

Jenn Ooton
Editorial Page Editor
303-684-5295

OPINION

To Build A Better World, Start In Your Own Community

EDITORIAL

Prepare for the wilderness

There was a time not too long ago when people venturing into the wilderness in the wintertime knew that if something bad happened to them, they were on their own.

As recently as 20 years ago, skiers and snowshoers on the high-mountain trails on the Front Range could count on relative solitude for their treks. Only experts would take the risk.

But with the advent of several pieces of technology, including apparel made with space-age fabrics, avalanche beacons small enough to fit in the palm of a hand, global positioning system devices and cellular telephones, more people have realized that outdoor recreation doesn't have to be limited to just a few months of the year.

A new device slated for testing this year in Alaska's Denali National Park offers the next step in wilderness survival. It's a radio transmitter the size of a wristwatch, and it has already proven itself in crisis situations. The device is used by Project Lifesaver International to help rescuers locate individuals with severe

autism or Alzheimer's disease who have wandered away from their safe locations. The way project officials see it, the same technology that helps track down vulnerable adults and children should work to help rescuers find adventurers in the wild.

This season, National Parks Service officials plan to test it only on employees. To give the devices to the general public right now could instill a false sense of security, officials say.

Their concern is a valid one. Technology has allowed those in the wild to be rescued because they were carrying an avalanche beacon or because they were able to use their cell phone to call for help.

However, in many situations, a rescue is impossible because of adverse weather conditions or because a person has gotten into a spot where the signal just cannot reach.

While radio-signal wristwatches are worth looking into, they are likely not the final word in backcountry safety. That word is preparation, and it means the same today as it did before the technology boom. It means not going out alone, having others know your itinerary and carrying adequate clothing and food for conditions you might hit, not just what conditions you expect today.

Following those steps may mean you won't have to be rescued in the first place.

DAILY TIMES-CALL
LONGMONT AND THE ST. VRAIN VALLEY, COLORADO

Edward Lehman, Publisher
Dean G. Lehman, Editor & President
Lauren R. Lehman, Chief Financial Officer
Ben Weir, General Manager
John Vahlenkamp, Managing Editor
Dale L. Carr, Vice President/Production
Maurice Elhart, Circulation Director
Penny Dille, Advertising Director
Connie Coffield, Director of Promotion.

Community Service and Newspapers in Education

350 Terry St., Longmont, Colo. 80501
Telephone 303-776-2244
Classified 303-776-7440
Fax 303-678-8615

Office hours:
8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Weekdays

Circulation
Monday - Friday 5 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Saturday, Sunday 5 a.m. - noon

