

**Letters to the Editor Archive 2007**

**December 16, 2007**

**HOMETOWN DEMOCRACY AND TRUTH**

**Some decent, concerned Florida citizens who want to conserve vital resources and preserve what's left of our wilderness and wildlife are circulating a nonpartisan petition called Florida Hometown Democracy. If enough signatures are obtained, this petition will be placed on the 2008 ballot. If voters approve it, the final say on comprehensive land-use changes will be transferred from the applicant and politicians to voters. Citizens of an area will have a say on how their area will grow.**

**This has brought a violent reaction from those who would change comprehensive planning rules to suit themselves to continue unbridled development. These interests -- Big Sugar, agriculture, Realtors, big developers, lobbyists and chambers of commerce, along with some politicians -- have millions of dollars to spend against the efforts of ordinary citizens.**

**The first salvo from their big guns was to persuade our legislators in Tallahassee to change the petition-collection requirements to make it almost impossible for petition drives to succeed. When these big guns realized that almost 80 percent of Florida Hometown Democracy solicitations result in voters' signatures, they began other assaults. They put paid petition solicitors on the street with a fake petition that could easily be confused with the genuine FHD instrument.**

**At the same time former Speaker of the House John Thrasher, referring to himself as "Honorable," has sent to recent FHD petition signers a petition revocation form loaded with false information to persuade signers to take back their signatures. His letter says the FHD petition would bring a huge increase in Florida taxes, allow big developers to ruin Florida's scenic beauty and lead to increased utility bills.**

**This is not true; it's the opposite of the purpose of the genuine FHD petition, which can be read at [HometownDemocracy.com](http://HometownDemocracy.com). The petition can be downloaded, signed and mailed in.**

**What Thrasher advocates truly would increase taxes, ruin Florida's natural beauty and increase utility bills because growth does not pay for itself. He is the lobbyist for Florida's biggest developer. Is he "Honorable"?**

**GORDON WILLIAMSON, Holly Hill**

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**November 24, 2007**

**AHMADINEJAD'S CLAIM**

**News-Journal columnist Pierre Tristram writes, on Nov. 20, "Bristling with 7,000 nukes, U.S. would deny Iran 1?" He makes the case well, and I agree that the United States is an unabashed hypocrite. He says, "The mistranslated claim that Iranian leader Mahmoud Ahmadinejad wants Israel wiped off the face of the map is bandied about as proof" (that Muslim Iranians cannot be trusted with the bomb). Somewhere along the line, I have failed to learn what the proper translation of Ahmadinejad's remark is. Perhaps Mr. Tristram will explain?**

**ED FLANAGAN, Ormond Beach**

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**October 16, 2007 The Daytona Beach News-Journal Letters to the Editor**

**ANOTHER USELESS STUDY**

The Oct. 5 News-Journal article, "Colleges to study local roads," reports the goal of five colleges will be to resolve Volusia County's future road and bridge needs. If it's that simple, let me hazard answers to the assigned study areas:

- "Study typical national funding standards and confirm traffic forecasts." The county's traffic staff are already paid and capable to do this.
- "Determine whether the public perception survey performed by the county showing most residents are satisfied with roads is accurate." Where congestion is increasing by the day (see S.R. 40 through Ormond Beach), causing delays, fuel waste and safety problems, we are not satisfied.
- "Assess the impact of transportation on quality of life." See South Florida.
- "Economic and environmental impact analysis of transportation." An \$11,320 study by college students is not going to answer this.
- "Determine the impact of transportation on the region's economic growth." Congestion and energy waste cost businesses money; they recover it by raising prices to consumers. The "collaborative partnerships" celebrated by County Manager Jim Dineen only affect which of the taxpayers' pockets the road money comes from. The manager is quoted as saying the "public doesn't see (the) growing problem" The key word there is "growing." The \$56,600 being spent for college studies is just playing in the sand. We already know the score. Stop unplanned development, and adequately maintain roads and bridges already in place.

**ED FLANAGAN, Ormond Beach**

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**September 23, 2007 The Daytona Beach News-Journal Letters to the Editor**

**GENERAL MILLS LAUGHING ALL THE WAY TO THE BANK**

The News-Journal splashes the center of the front page with "Box tops turn into cash crop" (Sept. 4). The article portrays General Mills as a godsend for schools and children. Oh, please, let us come to our senses!

Brian Swimme, noted physicist and cosmologist, observes that "consumerism has replaced religion and cosmology in forming the world view of children. He argues that ads, rather than religion or traditional wisdom now shape a child's fundamental sense of purpose" (B. Swimme, The Sun, May 2001).

