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ASN Writer Sharon Austin with young raccons. - Story on page 7.
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ALBERTA STREET NEWS

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Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Home- lessness holds Home- less Memorial Service

By Linda Dumont with photos by John Zapantis

A memorial service was held on June 15 at the Boyle Street Community Services for the people who died due to homelessness in 2017. After the memorial, flowers were laid on the Homeless Memorial Statue in remembrance of those who had died.

107 people were commemorated: 57 males, 50 females. People remembered were identified by a process involving organizations, who work with people having housing problems, to ensure there are no duplications and that housing is a significant issue in the death.

Including people from 2017, since the annual service began, a total of 706 people have been remembered. At the service, individuals were not identified by name, but family and friends were invited to take part in a simple action of tribute, placing flowers at the Homeless Memorial Statue.



Above: A woman smudges at the Edmonton Homeless Memorial statue, where people placed flowers in memory of those who died due to homelessness..



Above: Elsie Paul, a Native Elder, led the prayer and blessing for the opening of the Edmonton Homeless Memorial

Below: Thomas McKercher shared his story about living on the streets addicted to substances for 35 years. He applies his know how to help people like himself, working with youth outreach at the Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples and is a 3rd degree in the Knights of Columbus



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Global Forgiveness Day

By Joanne Benger

Forgiveness is different things to different people. In Judaism you must go to the person your wronged and do right by him. The only things that can't be forgiven are murder and ruining a person's reputation because neither can be put right again.

In Christianity, the lord's prayer says it loud and clear: "Forgive me my trespasses as I forgive those who trespass against me." If forgiven we must pass it forward, but the only ones we can forgive are those who have personally wronged us. When forgiven, we must repent and turn away from our sins.

In AA the eighth step is about forgiveness. You must forgive both yourself and others. Then, even though forgiveness has taken place, you must right the wrongs if you can.

Forgiveness does not mean you escape punishment. When Pope John Paul II was shot he forgave the shooter but the shooter still got a hefty jail sentence.

After you forgive someone you don't have to have him for Sunday dinner, as Oprah explained. Joyce Meyers said, "Get away from people who poison your life. Forgive and forget and move on."

After you forgive you are in control of your emotions. You free up your energy and can get on with life.

It would be so much simpler if we could just say, "I forgive everyone, everywhere, whatever they did" on Global Forgiveness Day.



Dog days

By Joanne Benger

1. In summer we have hot dogs but not cold dogs.
2. Bad verse is doggerel. Narrow minded people are dogmatic. This is a mystery because dogs can't write poetry and express opinions.
3. When we have sore feet we say our dogs hurt.
4. We insult ladies by comparing them to female dogs and erring husbands sleep in the dog house.
5. There's Dog the Bounty Hunter who is a very dogged man.
6. Every dog has his day, but you can't teach an old dog new tricks.
7. We sing, "Give the dog a bone", and "There was a dog and Bingo was his name."
8. It's a dog-eat-dog world and we can eat a dog's breakfast or a dog's dinner or even dog food.
9. Roads have dog-leg turns and books become dog eared.
10. We insult politicians by saying the tail is wagging the dog.
11. A dogs body is a very busy person.
12. We can wear dog tooth tweed with a dog collar, dog roses, ride in a dog cart, get into a dog fight, go on a dog watch and do a dog trot.
13. We can be dog poor, dog sick, dog tired, but never dog rich, dog well or dog rested.
14. Some plants that contain dogs are dogbane, dog fennel, dog rose and dogwood.

The cooler days of August are here

By Joanne Benger

August is one of the three healthiest months of the year. Death rates always drop in July, August and September.

August 1 is the pagan holiday of Lughnassadh, the corn ritual celebrating harvest. Eat corn on the cob, make dolls and toys by braiding corn husks, then try your hand at carving out a corn cob pipe.