Letters welcome

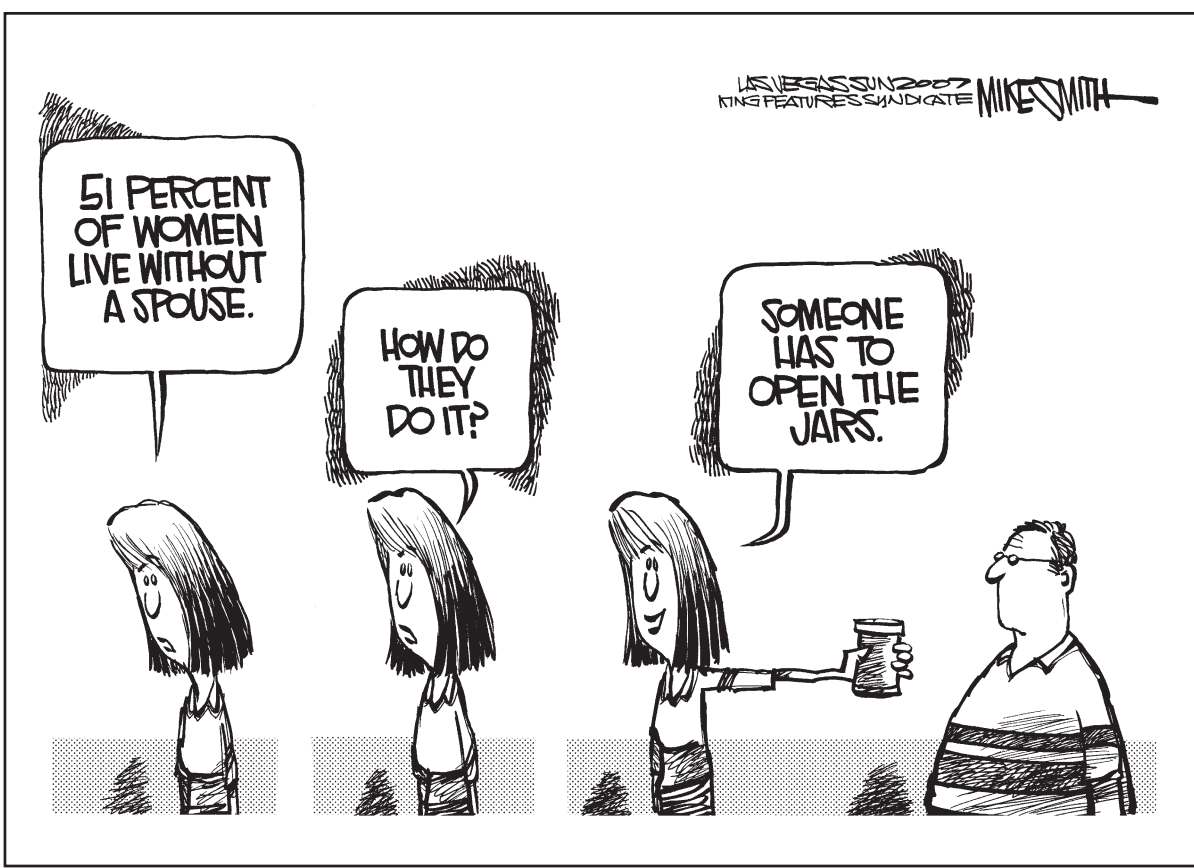
The Daily Times-Call encourages its readers to share their views. Letters must be 300 words or shorter. Short letters, about one typewritten, double-spaced page, on timely topics get preference. We will print as many letters as space allows.

Letters must be signed. We do not publish anonymous letters, poetry, letters signed with a pseudonym or letters addressed to a third party.

For verification, please include your address and daytime phone number. (We do not publish them.) Do not send e-mail letters as an attachment.

Send to:

Open Forum, P.O. Box 299,
Longmont, CO 80502;
e-mail: opinion@times-call.com.



Social networking fray

By Debra Bruno
The Christian Science Monitor

WASHINGTON — According to my daughter Joanna, a college student, the world is divided into three basic categories: friends, "Facebook friends," and everybody else.

I'm trying to get a handle on this.

From what I can tell, Facebook friends are not friends in the same way that her pals are friends.

In fact, Facebook might well be changing the nature of relationships, making them both more intrusive and yet somehow less intimate at the same time.

Facebook is a Web site, originally started exclusively for college students and first modeled on the actual photo booklets some colleges used to hand out. It has quickly blossomed into a massive online social network.

Its enthusiastic users love being connected to so many people. But they're also discovering some unpleasant side effects: Employers can check up on potential hires, and colleges can quash a wild party — announced on Facebook — before it gets out of hand.

And Facebook is changing human connections in strange ways. College students still make friends the old-fashioned way, whether it's by spilling beer on someone at a party or borrowing notes from psych class. But students and other Facebook fans increasingly treat "friend" as a verb instead of a noun. It's not at all like "befriending" someone, which smacks of tea parties and handwritten thank-you notes. To "friend" someone simply means adding that person to your Facebook list of friends. It doesn't imply actual interaction — let alone forging bonds of trust or sharing intimate details

Would you 'friend' your mom?

of your personal life. It just means you've made the list.