"Schools train individuals to respond as a mass. Boys and girls are drilled in being bored, frightened, envious, emotionally needy, and generally incomplete. A successful mass production economy requires such a clientele. Small business and small farm economies, like those of the Amish, require individual competence, thoughtfulness, compassion, and universal participation. Our own economy requires a managed mass of leveled, spiritless, anxious, family-less, friendless, godless, and obedient people who believe the difference between Coke and Pepsi is a subject worth arguing about" (J.T. Gatto, Yes Magazine, Winter 1998/99, p. 15).

**Do I need to point out that General Mills is laughing all the way to the bank with this sweet marketing scheme? Can't you just see all the little kids loading their moms' grocery carts with cereal for the excitement of collecting box tops? That one article alone is worth thousands in profits to General Mills.**

**When Kathleen Joslyn is quoted as saying, "I don't think (local consumers) are truly fully informed," she said a mouthful. Do the schools or parents do any price comparisons between General Mills and generic cereals that are sold in the markets for often less than half the price and, I might add, often less than half the sugar? Have those who are so enthusiastic about General Mills' wondrous gifts researched whether General Mills products are healthy for children or what their production costs us in environmental damage to our one and only planet? One area that affects both is General Mills' involvement with the production of genetically altered grains.**

**Please, friends, look at any corporate "gift" with enough skepticism to ask important questions. Corporations the size of General Mills are concerned about their bottom line. Period.**

**KURLAND DAVIES, Ormond Beach**

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**September 12, 2007**

### **BUSH STUCK ON IRAQ POLICY**

**"You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear." This old saying describes very well the efforts of President Bush when he attempts to sell or justify his Iraq policy. No matter how the war ends, his immature judgment, which caused him to mislead the nation into war and its subsequent mismanagement, can never be justified -- unless one accepts the idea that the end justifies the means. In place of going into Iraq, a more effective way to deal with the likes of Osama bin Laden would have been staying in Afghanistan and focusing on terrorism, not nation building. No fair-minded person who is ruled by the truth can ignore the tragedies of this administration. Bush's stubbornness and his belief that he's a great leader null his intelligence. So he keeps trying to "make a silk purse out of a sow's ear," and the nation keeps suffering.**

**CHARLES L. McDEARMONT, Daytona Beach**

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**September 12, 2007**

### **PROTECT AMERICA ACT**

**Those who oppose the Protect America Act recently passed by Congress and those who even suggest a more complete debate of its constitutional implications are accused of putting the lives of Americans at risk. The real and present danger is that by making this legislation permanent and failing to vigorously debate its constitutional implications, Congress puts America itself at risk. Congress must refuse to make any surveillance program permanent until members know what surveillance activities have already been conducted over the past six years and how many American citizens have already had their constitutional rights violated. In the president's oath of office, he swears to protect the Constitution. That same Constitution gives Congress the responsibility to impeach the president if he fails to honor his oath.**

**RICHARD 'BUD' MURPHY, Ormond Beach**

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**September 2, 2007 The Daytona Beach News-Journal Letters to the Editor**

**Private health insurance**

**It's time to do it -- health care -- right!**

**Kudos to The News-Journal editorial team! "Bared-bones coverage" (Aug. 23 editorial) does a good job of exposing the real beneficiaries of "private health insurance": insurance companies through premiums; employers through avoidance of involvement in the health care of employees; and government by "passing the buck."**

**Harry "The Buck Stops Here" Truman, would be furious!**

**It is a neat marketing plan for a niche market. Sounds good: "I've got insurance!" The cost is right: "It's cheap!" The rationale inviting: "I don't expect to need it anyway!"**

**The reality: If you do need it, you're probably as bad off as having no insurance at all, depending upon the exclusions and deductibles that can be many and large. In short, the purchaser is likely to remain one major medical problem away from bankruptcy.**

**This new wrinkle in our so-called "health care system" is not a solution for individuals, although it is certainly planned to be a "bottom line" solution to increasing profits for the insurance industry. This new wrinkle is not a solution for the underlying problem of our badly conceived, broken and cruelly expensive health care system, although it provides a handy excuse for some -- unfortunately too many -- representatives in government to evade their responsibility to work together to craft a real solution.**

**At the end of the day, this new wrinkle simply expands total health care cost to the people of this nation. Moreover, it evades the reality that there is no way to fix the "medical care system" that masquerades as a "health care system" except to rebuild it from the ground floor up. And that is what our political candidates and elected representatives need to talk about and commit to do as they run for office during the next 15 months.**

**WILLIAM A. TERNENT, Port Orange**

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**August 21, 2007 The Daytona Beach News-Journal Letters to the Editor**

**Mexico's workers poorer**

**Re "NAFTA not a panacea," letter, Aug. 10:**

**To say that the North American Free Trade Agreement is not a panacea may be the understatement of the century!**

**Having just spent time in Mexico traveling with a Unitarian Universalist group that goes there each year to check up on the state of human rights in that country, I can say from my**

observations that NAFTA has not done anything positive for the workers. As in the United States, the rich are getting richer, but the poor are getting much poorer. Anyone interested in this devastating topic might want to read "Confronting Globalization: Economic Integration and Popular Resistance in Mexico." It tells what is going on from the people's point of view, not from the standpoint of what is politically correct!

