

Letter to the editor

Placing responsibility

To Editor:

I was shocked to read about the couple that was killed, due in part, to their own doing in. I was exceptionally saddened, though as I continued to read the story on the second page, I came to realization of what a culture we who live in this area have become. This raging debate about drunken driving and public responsibility has become absolutely absurd, as we demonize situations which in many circumstances are caused by illnesses or hardships unknown to us, such as this.

Yes, another "stupid Indian" couple has died. But the more damaging thing I have realized is that the Fire Rock Casino could have stopped this incident. The front door staff went so far as to call the police after blocking this couple's entrance; why did they not detain them at the door, why did they not take an active part as security personal to secure every person on their property, even those who could not secure themselves? Cries for help are often times not shared by those who need help most. As a culture, we have come to the ungodly place of allowing our prejudices against such things allow people to get killed! Yes, they were drunk, but why would being drunk disaffirm the inebriated from being considered human. And what divides us from having compassion toward people in situations like this, and taking part from stopping people from doing worse, like returning to their car and driving away? Yes, the couple died and is probably responsible, but the remaining responsibility remains with the security personal that were too uncompassioned to save these people from their own avoidable death.

It was not anyone's responsibility to care for these people who died, but I still have compassion to say, "Hey man, you're not well, how can I help?" This is a very sad day because a couple died; not because the driver got behind the wheel drunk and drove, but because this was a completely avoidable calamity. The Fire Rock Casino staff could have prevented it, but instead aimed to cover their greed, instead of their fellow man.

S. Nathan Shorty
Ganado

[Ed. Note: Kee Manygoats was killed in the crash to which Mr. Shorty refers, and the driver, Elizabeth Manygoats, was seriously injured.]

The positive impact of recreation

To Editor:

I was saddened when I was told that the city administration wants to close the Gallup Aquatic Center or give it to the schools to operate.

The concern is that the Gallup Aquatic Center runs in the red. While this may be true, it does bring in money to the community, and the non-monetary benefits far outweigh the monetary issues. The Gallup Aquatic Center was supported and built by a citywide bond that passed 2 to 1.

The very first year the Gallup Aquatic Center was opened, 30,000 patrons walked through the doors. Most of these were children were under 16 years of age. Since that first year, the number of patrons has increased.

The Gallup Aquatic Center, Harold Runnels Pool, Larry Brian Mitchell Recreation Center, Fitness Center, Ford Canyon Park, tennis courts, playgrounds, picnic areas, Tom Saucedo Field, T-Ball Park, Sports Complex, Soccer Complex, etc. are for the common good. They are not designed to bring in money for the municipality, but they are designed to enhance the quality of life for the citizens. This is what draws people to visit here, move here, and stay here. This positively impacts the economy of the entire community, which in turn enhances the financial stability of the municipal government. If these services were to charge the amount necessary to make a profit, no one would use these services. Like a school or a library, these facilities are here to provide a service, not make money.

In order to grow and be healthy, cities need and must have the city leaders support Recreation and Parks with a positive attitude.

You cannot put a dollar value on a child learning to swim, or children playing in the pool or on the playground equipment, laughing and having fun with friends, playing sports, a family having a picnic, etc. What would Gallup be like if it didn't have any fields, pools, playgrounds, tennis courts, fitness and recreation centers? The county officials didn't think twice to spend \$5,000,000 for a new jail for kids within the city limits. Why can't we spend money on positive places for kids? The recreation programs and parks provide a good place for everyone to learn healthy habits and make good choices so they aren't out getting into trouble and ending up in the jail. Please think twice of what Gallup would be like without Recreation and Parks. Saving money by not having recreation will cost more money in the end. What is that going to cost, and not just monetarily?

Recreation provides a good service to the community. Without these locations, kids will have nothing to do. With the high rate of diabetes in Gallup and McKinley County, it is imperative to teach kids to have healthy and active habits to carry with them throughout their lives. When diagnosed with diabetes or obesity, the first thing a doctor tells patients is to start exercising. This would be much harder and for some nearly impossible to do without these city facilities.