August 2 is Lammas, one of the four traditional quarterly days of celebration. The others are Candelmas (Feb. 21, May Day and Halloween. Eat drink and be merry.

August 6 is the first Monday of August so it is the Civic Holiday which some call the August Long Weekend and others call Heritage Days. This is the time for Heritage Day festivals with food, dance and handicrafts from cultures around the world.

August 13 is not only an unlucky thirteen, it is also the second Monday in August which is traditionally seen as one of the unluckiest days of the year. It is the anniversary of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The prudent lock the door and cower under the bed.

Now we enter mid August, the most popular time for becoming independent. August 14 is Pakistan Independence Day and August 15 is Indian Independence Day

as well as Korea's Liberation Day.

Dog Days end August 15; the hottest days of summer are now over. Cooler days are coming and stores are displaying their new line of fall clothes and back to school styles. Pack away the thongs and find you hoodie.

August 18-19 is Enbridge Ride to Conquer Cancer. The summer holidays are ending and reality is setting in. Be kind to someone who isn't feeling well.

August 24 we once again turn our minds to independence. August 24 is Ukrainian Independence Day and May 24 is Philippine National Heroes Day.

August 31, 1997 is the day we can't forget. Diana, princess of Wales, was killed in a car crash in a Paris tunnel along with her boyfriend Dodi Fayed and their driver, Paul Henri. Thousands of mourners lined the street to watch Princess Diana's funeral cortege and millions more watched it on TV. She is buried on the remote island of Althorp like a princess from King Arthur's court. Meanwhile Dodi has had three burials. As is the Muslim custom he was buried the day he died. He was laid to rest in a grave in a cemetery in Working in Surrey. Six weeks later Dodi was exhumed and buried temporarily near his father's house while his final resting place was being prepared. Ten months after Dodi's death his mausoleum was completed and he was buried for the third time. A path lit by 40 lamps leads from his father's house to Dodi's mausoleum of red granite from Africa.

Danny Getzlaf's calling to fight ALS is a journey taken one day at a time



Danny Getzlaf walking the 5 k at the 2018 Walk for ALS at Hawrelak Park on June 9th, 2018. Photo courtesy of Danny Getzlaf

By John Zapantis

Danny Getzlaf has an unusual calling, one that's like being sent off to fight a war and knowing if one day he may not come back, while trying to win the battle. His calling to fight that war requires honour and courage in getting his message out while taking on the enemy. His enemy is a lot different than those of the armies fighting on the front lines.

His deadly enemy is ALS, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, more popularly known as Lou Gehrig's disease. ALS is a neurodegenerative disease that attacks the central nervous system.

The 6 foot 5 inch, 290 pound man, whose happily married to Morinville's top Remax realtor, Linda Getzlaf, shares a family life with his wife and their six children in the Town of Morinville, Alberta.

He first started experiencing problems with ALS in the summer of 2017, running into an array of mobility problems that would interfere with his family life and priorities as a labourer working for the Town of Morinville. Getzlaf said, "Well, before I was diagnosed with ALS, I realized I was fatigued. I had problems getting off the ground. I was sleeping for a couple of hours every day. I thought I was getting old. I thought I was burning out."

"I knew there was something wrong. I thought there was high blood pressure, or blood sugar levels, until August 28th 2017. I went to my family doctor. I was having a wart burnt off my left foot. I showed him my right foot. I said to him, I don't know if this means anything, but I can't curl my big toe."

"He looked at it and he said, 'Well you should be able to curl it.' As in most cases he has never had a patient with Lou Gehrig's disease or ALS. Most doctors don't even know what they're looking for. By fluke he had a friend, Doctor Roberts, who sent me to the Sturgeon Hospital."

The doctors then conducted a battery of tests, including an MRI that confirmed Danny's diagnosis on November 2017 for In Limb Onset ALS, where patients can develop twitching and cramps in at least one limb. Other problems that may occur include balance problems, weakness in their hands and feet.