**MARTI KING, Ormond Beach**

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**August 14, 2007 The Daytona Beach News-Journal Letters to the Editor**

**'SNAPSHOTS' TERRIFIC**

Friday evening I enjoyed one of the finest performances offered by Seaside Music Theater. "Snapshots" was tender and witty, bringing tears as well as laughter. All six cast members were excellent in their roles. The set was a delight.

The only disturbing aspect was the numerous empty seats. This quality production should be a sellout. I encourage those who haven't seen "Snapshots" to get tickets ASAP. They'll be glad they did.

**JANET A. TERNENT, Port Orange**

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**July 30, 2007 The Daytona Beach News-Journal Letters to the Editor**

**PRETTY LAWNS MAY POISON OUR BIRDS**

In the local section of The News-Journal on June 16, Dinah Voyles Pulver had a marvelous article on the loss of birdlife. The headline asks: "What is happening to . . . AMERICA'S BIRDS?"

Adding to the usual pressures on wildlife because of loss of habitat to ever-encroaching development and pressures of human overpopulation, there is another impact on aquatic and upland birdlife.

I believe people who consider their lawns so important that they use chemical sprays to keep their grass bug-free are negatively affecting the chain of life of birds and other wildlife.

Spraying threatens wildlife food sources but also hurts birds that feed on the poison residue from many sources. In most areas, insects are flourishing but bees, butterflies, moths and caterpillars are losing ground. For hungry raptors, squirrels, rabbits, rats, mice and snakes are threatened. The obvious result is seen in a lowering of the bird count.

There are bright spots that may help. Some homeowners have stopped chemical use. They mulch and fertilize with fallen leaves and replace thirsty lawns with ground-covering plants, shrubs and trees. They save money and give our bird friends a safe and varied menu selection.

**GORDON WILLIAMSON, Holly Hill**

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**July 15, 2007 The Daytona Beach News-Journal Letters to the Editor**

## **Must value community**

**Re "Future in limbo without founder:**

**Many wonder if it can go on without founder," article, July 8: I read with interest Audrey Parente's article about the loss of Tippen Davidson. The News-Journal president, CEO and co-editor, who founded the Florida International Festival, was certainly a remarkable man. And I have always known that he was a great influence for the arts in this community. Although I am a newcomer here, of 19 years, my mother lived here for about 40 years before I did, and I remember her writing to me in Michigan about wonderful concerts by the London Symphony Orchestra. When I came here, I did one season of volunteer work for the FIF, and I was really impressed to see that its mailings went to every country I could think of. Tippen and his late wife were great builders of that which creates a whole and vibrant community. Now that we have it, we must treasure it.**

**PATRICIA TUGAS, Ormond Beach**

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**June 7, 2007 The Daytona Beach News-Journal Letters to the Editor**

### **IMPEACH DICK CHENEY**

**There are times when a people cannot move forward until they have dealt with the past. This is one of those times. Impeaching Vice President Dick Cheney is an important step in restoring the rule of law and the integrity of the United States of America.**

**BUD MURPHY, Ormond Beach**

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**April 29, 2007 The Daytona Beach News-Journal**

### **NOT-HEAVY PRICE?**

**One of the most difficult lessons for us humans seems to be connecting the dots between actions and effects that are not immediately apparent but which lurk in the reality that all things are connected in the interdependent web of existence.**

**Consider one of the more recent examples. Pressed by the reality that the price of oil for energy is going nowhere but up, many of our political leaders have been jumping on the ethanol bandwagon. On the surface it sounds good. Use plain old vegetative sources -- corn especially -- to reduce the need for petroleum. Farmers seem to like it; corn prices are going up. Commodity traders love it; it's almost as good as a hard freeze of the orange crop in raising OJ futures prices. Farm state politicians love making policies and law about it; their hometown economies prosper. Seems like a winner. Let's go all out for it! Oops. The feed lot farmers are concerned. Rising corn prices mean higher beef, chicken and pork prices and potential for reduced consumer consumption. Ecologists see increased water consumption to cover more acreage and the further drawdown of dwindling farm state aquifers. Those concerned with feeding starving populations around the world anticipate decreasing shipments of corn and grains, and increasing starvation. Economists see rising prices for food in general and other derivatives from corn and "ethanol" crops. Not so nice. But there may be some real light at the end of the tunnel! Turns out that high-fructose corn syrup, which**

seems to be in just about everything we get from the processed food industry, is perhaps the biggest cause of obesity in this nation. Now, if we can just divert enough of that energy into ethanol production, maybe we can drive the price of fructose so high that we can eliminate it from our foods and soft drinks and we can regain our natural waistlines.

