

AS I  
SEE IT

by Robert Koger

## Money, Not People

Last week a suburban Dallas woman killed her two children. She first tried to poison them with bathroom cleaner, but they refused to drink it. She then choked them with wire until they no longer moved. When she called into the police to report the crime, she was calm and just stated what she had done in a matter of fact tone. She stated that her children were autistic and she just wanted "normal kids."

People with autism and mental retardation are often dismissed or pushed to the side because of their problem. Mental retardation is not a disease. You can't catch mental retardation from anyone, nor is there a cure for mental retardation. Mental retardation is a term used to describe a person that has limitations in mental functioning. This can result in decreased skills in communication, social abilities, and self care. Most people with mental retardation can learn, it just takes them longer. People with an I.Q., or intellectual function, of a score of 70 or below are classified as having mental retardation.

Autism is a neurological disorder that most often results in a development disability that manifests itself in social interaction, language skills, and awareness to events and actions of others. Autism is not a single disorder. There are many dif-

ferent forms and are within what is called the autism spectrum. Mental retardation and autism are separate diagnostic categories, although there is a small overlap with some people. Most people with autism are not mentally retarded, I.Q. below 70, but in the past have been classified as such due to the inability to properly test the autistic person.

As many as 3 out of every 100 people have mental retardation. Autism shows up in 1 out of every 100, but the numbers of people with autism is growing. People diagnosed with autism have increased over 1,300 percent in the last decade. It costs a minimum of \$3.2 million to care for a person with mental retardation or autism over their lifetime. It also has a large impact on the family. There are limited choices for affordable care and therapy. Plus it is very taxing on the parents who care for the child. The care is continuous and can last a lifetime, although approximately 50% of people with autism will eventually become self sufficient.

How is Texas responding to the crisis? Governor Rick Perry ordered state agencies to cut expenses. The end result is that Texas mental health funds could be cut by as much as \$246 million. This impacts 39 public supported mental health centers, all of which provide low-cost psychiatric care for poor or uninsured people. State hospi-

tals would be required to cut patient load. The program, Children with Special Health Care Needs, which provides treatment and medication for children with health care problems, will also take major cuts.

This is about money, not people. Of all the residents of Texas, the people with mental retardation and autism are the most vulnerable. They must rely on others for their care. If you have ever spent time with people who have mental retardation or autism, it doesn't take long to realize they are truly special people. Unlike a small child that will eventually be able to care for themselves, people with mental health problems may never reach that level. We can't afford to ignore, throw out, or kill a segment of our population just because someone feels they aren't "normal." We also can't afford to enact budget cuts that deny proper care for the most vulnerable in our society.

Robert "Bob" Koger is a self syndicated columnist that writes for weekly Texas newspapers. He is a Sanger, Texas, resident. Bob retired after spending 20 years active duty military and another 18 years as a civilian employee for the military. He is the author of 101 Great Youth Soccer Drills, The New Coach's Guide to Coaching Youth Soccer, The Baffled Parent's Guide to Fix-It Drills for Youth Soccer, and The Ultimate Guide for Stay-at-home Parents. You can contact Bob through this newspaper or through his web site at: www.robertkoger.com.

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## Animal Thoughts...



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THE IDLE  
AMERICAN

by Don Newbury

Most hunters are so gung-ho, they'll hunt anything that'll run from 'em.

Similarly, TV news folks salivate at the prospect of all-out chases to pluck credible opinions on controversial topics.

That was the case recently when a neurosurgeon was questioned by a Dallas TV reporter. The query concerned the ongoing debate about whether a helmet law should be enacted for motorcyclists. His answer was, uh, a no-brainer....

Explaining that many serious injuries incurred by riders were not helmets would otherwise be minor, Dr. Jeremy Denning mentioned that some physicians have coined a word that reveals their opinions. The "word" fittingly describes the bikes whose riders are "helmetless."

"They call them 'donorcycles,'" Dr. Denning said.

End of interview.... Meanwhile, operators of four-wheeled vehicles often give law enforcement personnel reasons to coin names for certain drivers—names that are unfit to appear in a family newspaper.

James Davis, who was playing in big bands before they invented instruments that "plug in," has to smile when he remembers a traffic pull-over of several decades ago. Decked out in a tuxedo—common evening apparel for him—he was ready to tickle ivories at a country club gala. However, he was a bit late, and his foot was a bit heavy.