Joanna responds: Well, what I like about Facebook is that you're never out of touch. I do have to admit that it's also borderline creepy — you're flooded with personal information about everyone, from your closest friends to someone you've seen on the elevators a few times. But how else would I find out the guy in class is newly single? Or that the girl down the hall is Facebook friends with someone I went to high school with? It's a conversation starter, for sure. Talking is SO last year.

It is kind of cool. I'm thinking of the less socially adept kids. Having a roster of Facebook friends is comforting — they have all these people on their list, even if they don't happen to have a date for Saturday night.

In the same way that e-mail has given shy people the strength to give a quick "hey there" to the friend they might never call on the phone, Facebook keeps people in the picture, in a cyber-friendly sort of way.

Joanna: That's right. You've got Facebook to thank when, in your dorm's first hall meeting, you know half the names already. And you can blame Facebook for the lines you hear endlessly at parties: "I think I recognize you from Facebook." Then there's the most common line: "I am SO going to friend you tonight!" When you're walking to class and you can't shake the feeling you know the guy walking

next to you, it's Facebook. And when you later realize that you not only know his name, but you also know that he's an ultraconservative Republican, it's Facebook.

I think I'll pass. As an aging baby boomer, I've pretty much ignored almost all online technology, except for the wondrous uses of e-mail. I don't have a Web site, I don't blog, and I'm not really sure I see the benefits of instant-messaging, when e-mail is so quick and everyone has a cellphone. And the whole idea of creating my own profile on Facebook creeps me out. Just the other day, I started the registration process — you don't have to be a student to join — but when I got to the point where I actually had to click on my own children's profiles and ask them to "friend" me, I froze.

What if they refused to "friend" me, their own mother? What if they (rightly) decided that they didn't need to let me have access to details such as whether they were in a relationship? Or what they did on Halloween weekend?

Joanna: You have to understand why I can't be Facebook friends with you, Mom. Next thing you know, you'd be writing on my wall, nagging me about summer plans or doctor's appointments. That would be social suicide for sure.

She's right, I guess. Besides, I do have one ace in the hole: her big brother, Daniel, is on her friends list.

I'm pretty sure that he would tell me if there were anything I needed to be worried about. But I do have one question: What's a Facebook wall?

Debra Bruno is a newspaper editor in Washington. Her daughter, Joanna Davis, is a student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Fattening big government

By James P. Pinkerton
Special to Newsday

How big should the federal government be? Most people probably would say it's about the right size. But what if you knew that forces — indeed plans — were in motion to make Uncle Sam's bite on the economy almost twice what it is now?

The government spent about \$2.7 trillion in 2006. That's a lot of money, of course, but the gross domestic product, or GDP, is around \$13.3 trillion, and so it's a manageable figure.

Indeed, federal spending, which hovers at 20 percent of GDP, has been remarkably stable as a share of the economy, through war and peace, in the past half century.

But that spending status quo could change. The Congressional Budget Office says federal spending could rise to around 33 percent of GDP by the middle of this century. The cause, of course, is entitlement spending, combined with an aging population. And if one were to include state and local spending — also due to balloon because of retiree costs — the government's share of the economy in the decades ahead could easily reach 50 percent of GDP. In other words, America would move toward the sorts of hulking welfare super-states that afflict Europe today.

Oh, and of course, taxes would have to go up, too.

It's possible to finance deficits if they run at just 2 or 3 percent of GDP, as is the case now. But, if spending starts marching decisively upward, taxes will have to march upward, too.

U.S. needs to curb the welfare state

Most notable among entitlements, of course, is Social Security. Two years ago, President Bush proposed "personal retirement accounts" — partial privatization of the system — as a way of reducing the government's future financial burden, also as a way of letting younger workers participate in the stock market.

Bush was onto something. Ever since Thomas Jefferson extolled the idea of "widespread distribution of property," ever since Abraham Lincoln signed the Homestead Act, ever since Harry Truman endorsed low-cost Veterans Administration home loans, Americans have liked the idea of controlling their own destinies by controlling their own assets.

And, in fact, the idea of helping people develop their own nest eggs is increasingly popular around the world. In Singapore, for example, the government strongly encourages and subsidizes the asset-accumulation of its citizens.