**WILLIAM A. TERNENT, Port Orange**

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**April 12, 2007 The Daytona Beach News-Journal**

**COMMUNITY VOICES:**

**Congregants observe each day as Earth Day in Ormond Beach**

**By Kurtland Davies**

On April 6th the Unitarian Universalist Society in Ormond Beach honored the environment with an environment-friendly potluck. We served free range, vegetarian-fed, cruelty-free, hormone-free beef and chicken and locally grown organic vegetables. This was no easy task because it is next to impossible to find local organic farms in Florida. When we do find these items, the cost is two to four times higher.

Small groups toured our small Coastal Hammock where we continue to remove invasive plants such as air potato vine and Brazilian pepper and replant with native plants. We invite you to walk around the back of the UU building at 56 N. Halifax, behind the post office, to see one of the last natural coastal hammock habitats beachside in Ormond Beach. It is endangered because of the rampant unchecked development occurring all over Florida.

We displayed information about environmentally friendly cleaning products and our new “Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Rot(compost) program that will reduce our garbage from 82% to 10%! Because Ormond Beach does not provide recycling to commercial accounts, our individual members will have to take turns taking our recycling to their residences! We had individual and national “ecological footprints” – that show if we are living in ways that sustain the earth. If everyone in the world lived like average Americans, we would need 5 planets to survive. Guess what? We only have one.

After enjoying our wonderful “Green Dinner,” we watched a presentation that spelled out how we, as a congregation of environmentally concerned citizens, can become a beacon of hope for the establishment of a kinship with our one and only planet earth. Then, to our surprise, one of our members informed us that our wise leaders of Ormond Beach decided to cancel Earth Day because of a lack of interest.

What a shock! I wonder whose lack of interest we are really talking about? Environmental leadership in the state of Florida has been abysmal.

Global warming is now a proven fact, in spite of political efforts to curtail the reports of scientists. Florida of all the states in this country has the most to lose in the face of stronger hurricanes and rising sea levels. Yet Florida plans to build more coal-fueled power plants that will lead to more global warming. Seven new plants are planned, the biggest one in the nation in the sensitive, over-stressed Everglades!

Those of you who think coal is safe and doesn't produce CO2 ask yourselves why Europe has phased out coal and gone to wind and solar. Do you know that Florida's 12 coal-fueled plants already produce 3.4% of the nation's ENTIRE carbon dioxide emissions?

The lack of interest in environmental protection is really about money. It costs money to produce so-called "clean coal." Developers bring money into the coffers. Sensitive ecosystems become expendable to protect the bottom line.

Canceling Earth Day doesn't help. It makes matters worse to give up trying to educate the public. I say to our city leaders, "It is past time you woke up. There is an 800-pound gorilla in the room and he is mad as hell. If there is a lack of interest, it is city officials' job to provide the leadership that will raise the interest. If they persist in ignoring the grass-roots movement of environmentally concerned humans and Mother Earth and all her inhabitants, then voters should show them the door. There is far too much at stake. Give us back our Earth Day. Give us back our earth.

Davies, Ph.D., is an eco-psychologist and chair of the Green Sanctuary Team for the Unitarian Universalist Society in Ormond Beach.

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April 1, 2007 The Daytona Beach News-Journal  
CAROLYN WEST, Ormond Beach

## EDUCATION

### Policies discourage critical thinking

Bill Archer's Community Voices commentary on the No Child Left Behind initiative ("No corporate minion left behind," March 23) certainly reveals the essential truth about who benefits from this educational "improvement." Business and corporate leaders have been given a taxpayer-funded program that can turn our children into mere workers with good literacy skills but few critical-thinking skills. Thus they become consumer trainees at an early age, good for a business bottom line, but disastrous for the future of this country, socially, economically and politically.

Teachers are forced to "teach to the test." No Child Left Behind requirements squeeze out all but the most rigid type of learning, leaving no room for teachers to stimulate the kind of mental flexibility and creativity that once made the United States great.