Since the diagnosis, Danny has taken a temporary leave of absence from work, but hopes to be returning to work in the near future.

While on a leave of absence, the unfortunate experience of being set back by ALS has instilled a new meaning in his life and has helped to strengthen the

"Like, I was 51 years old. This had never happened to me before. Last summer, before I was diagnosed, I was very fatigued, going home and sleeping after work for two or three or four hours. I had a tough time standing and getting up."

bond he now shares with family and friends and his community.

Getzlaf said, "My perspective is, I wake up every morning. I get the best out of life and enjoy life and tell others how much I love them and what they mean to me. I tell them how important family and friends are."

"Most of the community here in Morinville has supported me and rallied behind me. You know, I didn't realize I had such an impact on the community."

Danny takes a medication called Rilutek that's responsible for extending his life span by two to three months more. The 50 milligrams tablet is taken by him twice daily.

Danny's notably a recognized face in the community. He's been a long term contributing volunteer helping out in the town's various public functions.

Danny has given back in his support for his family, friends and various community public functions, over his many years while living in Morinville. The Town of Morinville decided to give back to this great humanitarian through organizing various fundraising initiatives and donating 100% of those funds raised to be later included in Danny's ALS pledges that he raised while participating in The Walk for ALS held on June 9th at Hawrelak Park in Edmonton.

Restaurants and companies from Morinville and even as far away in Saskatchewan amassed like one big army to help Danny's public campaign in raising pledges for his future Walk for ALS.

The following included Coaches Corner in Morinville along with Molson's Canadian, who donated a smoker and fridge and sold 2,500 tickets at \$2.00 each, Great Western Breweries located in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, where Danny is from, sponsored a beer sale campaign in Danny's name and for every pint of beer sold, the company donated 25 cents and raised almost \$500 for Danny's cause. Audrey Hebert, a friend of Danny's, also hosted a Danny Getzlaf Walk for ALS barbeque at the Fish and Game, where they raised \$2,400 on that day.

One day Danny arrived to break the sad news about his diagnosis for ALS

He sobbed with relief



By Rodney Graham

I had an interesting, yet quite disturbing encounter last night. It reminded me just how bad the poor are treated by the 'good' citizens of this wicked democracy. It reminded me what an evil society we nurture.

I often hike or bike late at night. The reason is because I'm semi-retired and self-employed so I have no real schedule. Also because it is not so hot at night, it's quiet, and I can think.

I was taking a shortcut through a large shopping mall parking lot in downtown Winnipeg. It was well after midnight, so the mall was all closed up. As I approached the corner of the mall I was surprised to see a homeless man sitting on the sidewalk.

He probably had seen me coming towards him. Not wanting to alarm him, I quickly said 'Hello, have good night, bro.' and walked on by. I wanted him to know I was not a threat.

As I said this in as friendly a way as I could, he nodded and dropped his head and began sobbing. Then nodded again. I kept walking away... and left him in peace.

Most people wouldn't understand his response. I did. I will say, 'unfortunately' because I know how it is to feel how he felt at

that moment...

I'll try to explain it briefly. These citizens are harassed so much - they are always worried, harried, expecting a security guard or police to come by and question them, tell them to move on. Or worse. He was sobbing with relief.

Most don't know this, will never know it, and don't want to know. And our wonderful establishment, including mainstream media, helps keep us fed with the pabulum of deceit.

Canada's Unofficial National Flower: The Bunchberry

By Sharon Austin

On May 19, 2018 Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex and Meghan Markle were wed in a magnificent ceremony in St George's Chapel at Windsor Castle. Her beautiful flowing cathedral-length veil symbolized a special connection to the Commonwealth. All 53 countries of the Commonwealth were represented on her veil with each country's flower hand embroidered in silk threads and organza. Canada was represented by its unofficial national flower (Cornus Canadensis) better known as the Bunchberry. Its French name is quatre-temps and one Indigenous name is kawiscowimin in Cree; translated as "rabbit berry" or "gravel inside," referring to the seeds inside the berries. The Bunchberry was a perfect choice as it is found in all the provinces and territories of Canada and like Canada it changes with the seasons from a pretty white flower in summer to edible red berries in the fall. The berries are eaten by rabbits, bears, birds, and people. Most of us have probably reached down and picked a handful of bunchberries to eat.

