

# OPINION

## ONE MAN'S PERSPECTIVE



**RANDY M. CAUTHRON**  
SPENCER REPORTER  
MANAGING EDITOR

### A beautiful message

A friend and fellow Kiwanian Tom Roti delivered a very special and powerful message he received during a recent church service. In light of Tuesday's column centering around the issue of life, he felt the writing worth sharing. After reading the simple yet poignant verses, I thought the message worth sharing.

#### THE APPLE THEORY

*If people were just apples, then each tiny little seed  
Could be planted or discarded solely based upon need.  
And each struggling little seedling looking up to see the sky  
Could be cultivated nicely or cut off and left to die.*

*Not a life would be protected, not an apple tree exempt  
From the fate that would befall it ...  
And if someone should attempt  
To set the parameters for conduct in our dealing with a sprout,  
Then the civil rights committee would step in and throw him out!*

*If people were just apples then the green and wormy may  
Without fear of accusation, quietly be put away.  
Any immature or handicapped, the slightest of degrees,  
Might be sorted out likes apples and discarded as you please.*

*If people were just apples then the ones that start to age  
Growing old and soft and wrinkled, moving far beyond the stage  
Of when the quality of life was fully beautiful and strong,  
Would be ushered to their coffins without fear of doing wrong.*

*If people were just apples then we'd measure and we'd weigh  
Which were good enough to save and all of the ones we'd throw away.  
And some day soon the refuse pile of life would get its due —  
Someone would come along and judge that we should be there too!*

— LONIE EATHERTON

The old adage, "One bad apple spoils the bunch," truly applies. Are you going to be the bad apple? Pray for life. Be well. Stay healthy. God bless — both the born and unborn. And as always, what say you?

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## ARGUS ON CURRENT EVENTS



**ARGUS HAMILTON**  
GOD BLESS AMERICA,  
HOW IS EVERYBODY?

The Punxsutawney Phil Club hosted Groundhog Day at Gobbler's Knob in central Pennsylvania on Thursday for the winter forecast. The annual ritual isn't confined to Gobbler's Knob. Biden came outside the White House this morning and he saw his shadow, and that means six more weeks of comedy.

President Biden traveled to New York Tuesday to launch the construction on a new tunnel bridge as well as attend a fundraising event for his likely 2024 campaign. Joe declared he will run for re-election in 2024, God willing. However as we all know, God does not choose our presidents, the FBI does.

Former Prime Minister Boris Johnson was interviewed on Fox News Tuesday and he called for a free trade deal between the United States and England. He also praised former President Trump's foreign policy. Boris Johnson and Donald Trump won't rest until they destroy their common enemy, Super Cuts.

Congress debated police reform Monday following the outcry over criminal behavior by Memphis police. Yet the same day, news video showed Las Vegas police pulling an injured man out of a burning car after it had crashed head-on into a palm tree. Viewers were relieved to see it wasn't Jay Leno.

Alec Baldwin got charged with involuntary manslaughter in the shooting of his cinematographer Tuesday. Get your popcorn. During the preliminary hearing, a gun expert for the defense said the shooting was caused by a loose nut behind the trigger, then a psychiatrist for the prosecution said the same thing.

Tyson Chicken plants were the targets of recent protests by the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, who insist the animals we eat have human qualities. I simply must stop using my Ouija board as a butcher board. My chicken came back to life three times in 10 minutes from the spirit world.

The Border Patrol reports a spike in the number of people caught trying to bring eggs into the U.S. illegally from Mexico to sell at a huge profit on the black market. Yesterday I dropped a dozen eggs while carrying the bag from the grocery store. Liberty Mutual is sending out a claims adjuster tomorrow.