The very same March 23 issue of The News-Journal featured two editorials, both about students trying to stretch their critical-thinking capabilities and to challenge repressive education institutions. These students were resisting the very same conformist and inflexible school environment fostered by NCLB constraints.

As New-Journal editors point out, limiting free speech limits freedom of inquiry, the same kind of limitation that results from No Child Left Behind. Instead of maintaining good public order, as the University of Central Florida administrators claim, they are maintaining the on-going effort to control the minds of our children. What a waste of our most precious resource!

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The Daytona Beach News-Journal Front page article

March 28, 2007

Religious groups see environmentalism as moral issue

By JIM HAUG Staff Writer

ORMOND BEACH -- Paper plates are out at the Unitarian Universalist Society's potluck dinners.

Glassware is in, even though it means long dishwashing sessions, Gaia Davies said. She is a member of the Green Sanctuary Initiative, which is about making "the congregation as green as possible."

Throughout the country, many churches are adopting environmentally friendly practices despite some resistance from social conservatives and critics who question the human impact on climate change.

Unitarians see environmentalism as a moral imperative, said Bud Murphy, pastor of the Unitarian Universalist Society on Halifax Drive.

"Almost every church has a oneness concept (with the universe)," said Murphy. "By taking care of our home," Murphy said, "we are respecting ourselves as an extension of the universe."

The congregation watched Al Gore's documentary on climate change called "An Inconvenient Truth" in January.

On weekends, the Unitarians are weeding out the exotic potato vine species from their property's half-acre of woods. The hammock could become a sanctuary for gopher tortoises. The Rev. Sarah Lund, pastor of the United Church of Christ in New Smyrna Beach, recently gave a sermon called "The Prodigal Nation" in which she compared the waste of natural resources to the biblical story of the "Prodigal Son" wasting his inheritance.

Instead of giving up chocolate for Lent, Catholics in Portland, Ore., are going on a 40-day carbon-emission diet, said Meg O'Brien, a member of St. Andrew parish.

The goal is for each member to reduce the emission of 5,000 pounds of carbon by making sacrifices like not driving on the weekends or switching to energy-efficient light bulbs.

Sally Vance-Trembeth, a Catholic theologian, said her commitment to the environment led her to give up her snowblower when she taught at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Ind.

"Before we moved out to San Francisco, I was in the process of converting our large lawn into a prairie," Vance-Trembeth said in an e-mail. The emphasis on the environment is making some Christians worry about their churches' priorities.

James Dobson, the chairman of Focus on the Family, and two dozen other social conservatives asked the National Association of Evangelicals to oust Vice President Richard Cizik because of his "relentless campaign" against global warming.

In a letter, they said Cizik's obsession is moving evangelicals away from the "great moral issues of our time: notably the sanctity of life, the integrity of marriage and the teaching of sexual abstinence and morality to our children."

But the National Association of Evangelicals affirmed its stance of caring for the environment at a recent meeting.

Catholic Bishop Thomas Wenski of the Orlando Diocese, which includes Volusia County, has weighed in on the national debate on global warming.

"To do nothing could be dangerous and costly to the flourishing of humankind on the planet," Wenski said in a public statement.

The bishop serves as chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on International Policy.

Davies, the Unitarian, said her environmentalism is "not a tree-huggy thing. This is about survival."

Davies, however, acknowledged that it's not easy to change a lifestyle. "We live frugally," she said. "We live in a small house, drive a Prius, but we take a few airplane trips a year. That can blast the heck out of your footprint (or impact on the environment)."

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Permanent link to the article is:

<http://www.news-journalonline.com/liblink/green032807.htm>

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**MARCH 25, 2007**  
**Daytona Beach News-Journal Letters to Editor**  
**GORDON WILLIAMSON, Holly Hill**

**GOOD ADVICE TO FOLLOW:**

I was pleased to see the letter last Sunday by Allan Ferver ("Consumption: Bad habits are doing U.S. in"). It is a message we need to see again and again until we get it right. Our footprint is splashing the mud of destruction everywhere. Nature's raw materials and habitat are relentlessly destroyed, driven by thoughtless corporate greed without care for the other inhabitants of this planet. Development and governments are usually the early destroyers. They are followed by the poison producers. Their products allow us to "sanitize" our neighborhoods by killing what they call "nuisance" trees, plants, flying and crawling insects, birds and small animals. If we stop and think, we'll realize that a major factor in the fight to reverse global warming is the preservation of wilderness and wetlands, Earth's lungs and kidneys. Every form of life is with us for a reason. Mr. Ferver's letter discusses the loss of bee populations and how it negatively affects humans. Let's follow his suggestion to help the honeybees, conserve in every way, and make a commitment to stop our ravenous waste.