Danny Getzlaf - from page 4

to Denise Hunter, co-owner of Hunters Print and Copy in Morinville. It was right after hearing the news about Danny's struggle with ALS that she became concerned about Danny's devastating news. Without his knowledge, she reflected on the many great things this man had contributed to the Morinville community as a long-term volunteer contributor to the town's many public functions. With that thought in mind, she set out to help raise funds for Danny's upcoming Walk for ALS fundraising initiative, setting out to print Danny Getzlaf support posters and Danny Getzlaf Community Spirit buttons. There at the print shop she printed 1000 buttons. She later made a deal with Sobey's in Morinville to sell the buttons at their store for \$10 dollars a button. The button drive was successful and all 1000 buttons sold, raising \$10,000 for Danny's cause.

The generous business lady also placed an ad in the Morinville Free Press. The paper volunteered to provide free advertising space in their paper, that read, 'Let's get together as a community and stand

behind Danny Getzlaf.'

Soon other local businesses in Morinville noticed Danny's ad placed in the Free Press and showed their sympathy and support by purchasing Danny Getzlaf posters and posting them on their store front windows.

Door to door canvassers, were also provided by Hunters Print and Copy, with its many canvassers knocking on the doors of the town's residents, selling each button for a \$10 dollar donation.

The public fund raising campaign to promote Danny's fight with ALS was a grand success and all the money raised from various fund raising sources were allocated to the Walk for ALS.

That fundraising campaign by all the local restaurants and surrounding businesses involved, inevitably put Danny Getzlaf on the ALS Society's Walk for ALS fund raising map, where Danny Getzlaf was recognized as the top individual fundraiser for raising \$22,314.53 for The Walk for ALS. Danny also finished in second place for his team category, Danny Getzlaf Community Spirit, where his team raised \$36,925.53. All the proceeds raised for the 2.5 K walk that Danny par-

ticipated in on June 9th will be donated to the ALS Society's, programs services and research.

When ASN asked Hunters Print and Copy co-owner Denise Hunter about her thoughts on Danny's fight to take on ALS, Hunter said, "I guess I'd just like to say, stand behind him. You know the walk was successful. He made over \$36,000 dollars and we're going with what he says, 'Let's take it one day at a time!'

Danny's calling has been a rewarding one. Back on April 20th this year the Morinville News and its Founder and Publisher Stephen Dafoe sponsored an award called the Paul Krauskopf Community Spirit Award that was awarded to Danny Getzlaf for his immense selfless contributions as a long-term volunteer while helping out at various Morinville public functions.

Congratulations to Danny Getzlaf. His calling is defined in many ways: a great husband and father to his lovely wife and family and a great friend to his friends and the Morinville community and his ever lasting legacy that will live on in the fight to find a cure for ALS.

Too ironic for words, eh?

By Allan Sheppard

Irony is in the air these days. Assorted media are daily awash with examples. The most obvious come from the United States, thanks to its (unintentional) ironist-in-chief, Donald Trump.

Of Wikipedia's many types of irony one, situational irony, is relevant to current goings-on: "The disparity of intention and result; when the result of an action is contrary to the desired or expected effect."

Politicians and commentators sometimes use another term to define roughly the same thing: unintended consequences, by which they mean the unanticipated bad things done with self-defined good intentions. That term is most often used by right-leaning ideologues to characterize policies, projects, and programs proposed or implemented by left-leaning counterparts. But the logic of the idea applies just as well to misguided good intentions imposed from the right as from the left.

