

OPINION

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OUR OPINION

Changing Attitudes

There is no need for anyone, anywhere to silently suffer at the hands of another

Sexual assault and child abuse are not easy subjects to talk about but they occur in our community far too often.

Many cases go unreported because of the victims' belief that somehow they are to blame. Sadly, many victims are too young to even know the ramifications of an assault perpetrated upon them.

April is both Sexual Assault Awareness Month and Child Abuse Prevention Month to promote awareness that these societal problems are not the victim's fault and should be reported. More importantly, these awareness campaigns promote education and prevention to reduce, and hopefully some day eliminate, these crimes.

The graphic on our front page is a reminder for Lufkin and Angelina County residents that putting an end to these crimes is their responsibility. No one likes talking about these crimes, but this community is failing its most vulnerable residents by ignoring the problem and hoping it goes away. The current count on that front page graphic proves ignorance is not bliss.

The statistics from the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network — the nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization — and the National Sexual Violence Resource Center are horrific.

■ An American is sexually assaulted every 68 seconds.

■ Only 25 of every 1,000 rapists will end up in prison.

■ 91.9% of women are sexually assaulted by an intimate partner or acquaintance.

The statistics from TexProtects, the official chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America, are just as bad.

■ In Texas, more than four children die from abuse or neglect on average every week, 184 children are confirmed victims daily, and more than seven children are maltreated every hour.

■ More than 80% of child abuse cases in Texas are the result of neglect.

■ About 90% of child abuse victims know their abuser.

Victims of abuse are often conflicted about how they feel about themselves, according to District Attorney Janet Cassels.

"Frequently, victims feel a sense of shame," Cassels said. "Children have trouble dealing with these situations, even bigger kids."

Not all adult victims are the victims of sexual assault, according to Cassels. Some may have lived with a batterer and feel a sense of shame that they allowed themselves to be treated this way. Worse, she said, some have issues where they feel a misguided sense of having deserved it.

Substance abuse and financial insecurity also are contributing factors, Cassels said, calling substance abuse a huge factor and

Getting help

■ If you are in immediate danger, call 911.

■ The Janelle Grum Family Crisis Center of East Texas has a 24-hour hotline available at (800) 828-SAFE. You also can send a confidential text to (936) 552-9256 or visit fcctec.com.

■ RAINN operates the National Sexual Assault Hotline. It's available by phone (800) 656-HOPE and online at rainn.org.

■ To report child abuse, contact the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services at (800) 252-5400, or any local law enforcement office.

■ Harold's House-East Texas Alliance for Children is a Lufkin-based child advocacy center. Its sexual assault services are not exclusive for young victims. Call (936) 639-1999 or visit haroldshouse.org.

really prevalent in the vast majority of cases her office handles.

"There is nothing fair about being a victim," she said. "But the best you can do is try to assist them through the process and try to put them in touch with the resources that may be able to help."

"And just understand, there is work for the victims to do that can't be done for them. You can try that, but everybody is an individual, and those that manage best have some support, even outside of the system."

Those resources include the Janelle Grum Family Crisis Center of East Texas, which tries to provide relief and support to abuse victims.

Advocates who work for the center are trained to provide counseling in various capacities. The center operates a safe house as well as a number of client services, including support groups. The center also advocates for those who believe they may be witnessing cases of abuse, helping them find the words to speak up and provide support to the victim.

In cases where sexual assault has been reported, local authorities look to Harold's House for assistance. The local child advocacy center provides a forensic interview of the alleged assaults, as well as a SANE exam from a qualified forensic nurse who is specialized in conducting evidentiary exams of sexual assaults. While Harold's House is a child advocacy center, its sexual assault services are not only for young victims.

Both the Janelle Grum Family Crisis Center and Harold's House provide their services at no cost.

Chances are someone in your life is a survivor of sexual harassment, assault or abuse, even if they have never shared their story with you. Preventing sexual assault and child abuse is up to each of us. What we say and do every day sends a message about our beliefs and values.

So what do you believe?

Family Fun & Resource Day on May 21

Armed Forces Day is May 21.

A number of years ago, Veteran Family Fun & Resource Day was started by the American Legion Family No. 113. It has been held at several locations over the years and even had to be canceled for a couple of years due to COVID-19, but we're back.

This year we'll be at the VFW Post No. 1836 on Ford Chapel Road from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. for a fun-filled free day for our veterans, active duty, first responders and their families. If you, your company or organization would like to help us say, "Thank you for your service," please send us a request for a space request form to ala113@consolidated.net or text to (936) 674-7347.