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**March 6, 2007,**  
**Daytona Beach News-Journal Letters to Editor**  
**Letters to the Editor**  
**GAIA DAVIES, Ormond Beach**

**Why 2 garbage pickups?**

Can anyone explain to me why I need two garbage pickups a week at my house? It makes absolutely no sense. Imagine the money that could be saved, the gasoline not used, the pollution not spewed, the noise not heard, the reduction in road-repair expense. The latest statistics I could find show that the average household in Volusia County has 2.32 occupants. How could they possibly fill a garbage can in three days? If they are doing that on a regular basis, they need to recycle more! Is this the no-brainer I think it is? Or am I missing something here?

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Daytona Beach News-Journal: Letters to Editor  
Feb. 28, 2007  
**ED FLANAGAN, Ormond Beach**

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING A WIN-WIN**

Headlines often misrepresent the content of an article. "Can't zone our way to affordability" (Feb. 14 column) is an example of a headline being more reliable than the column.

The Volusia Home Builders Association rejects inclusionary zoning (mandatory addition to a development of affordable units in exchange for money-saving incentives) because of results it has witnessed in California and Maryland. Less hyperbole and more research, please.

"The Impact of Inclusionary Zoning on Development," a report by the Business and Professional People for the Public Interest, cites many successes. It states that "Montgomery County, Maryland,

alone has produced over 11,500 affordable units since 1973 and has generated \$477.4 million of private sector investment in affordable housing." California, the report says, produced more than 34,000 affordable units from just one-third of its 107 programs, up to 2004. The report tabulates successes in several other states. Longmont, Colo., despite a population of only 70,000 people, had reportedly produced 545 units, with 444 more units in the pipeline, as of 2004.

Fairly, the report allows that in some cases it is likely that modest market-rate increases, reduced developer profit margins, or reduced land prices are offsetting the cost of affordable units, with the most likely scenario being a moderation in land prices over time. A community land trust can mitigate such effects.

Inclusionary zoning is just one of several tools to encourage the construction of housing affordable to vital service employees, such as teachers, first responders and health-care workers. We "can't zone our way to affordability," but a workforce housing ordinance, crafted with input from employers, workers, developers, nonprofits, planners, seniors, elected bodies, Realtors, landowners and other affected parties, each willing to give a little to gain a lot, can be a win-win for the entire region.

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February 18, 2007 Daytona Beach News Journal  
**BIASES CRIPPLE U.S. HEALTH-CARE SYSTEM**

**By WILLIAM A. TERNENT**  
**COMMUNITY VOICE**

The "health" care delivered by the existing medical care system in Florida and the United States costs too much, is growing at a rate that is out of control and performs poorly for the price being paid by the public. To make matters worse, it creates to a large extent its own market, is fraught with errors that kill and maim its customers, covers its own shortcomings and denigrates health maintenance and healing approaches less invasive, less expensive and more effective than many it prescribes or advocates. While state and national political leaders and legislators are looking for ways to control or cut costs related to "health" care, they largely ignore the quality issues of the existing medical care system or see them merely as cost factors to be improved upon. In short, they focus almost exclusively on cost as a cause rather than a symptom of a poorly performing system. The reality: We don't have the world's best health-care system, only the most expensive.

The American Heart Association, for example, reports that about 1.4 million cardiac catheterizations, 1.2 million angioplasties and 460,000 bypass surgeries are performed annually at a cost of about \$121 billion. Yet, multiple studies over the past 25 years do not show them preventing heart attacks or premature death for the overwhelming majority of persons.

**CRISIS AND PROGRESS** Many examples of crisis becoming the handmaiden of significant change may be found, but not in the field of so-called health care in the United States. Health care has been in a state of crisis for decades. Excessive cost and growth are merely the most recent manifestations. Periodically the crises rotate among a variety of other concerns: too few physicians or nurses; too few (or too many) hospitals or hospital beds or emergency and trauma treatment centers; too many people without health insurance; too little research concerning currently targeted health conditions or problems, to name a few. Unfortunately, responses to these symptomatic system crises have not been effective. Indeed, many may have exacerbated problems.