There is a crucial difference: how ideologues of each type define and evaluate what they believe is good and how they make connections between intentions and their consequences can be dramatically different. At extreme ends of the spectrum, ideologies may be so firmly entrenched that the claimed goodness of intentions overrides (Dare I say, "Trumps"?) possible or actual bad effects, often in flagrant denial of obvious facts or apparent truths. The ends, when seemingly achieved, are so self-evidently and politically correct (to the true believer) as to justify any means that might have done some or much incidental (or, to use the preferred euphemism in some quarters, "collateral") damage along the way.

Residential schools in Canada and the United States are an example. They were undertaken with the stated (in the United States) or inherent (in Canada) goal of "kill(ing) the Indian in the child." Powers-that-were assumed that children indoctrinated into Christianity and the industrial approach to schooling would best be able to assimilate into societies and economies based on European models.

The great majority of children forced ("kidnapped" would not have been too strong a word) into residential schools were successfully alienated from their families, communities, cultures, and ways of life, as the authorities of the day intended. But they were unsuccessfully assimilated into the European world view and way of life. Most of them were left rootless and disoriented, unable to fit into Canada's "official" culture and society; un-

able to return to and be accepted in their original communities; unable to parent chil-

dren or hold jobs in a competitive environment, not having been given opportunities to learn such things in the strictly regimented, nurture-starved environments at residential school.

With the wisdom of hindsight, we know that removing children from nurturing and functioning families, communities, and economies and placing them in sterile, artificial environments intended to fill buckets of learning and skills is precisely not the way to assimilate them into a culture, society, or economy, either the one from which they are removed or the one for which they are supposedly to be prepared.

Perhaps it is unfair or unreasonable to apply wisdom gained from experiencing and re-evaluating history to our forebears. But surely it is reasonable to apply it to ourselves in the light of what we have learned. We learn from mistakes, probably more often and more effectively than from successes, so we should acknowledge, accept, and learn from the unintended bad consequences of good intentions.

We should not deny obvious mistakes, thereby effectively refusing to learn from them and denying that mistakes leading to bad consequences occurred or could have occurred. Yet that is what we do. And have done.

It is what we seem likely to do again. And again.

The decision by U.S. authorities to separate asylum-seeking migrants—or illegal immigrants, as those authorities, acting in response to Trumpian biases and presumptions, label them—who cross the Mexican border from their children is among the more brutal recent examples.

The stated intent of these forced separations is to deter further migration to the U.S. from countries in Central America, near-failed states whose collapse toward anarchy has to significant degrees been fuelled and sustained by policies and actions of U.S. government and commerce. Whether that end is achievable is seriously doubtful. Whether it is in any way measurable is absurdly improbable. But it is virtually unassailable as a defence among any law-and-order focused political base.

The inherent intent, strenuously denied but logically consistent, is to punish without due process anyone who presumes to test U.S. resolve and asserted values by trying to move there.

The unintended consequence—a result of using children as pawns in a greater game—

is the damage inflicted upon the innocent children of those supposedly illegal migrants by separating them from their families. We know from experience the damage such forced separations do to children, but that is not enough to deter the U.S. from asserting its authority in discriminatory ways.

That's the first irony: a result that could not have been intended but could have, should have, been anticipated: visiting the sins of the parents upon the children.

But there is a greater irony. The U.S. was founded and populated, as a settler colonial state, by men and women (with, in many cases, their children) who invaded and seized the lands of indigenous peoples in far greater numbers and with much greater violence than it now faces on its southern border. That immigration was not, and could never be, technically illegal: the indigenous occupiers of the land had not passed laws excluding migrants, though many tried, in futility, to fight the invaders off. But it was surely by any rational, objective standard morally and ethically wrong.

Much has been written on that point. I'll call it the irony of hypocrisy and leave it there; sadly, for if I am honest, it leaves us nowhere we should want to be.