The traffic officer gave his obligatory lecture, then backed off with "just a warning." Noticing Davis' spiffy tuxedo, the officer barked, "If you weren't

late for your own wedding, I'd throw the book at you...."

Bill Sanders, a federal government retiree, had reason to smile about a similar offense recently.

His wife Carolyn chuckled as her hubby was red-lighted to the roadside. As the officer strode toward the car, she hoped that he would make the usual inquiry, the one to determine if the driver had a good reason to be speeding.

"I'm on my way to a Crime Stoppers' meeting," Bill answered sheepishly....

The truth, of course, is hard to beat. His speed wasn't THAT MUCH over the limit, and he was indeed on route to the afore-mentioned meeting. Later, he served as county president of Crime Stoppers.

When Sanders began his career in government service, his assignment was in Austin. It was during the presidency of Lyndon B. Johnson.

One day, the Johnsons were in town, and Lady Byrd was planning a barbecue picnic at the ranch. She decided on a "Yellow Rose of Texas" theme....

Sanders' supervisor instructed him to get a dozen garbage cans painted for the event.

"The cans are to be painted exactly as Mrs. Johnson instructed," he said. "They are to be yellow rose yellow—not 'lemon yellow,' not 'mustard yellow' and not 'sun-

rise yellow,'" the boss warned.

For emphasis, he repeated the mandate, asking Bill if he fully understood. Bill did....

The ever-resourceful Sanders gave serious thought to the assignment. He feared grave consequences if the painted cans were a hue or two off.

So, his first stop was at the floral shop. He purchased a bouquet of yellow roses before proceeding to the paint shop.

"Paint these cans the same color of these here roses," Sanders said. "Make sure it's not 'lemon yellow,' 'mustard yellow' or 'sunrise yellow.'" He asked the painters if they understood; they did. They yellowed up the cans just right, and Bill "got it right" for almost 40 years in government service....

I'll end this week's piece by dredging up the old chauvinistic yarn about a traffic officer who finally prevailed after a lengthy high-speed chase.

The veteran DPS guy thought he'd "heard them all," but this offender offered a new excuse.

"I tried to outrun you for good reason," the driver said. "A week ago, my wife ran off with a trooper, and I figured he was trying to bring her back...."

Dr. Newbury is a speaker and author in the Metroplex. He welcomes inquiries and comments.

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## LETTERS

## Animal Shelter needs to be more accessible

Dear Editor,

Sanger citizens, are you aware that "5 out of 6 animals in Sanger's Animal "Shelter" were put down, as reported by the Denton Record Chronicle on July 18, 2010?

Out of 151 dogs and cats, 126 never left.

In fact, according to City of Sanger records, ONE animal (out of 151) was adopted in 2009.

Does it disturb you that your pets and mine are kept behind locked gates, behind signs that say, "Authorized Personnel Only," "Restricted Area" unable to be viewed by their families or others interested in adopting, resulting in an 84% death rate in 2009, according to the Denton Record Chronicle?

When it is stated, "The majority of animals the city picks up are reunited with their owners," and "The shelter is open from 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., but evidence proves otherwise, are you confused or outraged?

Have you ever tried to call Sanger Police at their listed number of 458-7444 during a weekday and not be able to talk to Sanger Police? The Sanger "Shelter" has no direct line and you may never talk to the Sanger Animal Control Officer holding your pet, until it is too late.

Do you know that ALL shelters in Denton County REQUIRE an Animal Shelter Advisory Board? Sanger Shelter has no such board; not one to represent our pets, to provide oversight for what goes on behind locked gates.

VISIT THE SANGER SHELTER: East on Willow, past Railroad Tracks, past Galilee Church, go right/south on Kirkland. It's open Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Sanger residents are invited and urged to become involved to stop this terrible (not to mention expensive) practice of eliminating dogs and cats that end up in isolation.

The next Sanger City Council meeting is to be held Monday, August 2, at 7 p.m. at City Hall, located at 502 Elm

Street. Come with suggestions and stories. Contact City Hall at 940-458-7930 and tell them 84% is unacceptable. Your pets could end up at Sanger "Shelter", who will speak for them?

Kelli Alexander - Sanger

Have an opinion! Tell it to the editor.  
See letter policy on the bottom of page 2:

\*SANGER COURIER NOTE: The figure 5 out of 6 animals put down, does not include pets that were reunited with their families, but unwanted dogs or cats picked up by Sanger Animal Control.

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