**MEDICAL MYOPIA** The fundamental health-care problem is not lack of money, research, technology or a new miracle drug. It is medical myopia. Public policy, public funding and third-party payments (insurance) are patterned to support the assumptions of an allopathic philosophy of health and

healing. That system is far more focused on fighting disease than on sustaining or enhancing health. The battleground is our bodies, where knights in white coats prod, slash, jab and conduct chemical warfare on disease-causing invaders. No serious progress in improving the cost effectiveness or quality of health outcomes can be anticipated until we adopt a far more expansive and insightful view of human health. Other options must be considered to improve the results in our health system while containing, minimizing or reducing costs. **NO SINGLE APPROACH** There are many approaches to health and healing, some of which date to early civilization. Some have been jettisoned as their effectiveness in practice was found wanting or simply deemed irrational in the face of new ideas, practices or scientific investigation. What works for people has a way of surviving, but is not necessarily included within an expanding philosophy of health and healing that is dominated by the allopathic view. Not infrequently, ideas and practices different from the mainstream are seen as threats, and attempts are made to exclude or isolate them. There is no single bad guy. Ask any doctor of osteopathy or chiropractor who lived and worked in the mid-1900s. M.D.s (allopathic physicians) shunned D.O.s who generally shunned chiropractors. The newer, although less openly hostile, dimension of this age-old problem of competitive ideas persists in relation to homeopathic physicians, naturopathic physicians, herbal healers and more ancient healing and health traditions from around the world. Each had (and has) part of the truth, something unique to offer that worked (for many patients) but none had (or have) all of the truth.

**UNBIASED EVALUATIONS** We deserve a health and healing system that is capable of growing and embracing what works. It needs to be unbiased philosophically and intellectually so it can recognize new and old ideas and deal with them honestly and openly. That intellectual honesty also needs to recognize the havoc created by many of the dominant allopathic-based therapies and should insist that their merit be questioned as routine proper practice. (Example: Statin drugs are routinely prescribed by most physicians to lower "bad" and increase "good" cholesterol. Some studies show up to 60 percent of participants experiencing side effects, about half of them serious, including heart failure, muscle weakness, cognitive problems and cancer. Studies indicate that those with LDL and HDL cholesterol ratios levels below 4 aren't helped by statin drugs. Simple niacin -- vitamin B3 -- can be more effective than statin drugs for elevating "good" and lowering "bad" cholesterol, according to a New England Journal of Medicine report.) Most importantly, medical practitioners need to see themselves as part of a team and accept the responsibility to be widely informed in their areas of expertise beyond the views of their portal of entrance to practice (allopathy, osteopathy, naturopathy, chiropractic, etc.). Some do. Of course, patients, armed with knowledge of relevant options, need to accept a significant role in making decisions about their health and medical care.

**DRUGS AND NATURE** Living in this world is worrisome. Harmful bacteria, microbes and viruses are everywhere. To protect ourselves we need to develop and use substances that can defend the body against them, do battle and kill them in the body, or eliminate them in the environment. In addition, there are problems -- like pain -- that are not always attributed to such "invaders." Some such substances are inherent in nature and are as or more effective than substances created in the laboratory by drug companies. While they may be subjected to substantive, high-quality research, they are seldom submitted to the Food and Drug Administration, since that can be very costly and no commercial (financial) advantage is available in the marketplace since a natural substance cannot be patented. Drug companies can get around this problem when they identify a natural substance with especially advantageous properties by chemically reconstructing them in ways that permit patenting. A publicly funded agency such as the FDA, which was established to serve the public interest, should be as involved in determining the effectiveness of non-patentable substances as it is in supporting for-profit pharmaceutical industry research. In the wake of the allopathic domination of medicine in the United States, drug companies have flourished, great economic interests have been created, and public policy has been shaped that promulgates and defends such interests. The results have been a mixed combination of positive and negative. For instance, it would be foolish to deny the immediate positive impact of the introduction of sulfa compounds and penicillin during World War II and their use

in specific cases. It would be equally foolish to deny that their overuse has diminished their effectiveness over time. In the meantime, many effective natural substances are ignored. Of course, there are substances in nature that can also cause harm to the humans, and a number which can result in negative interactions when taken with pharmaceutical drugs. But, as a group, few natural remedies from nature can match the misery, suffering, debilitation and death that can be caused by prescription drugs. Working under the allopathic tradition we are not becoming healthier, we're becoming increasingly disease-ridden. Indeed, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that in the past 100 years only about five years of 30 years added to the average lifespan is a result of medical care for illness and preventive medicine. The remainder is attributed to improvements in public health measures such as sanitation, better housing, clean water, and higher living standards. Imagine what might be possible under a health-care system focused as much on maintaining and enhancing health and a healthy environment as on fighting disease.