On Independence Day in 1852, escaped slave and ardently eloquent abolitionist Frederick Douglass, spoke of the hypocrisy of American claims to exemplify freedom and inherent equality of its people, in the light of the experience of African slaves and others in the U.S.:

"At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh! Had I the ability, and could I reach the nation's ear, I would, today, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke. For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake. The feeling of the nation must be quickened; the conscience of the nation must be roused; the propriety of the nation must be startled; the hypocrisy of the nation must be exposed; and its crimes against God and man must be proclaimed and denounced."

Perceptive as Douglass's insights and observations were, eloquently as he spoke them, profoundly as he plumbed the depths of the manifest ironies of his day, it is a fair question whether the reforms he championed have been achieved to the extent he intended. African and Indigenous Americans, among many minorities, might be objectively better off than they were in 1852, but are they truly free and equal?

Are the ironies and hypocrisies any less profound now than they were then? Or are

Nursery of Raccoons

By Sharon Austin

A group of crows is called a murder of crows and a group of cats is called a clowder of cats but what do you call a group of raccoons? When I looked it up, one site said a group of raccoons was just called "some raccoons." Imagine my disappointment that such a beautiful, intelligent, adaptable animal would not have an imaginative word to describe a group. I would have called them a ruckus of raccoons because they are very vocal, or a rumble of raccoons due to their defiant stance when threatened. However the Canadian Animals' website did offer another group name; "a nursery of raccoons." How very fitting I said to myself as I warmed baby bottles of milk for my own nursery of 5 baby raccoons.

Our baby raccoons were left orphaned when their mother was killed by a car on the highway. A nurse spotted the poor babies crying pitifully beside their dead mother and she rescued them and bottle fed them for a few days. Nurses work such long hours on their shifts that she appealed on-line for someone to take over their care. A friend saw the post and called us right away, knowing that we had raised baby raccoons many times before. My husband and I are both seniors so we had the time to do all the feeding and care that they needed to survive. They came in a cat carrier cuddled in a little blanket along with their four baby bottles, little washcloths, and a few cartons of catmilk. The nurse had started them out on small pink cartons of catmilk from the dollar store so we continued with it rather than changing their food and risking upset stomachs. They looked so cute nursing on

their bottles and patty-caking with their little dark paws as they purred with happiness. They purr like a cat but much louder and more rumbly. Like any baby, all they needed was food, care, and a safe place to grow. After a few weeks, the baby raccoons started to eat cat food, fruit, cheerios, bits of chicken and just about anything else we put out for them. Raccoons are omnivores so in the wild they survive on a flexible diet of insects, berries, eggs, nuts, frogs, fish, small mammals and anything edible they can find. In suburban areas they will get into garbage sarching for food.

Raccoons are native to North America and Central America and live in marshes and forests with access to water. Their dens can be found in log piles, tree holes, ground burrows, or even abandoned buildings. The name raccoon comes from the Algonquian word "Arahkun" which means "he scratches with the hands." Even as babies their little hands with sharp, nonretractable claws are always moving and investigating the world around them. Raccoons have a highly developed sense of touch and contrary to popular belief, they do not wash their food before they eat. Their paws become more sensitive to touch when wet so when they are 'washing food' they are really taking in information. Others say that they dip their food in water to make it easier to swallow. Sight is not as important to the raccoon because they are able to rely on their sense of touch, smell and hearing. It is said that the raccoon can hear an earthworm moving under the ground!

