

## Letters to the editor

### Kudos, kiddos

To Editor:

I was dining at Applebee's in Gallup, on Thursday April 16. There was a GMCS bus in the lot. My friend and I both thought maybe one of the drivers was having lunch. When we walked in, we were both surprised to find a large group of children sitting at the tables in the main dining area. We sat in the lounge area and were watching the kids as they socialized and ate their lunches.

My friend and I were both quite impressed by the behavior the large group of children were displaying. Out of curiosity, I asked one of the teachers what the outing was about, and to comment on how wonderful it was to see such a large group behaving so well. Ms. Mower said the students were on an outing to practice manners. I told her, and the other teachers, how great the kids were doing. Later I asked a waitress which school the kids were from, she said Stagecoach Elementary. I decided that a letter should be written to commend the kids on their outstanding manners!

I would like to let everyone know that it was a very enjoyable atmosphere. The kids, who were first-graders, used great "inside voices", and refrained from running around. The few times the teachers had to address any behavior it was minor. When it was time for them to leave, they very quietly gathered themselves and filed out the door, almost without notice. I have been in Applebee's when it was mostly adults dining, the kids have them beat in manners and public behavior! All of us could use a lesson from these little guys. Way to go Stagecoach students and teachers!

Kerri Cotten  
Gallup

### Justice Day

To Editor:

On behalf of the Navajo Nation Judiciary Committee, I want to extend my appreciation to Chief Justice Herb Yazzie, and the Navajo Nation judicial branch for the planning and coordinating the upcoming 50th annual Justice Day throughout the Navajo Nation. Particularly the district court staffs, administrators and judges. The Navajo Nation has come a long way of upholding our culture and tradition distinctively and keeping a strong stance of our sovereign status and jurisdictional affairs within the Navajo Nation.

With the 50th annual Justice Day activity starting this month, I would like to encourage my Navajo people and non-Navajo people to visit the district court service through out the Navajo Nation district court. Each and every year, the committee is tirelessly requesting for more funding for each of the district courts and making sure all of the courts' policies and procedures are up-to-date.

With our Navajo Nation population increasing and the everyday change of our social environment, the Judiciary Committee is keeping abreast of all laws that affect our sovereign status and making sure that we are not uttered by outside decree but our culture and traditions are acknowledged decisively! The Navajo Nation District Court Jurisdiction does have a long ways of obtaining the full unquestionable jurisdiction and that it's a matter of our US Congress acknowledgment to obtain that authority. In obtaining this status, it will take each and every Navajo tireless support and advocacy to achieve this status.

Again, I want to thank my Judiciary Committee for their tireless work of making sure that our Navajo Nation district court provides quality service.

Kee Allen Begay Jr.  
Judiciary Committee Chairman

### Cleaning crew

To Editor:

It seems that a day doesn't go by where you don't see something more shocking than the day before. It's as though all moral codes and rules have been tossed aside and it's a free for all. In our community domestic violence against a woman is an epidemic, drunk drivers being cited 4 or 5 times, start taking vehicles from repeat offenders. As a community we should be outraged.

Graffiti, drive-by shootings, drugs, murders, public drunkenness and panhandling are normal behavior here. Native Americans are losing a whole generation because of alcohol and violence. And the silence from the Navajo Nation is deafening. Per capita Gallup leads the state in murders. Where is the outcry?

No matter how dark the world gets we must keep illuminating for others to see and have hope. Our forefathers would be disgusted at the decay that has taken over Gallup. Ex-Mayors Muñoz and Rosebrough fought hard for change just to be attacked maliciously by the media and the liquor industry for their stance on human suffering and alcohol abuse and for their efforts for a better Gallup. Now it is about promises during elections and when mayors and councilmen get elected nothing gets done.

There are plenty of fine citizens of Gallup who are trying to make Gallup a better place to live. Keep up the good work your efforts will pay off one day. My family has called Gallup home for over 90 years, we love our city and we have wonderful God fearing people here who do care and are trying to make a difference. If something is wrong in your neighborhood, demand that your elected officials address those issues, or vote them out of office. You are the taxpayers; they work for you not other way around. If you live in a rundown neighborhood that has nuisance houses and are living in fear, demand change. In Wednesday's Independent April 1, article Herculean Task, local caring leaders of our community came together to come up with ideas to draw tourists to Gallup and to find out what is wrong with Gallup and what needs to be done. We can first start out by cleaning up our community; it is an outrage that litter has consumed us. Please somebody take a ride out so you can see the filthiness for yourself, you will agree with me that we can start giving Gallup a facelift. The councilmen for these districts are not addressing the litter issues in their districts. Sheriff Joe Arpaio from Phoenix uses jail inmates to clean up their city; why can't we do the same? Mayor Mendoza please address this urgent problem and make Gallup a pleasant community that we can all be proud of.