**A BETTER ALTERNATIVE** What might a world-class health-care and medical system look like? · It would emphasize the practice of health over the practice of medicine. In it, we patients would consult periodically with health-care specialists who understand it is their responsibility to work with us to maintain our health. They would recognize and emphasize that we are the key players in that process, and they would be ready to inform us of and advise from among a broad array of options. They would also accept the responsibility to advise us when we need more specialized assistance and see that we are appropriately referred and monitored in that process. · It would emphasize that adults are basically responsible for the state of their health and parents of their offspring. A medical care system heavily supported by public resources should not be expected to exist to remediate the bad results of individual choice behavior. · It would emphasize that those who create or impact environments within which others are expected to live, work and play have a responsibility of assuring that those environments do not have a negative impact on human health and environmental well-being. · It would require that governmental agencies such as the FDA and the National Institutes of Health be focused first on the interests of citizens rather than business or institutional interests. Public funding should be used to conduct rigorous studies comparing the symptomatic and healing efficacy of commonly used non-patentable, natural substances with much more expensive patented prescription drugs. Publicly funded health and medical benefits should favor those substances that most effectively lead to healing. · It would have available appropriate prevention, crisis intervention, remedial and custodial care personnel, facilities, systems and services to respond to the needs of its served populations. · It would make it possible for users/patients to identify available options for dealing with health concerns or problems and providers well qualified to deliver them. · It would recognize that there are legitimate spheres of both personal health and public health responsibility and that they need to work in concert. As a nation we've thrown so much money at the problems of illness that we already have in place most of the basic resources we need to build a truly functional health-care system. Our greatest hurdle will be unshackling the minds and intellect of the majority of our providers and the structure of the system from the inherent biases of the allopathic mindset. Ternent is a former professor and college administrator. He was also a health planning and system development professional and a business professional. Now retired, he lives in Port Orange.

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## **MEDICARE DRUG PRICES**

February 5, 2007

Daytona Beach News-Journal Letters to Editor

WILLIAM A. TERNENT, Port Orange

The U.S. House vote on Medicare negotiating authority would give the secretary of Health and Human Services the authority to negotiate for lower prescription drug costs for beneficiaries.

As an advocacy volunteer for the American Association of Retired Persons, I believe it is appropriate that the House voted to remove the prohibition against negotiating favorable prices for Medicare beneficiaries. It introduces legitimate "market forces" into the drug cost equation for Medicare, which constitutes perhaps the single largest group of consumers of prescription drugs in the nation. No other group represented by any other "health plan" has bargaining rights of its administrators denied in the marketplace.

I'm disappointed that the two House members representing the bulk of residents in Volusia and Flagler counties voted against the interests of Medicare recipients. I would have expected Reps. Tom Feeney and John Mica, who typically insist on legislation in keeping with enhancing competition and market forces, to support this bill. Apparently they see such forces to have merit only when they serve corporate rather than consumer interests, especially if those interests are served by a "group" plan (Medicare) that private interests will serve only if the public through its government assumes virtually all of the risk.

AARP is nonpartisan but very active in advocating for issues that impact our members and other older Americans. Drug cost is one of those issues.

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**POVERTY**

**Housing is problem**

January 21, 2007

News-Journal Letters to Editor

EDWARD J. FLANAGAN, Ormond Beach

Re "Public schools target of the destructive No Child act," Community Voices column by Bill Archer, Jan. 15:

To quote: "While research already shows that poverty creates low academic performance in many individuals because of its deprivations, it does not show that public education can correct that impoverished situation from which the low-performing students come. Only programs that are directed at eradicating poverty can do that."

The deprivations of poverty occur because the cost of housing drains 50-75 percent of the low-wage earner's income. Along with other must-pay costs like utilities, transportation, child care, clothing and health care, little is left for a quality diet. Poor nutrition leads to poor health and low energy, which lead to poor learning and low achievement, which lead to dropping out, which leads to low-paying jobs (as well as depriving businesses of high-ability employees).

It is reported that there is no place in the United States where a minimum-wage worker can rent a one-bedroom apartment for the 30 percent of his/her income that would leave enough for other bare necessities.

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**RANDOM FORCES BEHIND HAVOC**

January 7, 2007

News-Journal Letters to Editor

Reinhold Schlieper

Palm Coast FL

The Dec. 24 tornado experience was not very nice, I am sure. But the silliness of some comments of otherwise very intelligent people is more disturbing. So, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University was very blessed, according to its leading personnel? Well, did the divine bless-er of ERAU not have time enough to add to the "bless-ee list" that woman of Pierson who was unblessed enough to have had to

use her own body as a shield for her daughter's safety while the rented trailer crumbled all about her? Or what about all the folks at various trailer parks and at Sutton Place? In fact, divinity, for some perverse reason, never gets the blame for when manure happens and gets miracle credit when someone has a narrow escape from it. Can't lose on those job ratings, huh?

Comments such as these make one wonder about the acuity of human reason, don't they? My vote goes more for the power of random forces and the need for people to stick together than for any blessings or un-blessings from anywhere.