We really didn't need to teach the baby raccoons as they instinctively knew how to dip their food in water, how to climb a tree

and dig in the ground, and how to use their hands to get into everything that wasn't securely locked. According to research, Raccoons have a very high IQ and a great memory and problem solving abilities. If you have ever heard a family of raccoons foraging for food outside your house in the middle of the night you know that they are a very vocal animal. They communicate with each other by screeching, whimpering, growling, whistling, hissing and purring. Raccoons are a mostly nocturnal animal so you will most likely see them in the evening or at night. My mother-in-law had a raccoon that lived under her mobile home that came out every night for his feeding of pound cake. That was the fattest raccoon I ever saw! When our raccoons are old enough, we take them to our camp which is on the bank of a shallow river, where they hunt for insects and frogs, and dig along the river bank. When they are able to fend for themselves we let them go back to the wild before the cool fall weather. They need time to find themselves a den to spend the winter before the snow falls. Although raccoons do not hibernate, they will remain in their dens for weeks in the winter. They enter a state of torpor where their body temperature and metabolism is reduced so they do not need to search for food as often. It is always hard to see our babies go back to the wild and not know what will happen to them. The average lifespan of a raccoon in the wild is only one to three years because they have so many natural enemies but we always hope for the best,

What do you call a group of raccoons? Right now, I call them Louis, Taz, Homer, Petunia, and Pansy; my nursery of raccoons.

Continued from page 6

they more disturbing, because we have many reasons to know better? And is such progress as we may claim to have achieved due to reliance on scorching irony, convincing argument, or sterner stuff?

Perhaps the biggest irony of all lies in a realization that those who most effectively use words as weapons, Trump being but the latest in a long, ideological lineage, are impervious to irony. They don't use it and they don't get it. Appreciation of irony and hypocrisy start with appreciation of ambiguity. Weaponizers of words think and speak only in absolutes: either/or; black/white; us/them. The Chad Mitchell Trio put it nicely many decades ago (in my youth) in their hit song, The John Birch Society: "There's no one left but thee and we, and we're not sure of thee."

Where will it end? There was a time

when I might have predicted violence: revolution. I am not a violent person, so I would not have hoped for it, and do not now.

And yet...

The apparent alternative is no more attractive. It is the response of hollow men (with apologies to T.S. Eliot who was, ironically, his own kind of bigot): This is the way the world...our democracy...our freedom...our dignity...our self-respect...our hope...ends/Not with a bang but a whimper.

Postscript: If you object to my use of the pronouns "we" and "our" referring to actions of the U.S. government and its leadership, please consider whether Canada and Canadians differ from our southern neighbours' (and our European counterparts') attitudes and hypocrisies in kind or only in degree.

Word on the Street Project brings poetry to the streets

By Linda Dumont

As part of the Word on the Street Project, seventy poems have been sandblasted anonymously into sidewalks in three different locations: the Intercultural Centre Location by McCauley School, the Post Office Location just north of the Bissell Centre, and the Truth Garden Location.. There were more poems that the jury liked but there was no budget to use them. There are plans for plaques, but the City of Edmonton has not given final permission so it is still a work in progress. There are no immediate plans for an opening reception.

Lead artist Agnieszka Matejko, says, "Many of the submissions came from local schools so it's important that kids are included in a potential opening. Thanks so much to all of you for having the courage to submit poetry!"

The sexualization of innocent children

By Maria B.

We are passing through very hard times where entities see children as beings that they can use for their profiteering ends with no regard for basic decency in general and children in particular. They always seem to find a way to dig deeper within itself and discover new depths to plumb.

This is not something that we are introducing in our society, as this has been going on for generations. There is such an unhealthy relationship between popular culture and girls. It's such a big issue for me because I feel we all have the obligation to speak against this. I see girls surrounded by awful messages and want to do everything I can to protect them for as long as I can, with the realization that this is stronger than I can handle.

Some parents feel that exposure to sexuality is a normal sign of the times. Girls are just wearing clothes that are fun and they don't even know what the link to sex is. But my harsh reaction isn't about religious beliefs, personal standards of conduct or legal views on decency. Rather, my condemnation is based on my own work in child development and parenting, as well as the latest research on the impact of early exposure to sexuality to girls' development. The impact of this early sexualisation of girls is real and we do not have to be in the child development business to know that this is very wrong.