Cecil Garcia  
Gallup

## Pretty woman

For two days I contemplated the phenomenon that is Susan Boyle. As nearly everyone must know by now, Boyle is the Scottish singer who blew away the judges, the audience — and by the millions of YouTube hits — much of the world with her performance on the "Britain's Got Talent" television program.

Susan Boyle's performance is not the entire story, however. She's had her magnificent voice since she was a young girl. We are the story because of our reaction to her.

Watch the seven-minute YouTube video to get the full impact. One sees two young men assisting Susan backstage. We quickly size her up: a nearly 48-year-old woman with graying hair, a dress that looks as if it might have been purchased at the British equivalent of Wal-Mart hugging a body that even she described as "like a garage." Frumpy is the word that first comes to mind.

As she walks on stage, the condescension is as thick as a London fog. The judges are Piers Morgan, a former tabloid newspaper editor, the irritating Simon Cowell, the show's creator and also the co-host on America's talent reality show "American Idol," and Amanda Holden, a beautiful, blonde English actress. The message they send with their facial expressions and body language is reinforced by cutaway shots of the audience: What are you

doing here? Shouldn't you be mopping the stage instead of singing on it?

Cowell asks her to share her dream. Boyle says she wants to be like the English musical theater legend Elaine Paige. Cowell seems to struggle to hide his disdain, as if to say, "yes, and I'd like to be prime minister." He asks her what she intends to sing and she announces, "I Dreamed a Dream" from "Les Miserables." One of the judges is heard to mutter; "a difficult song."

The music begins and not 12 bars elapse before a stunned audience erupts in applause. All those hypocrites who thought nothing good could come from this dowdy woman because our narcissistic culture has taught us that the only thing that matters is beauty, not depth of character, suddenly want to embrace what seconds ago they had instinctively rejected.

More music, more words and the audience is on its feet cheering. Slowly, the gorgeous Amanda Holden rises to applaud and the contrast could not be starker. Two women are standing, one the incarnation of all we define as beautiful, the other exuding a depth of beauty that Hold-



Cal Thomas

en and the entire audience wishes it possessed. The faux beauty is paying tribute to the reality.

People are crying, not from the external beauty represented by Holden, but because of the internal beauty projected by Susan Boyle.

I have worked in television most of my professional life. I see many women before they have their hair and makeup done. Most are good looking enough; some are just average. But when they emerge from their makeovers, they have been transformed into something they are not. Reality was before. They are now someone's fantasy.

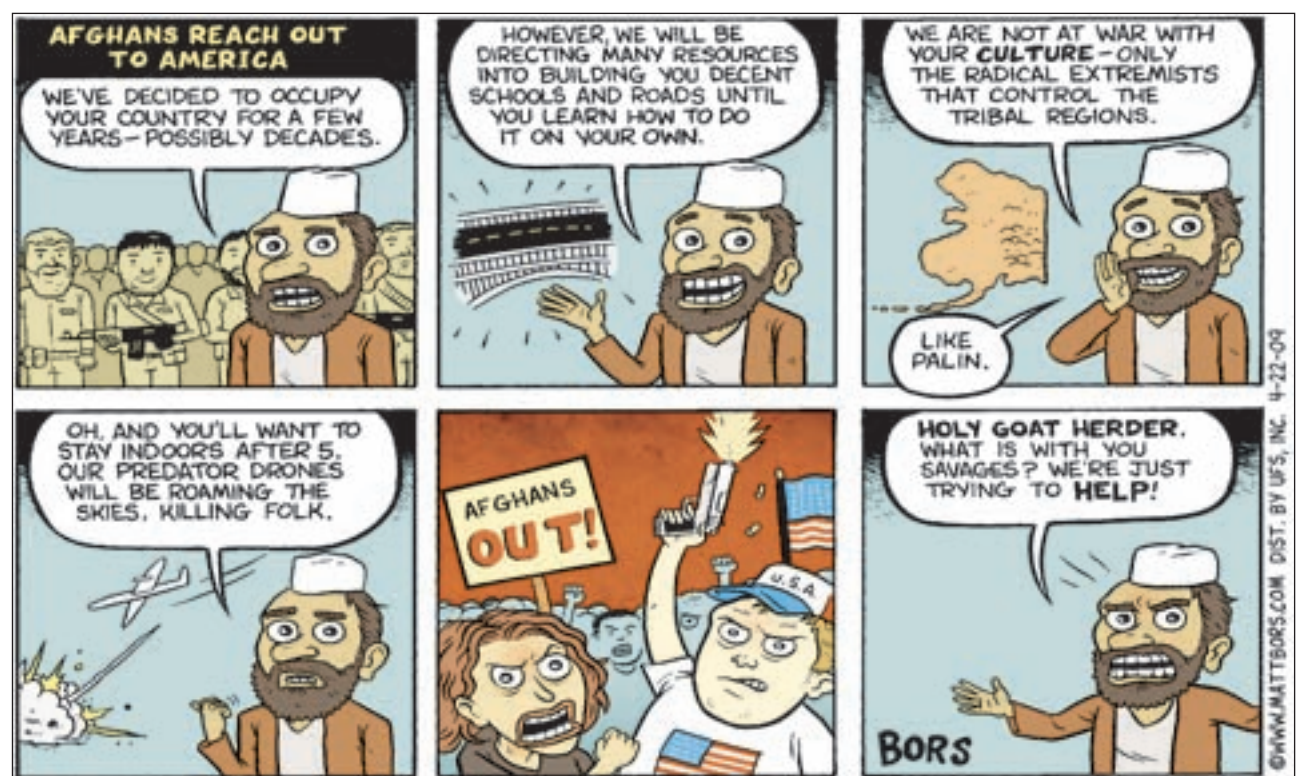
Even though we know where physical beauty ultimately leads — to wrinkles and sometimes to despair — we still worship it. The 18th-century English poet Thomas Gray got to the heart of it when he wrote:

"The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,  
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave.

Awaits alike the inevitable hour:  
The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

In an interview with a British newspaper, Susan Boyle said, "Modern society is too quick to judge people on their appearances. There is not much you can do about it; it is the way they think; it is the way they are. But maybe this could teach them a lesson, or set an example."

Let's hope it does both.



## Children in peril

With so much attention focused on the banking system and arguments over bailouts, the plight of America's children in this severe economic downturn is getting short shrift.

Official statistics are not yet readily available, but there is little doubt that poverty and family homelessness are rising, that the quality of public education in many communities is deteriorating and that legions of children are losing access to health care as their parents join the expanding ranks of the unemployed.

This is a toxic mix for children, a demoralizing convergence of factors that have long been known to impede the ability of young people to flourish.

"It's actually quite frightening," said Dr. Irwin Redlener, president of the Children's Health Fund in New York. "We're seeing very unsettling reports of increased numbers of children in poverty. Those numbers may rise from about 12.5 million before the recession to nearly 17 million by the end of this year."

Redlener is a pediatrician who also is a professor at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health. He co-founded the Children's Health Fund with the singer Paul Simon back in 1987 in response to a homeless crisis in New York City that saw families with small children wallowing tragically in squalid welfare hotels.

Redlener and Simon raised enough money to purchase a medically equipped van that traveled the city to bring free health care to homeless kids.

What is happening now, nationally,

is overwhelming compared with New York's problems in the mid-1980s. "We are seeing the emergence of what amounts to a 'recession generation,'" said Redlener. "This includes the children who were already living in poverty, but also millions more whose families had a reasonable chance of making it. Two years ago, they saw themselves as working class and middle class, but now many are unemployed or underemployed, and one of the results is that we're seeing growing numbers of children depending on emergency rooms for health care or going without care."

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has noted that changes in food stamp enrollment closely track changes in poverty. Since the start of the recession, the number of people receiving food stamps has increased by 4.6 million, nearly 17 percent. According to the center, that's an indication of a substantial increase in poverty over the same period. And that's bad news for children.

Similarly grim evidence is mounting with regard to homelessness. Surges in the number of families living in shelters are being reported by officials in communities across the country.

"This spike in homelessness," the center said, "is worsening what was already a large and persistent problem. Even before the current recession, an

estimated 1.6 million people, including 340,000 children, were homeless and living in emergency shelters or transitional housing over the course of a year. Many more adults and children were living on the street, in shelters for victims of domestic violence, or temporarily in the homes of friends and relations."

With unemployment expected to continue to rise for the foreseeable future, and with state and local governments staggering beneath the weight of budget deficits, there is no reason to believe that these problems — and their profound negative impact on children — will do anything but worsen.

States from coast to coast are cutting social service programs. Arizona's child protection agency, for example, has cut back on its investigations of abuse and neglect reports. Similar cutbacks in socially beneficial and even life-saving programs for children are in the works in many states.

Redlener described what is occurring as "a quiet disaster."

The number of state-of-the-art mobile medical units operated by the Children's Health Fund has grown from one in 1987 to 37. In an effort to bring health care to some of the children most in need right now — while at the same time drawing attention to the plight of children in general in these tough economic times — Redlener is planning to deploy the distinctive blue vans to some of the communities hardest hit by the recession.

The first stop will be Detroit this coming weekend.



Bob Herbert

## Letters to the Editor policy

GALLUP — The Independent encourages letters to the editor, which are published twice weekly — Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Letters must include writer's name, address and phone number although only the name and community of residence will be published.

Letters may not exceed 500 words. Letters may be edited for space and clarity. The Independent may choose not to print any letter for any reason.

Anyone may submit a letter, and there is no charge for publication.

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The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.

-Isaiah 41:1