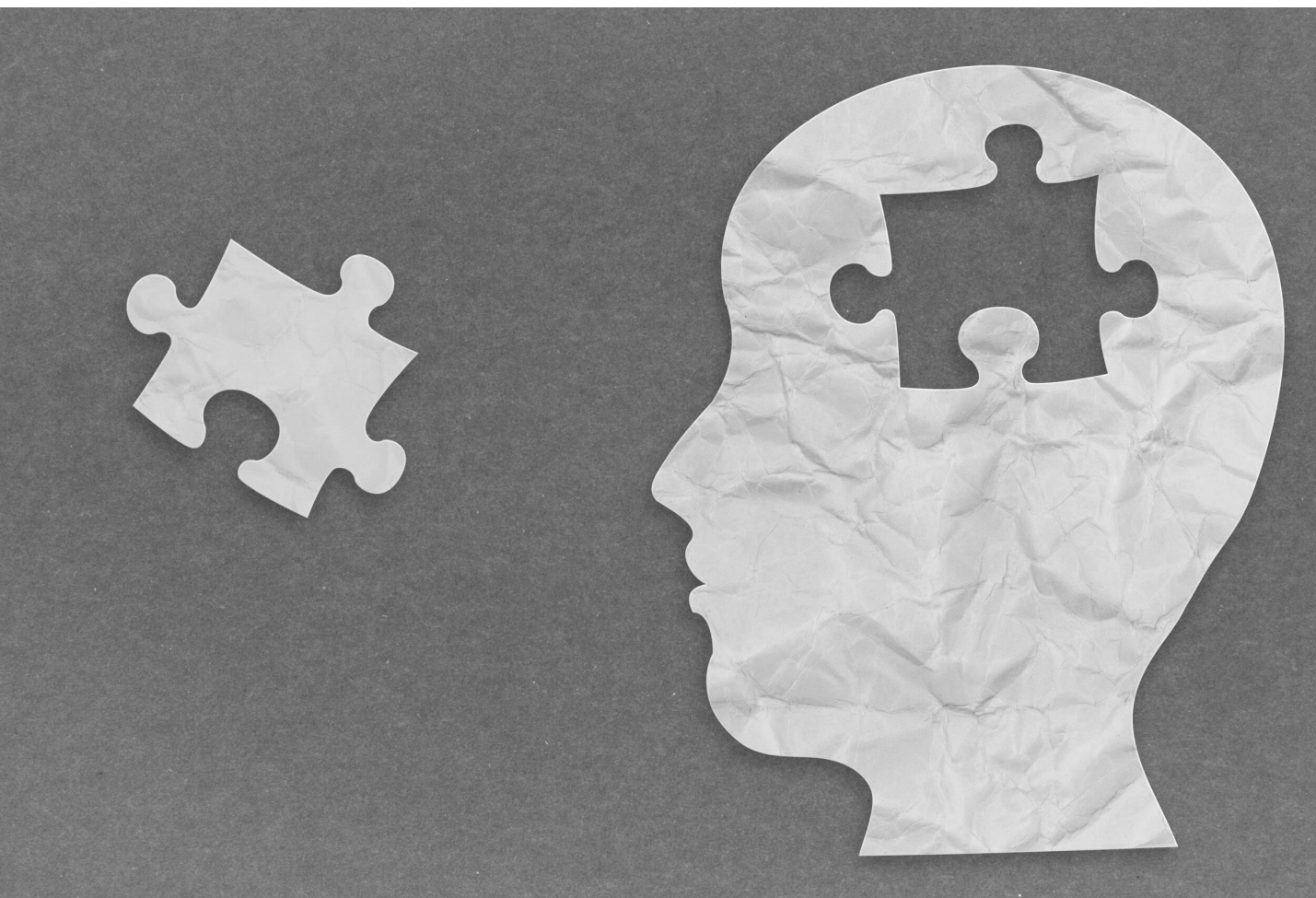
New York faced protests by illegal aliens about their living conditions after they were bused in from the border and put up in \$300 a night luxury hotel rooms. To their point, I don't see how decent people can live like this. The towels are so thick you can barely close your suitcase.

New York Mayor Eric Adams stood outside a luxury hotel where illegal aliens are being housed Tuesday and announced a new shelter for the single male migrants. The single migrant guys are being kicked out of their luxury hotel rooms and they're angry. In fact they're threatening to leave the country.

Iran's regime says it foiled a drone strike by Israel against its nuclear facility as Iranian street protests against the regime accelerated. An Iranian couple who danced together in the street at an anti-regime rally in Teheran each got 10 years in prison. If it was Gangnam Style they got off easy.

## GUEST COMMENTARY

### Iowa's mental illness system is not fixed yet, especially for children



**LESLIE CARPENTER**  
IOWA MENTAL  
HEALTH ADVOCACY

As the third week of the Iowa legislative session winds down, it seems that the urgency of the past few sessions to address mental health care in Iowa has faded. Many policymakers seem to feel that much work has been done in this space, and they are ready to move on to other priorities.

In fairness, the Iowa Legislature and Gov. Kim Reynolds have passed a lot of legislation to improve mental health care including, but not limited to, passing the Complex Needs Mental Health Law in 2018, the Children's Mental Health Law in 2019, and moving the funding stream from property taxes to the state budget. This took coordination, dedication, and collaboration, and it is appreciated.

Has Iowa made strides in building mental health resources? Yes, absolutely. The difficult reality, however, is that the need for mental health services — particularly among young people — has blown past the progress we have made. As a mental-health advocate, I continue to hear from Iowa families desperately searching for mental-health services for their loved ones and being unable to find them in our state.