The biggest perpetrators are television, movies, and the Internet. Popular culture sends its unhealthy messages loudly and persistently, drowning out other healthier messages (e.g., from parents) that might be trying to get through. When children are exposed to these messages enough, they can't help but internalize them and make them their own. And, sadly, these unhealthy messages shape the values, attitudes, and beliefs they come to hold about themselves and the world. It's not hard to see, then, how early exposure to sexuality can set girls on an unhealthy life path.

Young girls associate being sexy with gaining popularity in school, and who they want to play with. Another finding of the study was that the girls spent a lot of time with media.

The clothing that is sold in the stores for girls is geared to sexualize them. Very short shorts is the standard. So girls all pretty well dress the same but because some of them are taller and fuller, the clothing makes them even look sexier and these girls get names like slut and whore. And when these

girls report this behaviour, the teachers have the attitude that they are a perpetrators. Why do you dress like that? Right away the victims are blamed and everything is about them. If a boy is not paying attention in school, the teachers claim the girls are at fault because the boys are too busy looking at them and they are not paying attention to their studies. Why is this the fault of the girls?

So, what impact does all of this have on young girls? It definitely is not good. Girls, who are exposed to sexual messages in popular culture, are more likely to have low self-esteem and depression and to suffer from eating disorders. I see girls in my daughters' school wiggling their behinds, strutting their stuff, posing with hands on hips and one hip out, and giving off that "sassy" (code word for "sexy girl") attitude.

Unfortunately many mothers want their girls to grow up faster and actually encourage their young daughters to buy into this early equalization, potentially causing them to develop attitudes about their sexuality that can have serious long-term consequences on how they view themselves and their future sexual behaviour.

But, thankfully, mothers' influence on their daughters has two sides on the same coin. The good news is that mothers also have the ability to mitigate this unhealthy message about sexuality by limiting exposure to age-inappropriate sexuality, using early exposure to sexual messages as teachable moments, instilling healthy values and attitudes about sexuality, and, probably most important, not sexually objectifying themselves.

I can't really blame companies that sexualize young girls to fatten their bottom line. In the amoral free-market system, that is their reason for being. I do, however, blame the parents who buy this clearly inappropriate stuff, thus creating a market for these and other products that have no redeeming value and do plenty of harm. I have seen parents that hold their little girls accountable for what they wear to school. They are the ones that purchase the inappropriate clothing and they are not there to check out what their girls wear to school. So why scapegoat innocent little girls, who are just trying to fit in, in a cruel society, where everything is about what you wear and what you have. Otherwise, you are worth nothing.

Without realizing it, parents train their



children at home. If they drink and/or they do drugs, their children will be trying alcohol and drugs. If parents are bringing people into the home that show very little respect for their children, their children will learn to do the same in their own homes. If children witness their mothers being abused by the husband/boyfriend, the lesson is taken and they will do the same thing when they grow up. If the parents allow the older brothers to bully their younger siblings, these children will be more susceptible to be bullied at school because they have been taught this at home. If parents are rude and ignorant to their children, they will learn to be rude and ignorant to others. When parents allow their children to watch inappropriate shows at home, children will grow up faster with a distorted view about sex.

We as parents have the obligation and the power to ensure that our daughters develop into healthy human beings with strong and confident traits. For our boys, we must train them to respect women so that they, too, develop a healthy attitude about themselves so they develop into the incredible human beings that they are supposed to be, with strong and confident traits, but compassionate and kind.

We should not allow our children to be used as scapegoats and blame them for the lack of morals that is rampant in our society. We must ensure that we are the kind of models that our children will use in their developing years. Children should not be rushed; they should develop according to their ages and we must ensure that we have the kind of relationship with them that encourages them not only learn to live in the truth of who they are, but that they learn to choose the kind of actions that align with who they are.

Children are our future and we are doing so little to protect them.