant because, unlike students who took the NAEP tests two years earlier, the 2015 test-takers had the benefit of full Common Core implementation. Or maybe "benefit" is the wrong word.

As quoted in The New York Times, NAEP governing board chairman Terry Mazany described all these results as "worrisome." The Los Angeles Times quotes the "bottom line" offered by a former NAEP official: "We're stalled. We're not making any progress." Indeed.

These results confirm that our schools are headed in precisely the wrong direction. The Florida Legislature, Collier County school district and the Diocese of Venice should jump off the Common Core train before it goes over the cliff. How much more evidence do they need?