Esco Chavez,
Gallup

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.

Letters may be mailed, delivered in person, faxed or e-mailed to: Editor, The Independent, P.O. Box 1210, Gallup, New Mexico 87305, (505) 722-5750 (fax); editorialgallup@yahoo.com (e-mail).

Independent opinion

Save the pro position

If our illustrious mayor and the city council have their way, Alex Alvarez will no longer be the city's PGA golf pro on July 1, having been the subject of a RIFF as part of a city plan to save \$600,000 and put it away in case the city sees some extraordinary expenses in the coming year.

City officials have basically said Alvarez has outlived his usefulness to the city and that the city can save the \$50,000 or so in salary plus benefits because they would be able to call upon the local golfer's association to step in and promote the golf course and upcoming tournaments on a volunteer basis.

When this first came up, members of the city council expressed doubts about whether this would work, saying that the position is too important to rely on volunteers. We agree and suggest that maybe the city should test this theory first by laying off the city manager and relying on members of the Chamber of Commerce or NCI to come in on a voluntary basis to do that job. That would save the city a lot more than Alvarez's salary as well as give the clients at NCI some on-the-job training.

Another reason the city gives for laying off Alvarez is that he has to accept a lot of the responsibility for the fact that the golf course has lost hundreds of thousands of dollars annually over the time Alvarez has been the golf pro. Apparently, the city's position is that if Alvarez had done her job better, the golf course would have made a profit, despite the fact that for the last several years, the course has been nearly unplayable. Do we fire the lifeguards because the pools are losing money?

But the real reason why the city wants Alvarez gone is because they believe he is the one behind all of the negative stories that have appeared in the press in the last two years or so. The thinking by city officials is that Alvarez is using the press to get back at a boss — Bob Weekes — that he does not respect and can't get along with.

It's obvious that Weekes is the problem. Fox Run is in deplorable condition because of Weekes.

So a decision was made within the city government to kill two birds with one stone — save \$50,000 and get rid of an employee who refuses to toe the city line and say Weekes is the best thing that has happened to this city in decades. Right idea but wrong person. Weekes does not know how to grow grass.

This shows the kind of government that the city now has under Mayor Harry Mendoza and City Manager Gerald Herrera. Nothing is out in the open. Back door discussions and schemes that are often not made known even to members of the city council. This is just another reason why no one trusts this administration. Like Herrera told us: "Don't bother us with the facts."

This also shows why this administration has no clue as to how to run a city government.

First off, getting rid of Alvarez isn't going to stop the negative publicity in the paper. That's going to take getting someone in as greens superintendent who can actually make the golf course playable and that person is not Weekes. Until that happens, we will continue to report from local golfers about their frustrations and we'll be able to see first-hand the problems by just going to the course. We don't play golf with our eyes closed.

What worries us is that playing games with the golf pro position, Mendoza and Herrera are putting the city in serious jeopardy of having to give millions of dollars in damages when Alvarez files a suit for wrongful termination, as he will or should do.

The city calls this a reduction in force but in reality, it's a firing. They don't have enough against Alvarez to actually fire him so they are taking this approach to get rid of him but legally, they are wrong.

The publisher of this paper has denied that Alvarez has been a source for the negative stories that have appeared in the paper, the law is quite clear that even if he were, Alvarez would not be doing anything improper. As a PGA golf pro, part of his job is to make public information about the conditions of the golf course and for the city to take action against him for doing just that makes the city liable to the tune of millions in damages.

Of course, the attitude of this administration may be that this isn't their concern because any settlement or judgment would be a couple of years away and the next administration will have to come up with the money to pay Alvarez off. The attitude apparently is that at least Alvarez will be gone and let's let the next administration clean up after their mistakes.

This wouldn't be happening if we had a city manager who knew the law, knew his job and wasn't under the mayor's puppet. This is just another reason why the city council should step up on Tuesday and tell Herrera that his services are no longer needed.