But when Bush proposed his Social Security plan in 2005, Democrats in Congress quickly disposed of it. Veteran anti-tax activist Grover Norquist says he thinks he knows why: "The Democrats want people to be dependent on the government," he said Tuesday at a conference on Capitol Hill sponsored by the Free

Locals struggle with illegal immigration

By Tom Fitton
Judicial Watch

Chances are a short drive around your town will bring you face-to-face with one of the more visible signs of a defunct border security system: illegal alien day laborers loitering on street corners, seeking illegal work. Most of them are here illegally from Mexico. They likely crossed the border hundreds, if not thousands, of miles from your home. And yet, here they are. In your town, on your street corners.

Communities across America are wrestling with the local consequences of the illegal immigration crisis. Drugs, violent crime, overcrowded schools, and an overburdened health-care system are just a few of the social problems caused by rampant illegal immigration.

As the federal government continues to fail in one of its most basic functions, to protect our borders, local officials are increasingly being left to clean up the mess. And, as you might imagine, they are pursuing a variety of different strategies to deal with the grim realities they face. Some rely on the rule of law and place a priority on the rights of American citizens. Others, unfortunately, flout the law and place a priority on the needs of illegal aliens.

First, let's emphasize the positive.

In Hazleton, Penn., Mayor Louis Barletta pushed through the Illegal Immigration Relief Act last summer to hold accountable landlords who rent to illegal immigrants and employers who hire them. The ordinance also makes English the official language of Hazleton.

Barletta's reasoning is simple: Illegal immigration is expensive and wrong, and one way to stop it is to punish, to the degree the law allows, those responsible. Predictably, the American Civil Liberties Union has intervened on behalf of illegal immigrants, filing a lawsuit to prevent the ordinance from taking effect. Hazleton is now tied up in court battle with a trial date set for March. No matter what happens in Hazleton, however, Barletta's actions have already had a positive impact as other local communities, such as Beaufort County, South Carolina, have followed Hazleton's lead.

About 200 miles southwest of Hazleton, in Herndon, Va., local officials chose a different path. Rather than punishing employers who hire illegals, the town decided to use taxpayer funds to help illegal aliens find jobs. Judicial Watch filed a lawsuit on behalf of Herndon taxpayers, and, in response, the Herndon Town Council recently voted 6-1 to require the day laborer site to screen applicants for legal status.

Nonetheless, Herndon's day laborer site continues to function without proper screening, while Herndon taxpayers are asked to foot the bill for defending the site in court. Meanwhile, other taxpayer-funded day laborer sites exist in cities nationwide in violation of federal immigration law.

And then there are the cities that not only provide aid and comfort to illegal aliens, but are also complicit in helping them violate the law and avoid deportation.

In Cook County, Ill., for example, the board of commissioners plans to implement a "sanctuary policy" that would prevent county employees, including police officers, from assisting with immigration enforcement and/or reporting suspected illegal immigrants to the federal authorities. Similar policies are in place in many cities across America, including Los Angeles, San Francisco, Houston and, believe or not, in Washington, DC.

Local officials who coddle illegal aliens and help them violate the law say that protecting the border is a federal problem and none of their business. Tell that to the family of 21-year-old Marine Corporal Brian Mathews, who was killed just before Christmas by a man who police said was driving with four times the legal limit of alcohol in his blood. Maryland police had cited the man, an illegal alien, before for drunken driving. Mathews was killed this past Thanksgiving while waiting at a stoplight with his date, 24-year-old Jennifer Bower, in Montgomery County, Md. (Montgomery County uses taxpayer funds to support two illegal day labor sites and plans a third.)

There is a saying in political circles that "all politics is local." The same can now be said of the devastating impact of illegal immigration. And if we're going to deal with it effectively, local communities need to join the fight.

Tom Fitton is president of Judicial Watch, a conservative, nonpartisan educational foundation that fights government corruption. Visit www.judicialwatch.org for more information.

James P. Pinkerton is a columnist for Newsday.