Just because legislation was passed does not mean it is working on the ground and improving actual outcomes for Iowans. We are still lacking staffed hospital beds in both private hospitals and at our two remaining state psychiatric hospitals in Independence and Cherokee. Iowa is ranked 51st in the country — last in the nation — by the Treatment Advocacy Center, with only 2 beds per 100,000 people, when the recommended amount is 50 beds per 100,000 people.

Based upon Iowa's population, we should have 1,205 beds for adults. However, we have 566 staffed beds. The current numbers as of November 2022, according to the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services are: (64 state beds; 502 staffed private beds). For children, we should have 416 beds; we currently have 125 staffed beds (28 staffed state beds and 97 staffed private beds).

Mental health care at all levels is challenged by Iowa's workforce shortage. We fully support efforts this session both by legislators and the governor to address this shortage. However, part of the reason for the shortage is that it is difficult to work in a system that is broken and not serving the needs of the patients as well as the health care workers themselves.

We must take a multifaceted approach:  
Increase reimbursement rates to allow for salaries more commensurate with the highly skilled services these profes-

sionals are providing.

Increase access along the continuum of care, from the access centers to the hospitals to true #HousingThatHeals in the community.

We need to be able to serve patients with the most serious mental illnesses like schizophrenia who also have complex needs with co-occurring substance use disorders and other medical conditions as well.

The policies that could make this happen are in place, but the implementation is not. There are good people at the Department of Health and Human Services who are working diligently to improve the system. We appreciate their efforts and recognize that they need support through the additional funding, staffing, and technology necessary to complete this needed work and oversight.

I also urge hospitals and mental health care providers to expand services to those who desperately need treatment all along the continuum. I hope they fully utilize the new tiered rates which should allow them to serve more inpatients with intensive psychiatric needs.

I hope they increase the number of Intensive Residential Service Homes (IRSH) for people living with chronic mental illnesses and complex needs.

Iowa must find a balance. The Department of Justice rightly determined that Iowa must do a better job of integrating people with disabilities into the community, partly because of the atrocities that occurred at the Glenwood Resource Center. However, as this occurs, we must remember that there remains a need for long-term residential treatment options for people living with serious mental illnesses.

Too often, without a treatment-focused setting, these individuals end up in jails, prisons, and emergency departments, where they do not get the help they deserve. No Iowan should be criminalized because they are ill and unable to receive medical treatment. But that's what is happening in Iowa as a result of the severe lack of long-term supportive housing, acute care hospital beds, and state psychiatric hospital beds.

This is a complex and nuanced issue, and careful solutions are needed at all levels, from the federal government to the local policymakers. To truly fix the mental illness treatment system, we need collaboration and accountability.

I hope every Iowan reading this will take the time to write to your legislators and the governor to remind them of the ongoing need and urge their continued attention to this crisis that is still leaving too many to suffer and die. Together, we can make a difference!

## IOWA EDITORIAL

### Celebrate cycling by committing to safety

The Iowa Code elevates all sorts of interests above cyclists' interest in not being mowed down by drivers.

July will mark 50 years since the idea that became the Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa was hatched (the first ride was actually in late August). But despite half a century of weeklong celebrations of bicycle recreation, and the state as a whole, Iowa's laws remain less friendly to bicyclists than many others states'.

The Iowa Code elevates all sorts of interests above cyclists' interest in not being mowed down by drivers. A driver who only looks at a phone before a crash, for instance, instead of manipulating its controls, is not criminally liable under the distracted driving law. Penalties that apply after severe crashes involving a pedestrian or a four-way stop do not apply to the same crash involving a bicyclist. Confusion persists about how much responsibility drivers have to give bicyclists space on a road.

Iowa has made strides in setting aside spaces for cyclists, including networks of trails in many parts of the state and dedicated lanes in some cities. That's great, and each advance is a boon for safety. But the availability of such avenues does not change cyclists' right to use most roads or motorists' responsi-

bility to be aware of their surroundings. The trails were built to promote and facilitate cycling, not to segregate it from driving.

It's also worth emphasizing that the primary goal of stricter laws and stiffer penalties is not to come down harder on people after traffic accidents. Yes, people who are clearly malicious or incompetent or negligent should lose privileges and face other consequences.

But distracted driving in particular is a widespread scourge, practiced by those who might well think that they are quite attentive and defensive drivers. Iowa State Patrol officials say it's involved in about a fifth of crashes.

So it's awareness, more than deterrence, that is needed most to help more people realize that a "quick glance" at a phone is often not that quick — and that a brief look is all the time that's needed for a deadly crash.

State lawmakers have a chance — again — to correct bike-law shortcomings this winter. Advocates have for years been trying to require drivers to use electronics only in "hands-free" mode, but the bills keep dying at the Statehouse. A hearing on Senate File 60 on Monday included testimony from dozens of people about close calls and tragedies involving distracted drivers.



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