City officials usually don't listen to us. But they have an obligation to listen to the people. We are encouraging Gallup residents to make known to their elected officials that they are sick and tired of Mendoza and Herrera and their shoddy way of handling government affairs.

Keep Alvarez or if the city really has a legitimate reason to get rid of him, do it properly and follow the law so the taxpayers won't have to foot the huge liability bill later for the council's mistakes. Get rid of Herrera and put someone in who knows what they are doing.

Here are the phone numbers you can use to make your concerns known. Mendoza (722-3302), Jay Azua (722-0585), Allan Landavazo (870-7062), E. Bryan Wall (728-5881), Mike Enfield (863-6729).



See the USA in your government car

"See the USA in your Chevrolet America is asking you to call.

Drive your Chevrolet through the USA

America's the greatest land of all."

Fifty years ago, those words set to music each week on the old NBC "The Dinah Shore Show" reflected an America and an automobile industry that is no more. That time and that industry were laid to rest this week when General Motors filed for bankruptcy and the government effectively nationalized GM and Chrysler after wasting billions of our tax dollars on a failed bailout.

Despite disclaimers from President Obama that the government doesn't want to be in the car business, it is hard to see what it has bought with our tax dollars other than two of what used to be known as "the big three." Government by default or determination will choose the types of cars the companies it owns will make. Government will buy a lot of them because not enough customers will unless they are made offers they can't refuse, not by a car salesman in a loud sport coat, but by a government bureaucrat in a suit.

It's difficult to let go of an American dream. When I was growing up, every kid wanted to drive his own car. Our frugal parents (who had just one car) would let us drive it, but with restrictions, including a set time to bring the car back in the same pristine condition in which we found it.

A car was a right of passage. It conveyed independence and status. Each September we salivated at the prospect

of new models.

There was always a big buildup and we'd go to the Chevy (or Ford) dealer early on the morning they were for sale. Sometimes they would be covered with sheets and a dramatic unveiling would take place. TV commercials would show parts of new models in a kind of striptease before their debut. Some believe the models between 1955 and 1959, especially the 1957 Chevy Bel Air and the 1958 Impala, are unsurpassed, though Ford devotees have their Mustangs and T-Birds. Pontiac's GTO (cue the Beach Boys) and some Dodge and Plymouth models were also great.

Chrysler had the Imperial, which resembled a boat with running lights and The New Yorker for "old rich people." And then there was the one beyond our reach, but not beyond our dreams: the Cadillac. The song "Pink Cadillac" became a hit, in part because we saw Elvis in one.

America's relationship with its cars has rightly been called a love affair. Though some have tried to replicate the smell of a new car in spray cans, there is nothing quite like the feeling of sinking into new faux leather and later, if you could afford it, the real thing.

Much, if not all of those thrills will be gone, thanks to greed by the unions, government overregulation and bad

management. The customers, who once were always right, have been cheated.

All one has to do is look at government-made cars to see they are about as attractive as government art, government architecture, or many other things government does poorly. The Skoda (when the Czechoslovakia communist party made them -- they're nice now thanks to free market capitalism) had its own jokes: "How much is a Skoda worth with a full tank of gas?" Answer: "Twice as much." East Germany's Trabant, a major polluter, was little more than a two-cycle engine encased in the thinnest veneer and the old Soviet Union cars were about as appealing as a Siberian winter. These are the kinds of cars governments have produced.

President Obama says all of those laid-off autoworkers will have to "sacrifice" for the sake of their children and grandchildren. So much for their American Dream. If a Republican president had said that, he would have been denounced as insensitive and uncaring.

"On a highway, or a road along the levee

Performance is sweeter
Nothing can beat her
Life is completer in a Chevy."
Not anymore.

"Bye-bye Miss American Pie; drove my Chevy to the levee but the levee was dry."

This is the day GM died.



Cal
Thomas

Independent

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The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.

-Isaiah 35:1