May 27 is American Legion National Poppy Day. More on times and locations in the near future. After World War I, the poppy flourished in Europe. Scientists attributed the growth to soils in France and Belgium becoming enriched with lime from the rubble left by the war. From the dirt and mud grew a beautiful red poppy. The red poppy came to symbolize the blood shed during battle following the publication of the wartime poem "In Flanders Fields." The poem was written by Lt. Col. John McCrae, M.D. while serving on the front lines.

On Sept. 27, 1920, the poppy became the official flower of The American Legion family to memorialize the soldiers who fought and died during the war. In 1924, the distribution of poppies became a national program of The American Legion.

Led by the American Legion Auxiliary, each year members of The American Legion Family distribute poppies with a request that the person receiving the flower make a donation to support the future of veterans, active-duty military personnel and their families with medical and financial needs.

Poppy Day is celebrated in countries around the world. The American Legion brought National Poppy Day to the United States by asking Congress to designate the Friday before Memorial Day as National Poppy Day.

The VFW has a similar program with similar roots.

In 1924, the VFW registered the name "Buddy Poppy" with the U.S. Patent Office. Both organizations recognize the importance of distributing poppies around the Memorial Day weekend. Both organizations use collected funds to help local veterans in many ways, especially those in need.

The U.S. flag exchange and disposal ceremony will be June 11. The American Legion Family No. 113 and VFW Family No. 1836 are once again joining together to honor our beautiful American flag.

Starting at 1 p.m., bring in your old, tattered, torn or extremely

faded 3-foot-by-5-foot U.S. flag and get a new one compliments of the American Legion Family No. 113. Then join us and VFW Post No. 1836 at 5 p.m. for a formal flag retirement (disposal) ceremony.

Please join us and the city of Lufkin on June 14 for the annual Flag Day Ceremony. More details coming.

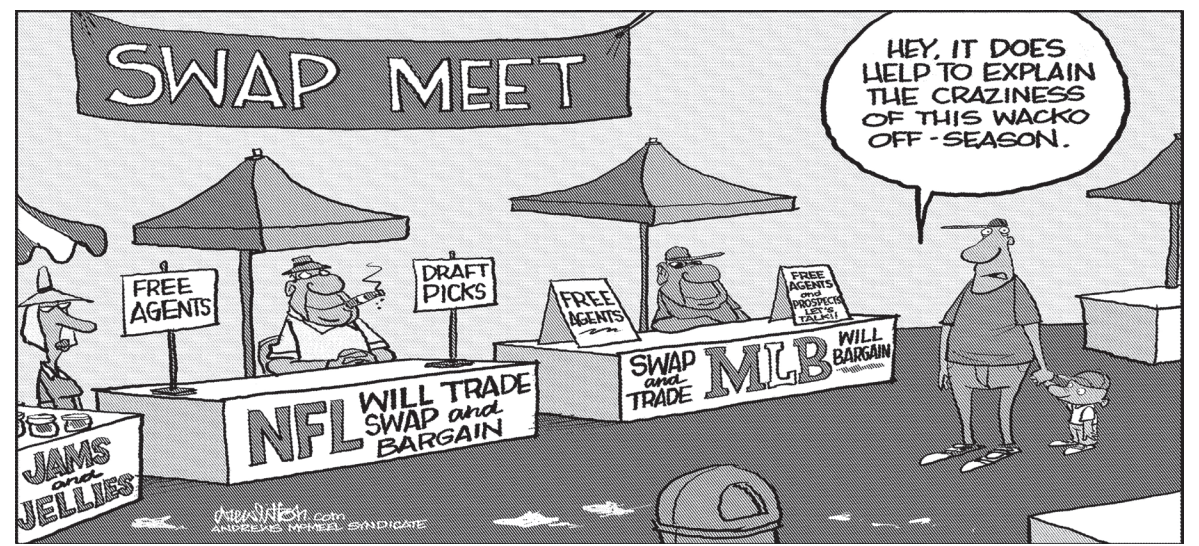
Did you know the American Legion Family No. 113 gets \$5 back for every wreath sponsored for Wreaths Across America in Lufkin?

That \$5 pays for flags, flags and more flags. On Memorial Day weekend, grave marker flags are put on veteran graves in several cemeteries around Angelina County. The money also helps purchase flags for the annual flag exchange.

By participating in this great event, you will help us help our community to keep faded, tattered and torn U.S. flags from being flown. Recently, we teamed up with Harbor Hospice in Lufkin to provide military branch flags for the veterans in hospice care and for the family afterward. With your help, we can continue to grow our U.S. flag programs and have a wreath for every veteran in Garden of Memories every year.

You can join, renew your dues and keep up with what is going on around the country online at legion.org, txlegion.org, alafveterans.org or alateexas.org.

Rita Redd is the president of the American Legion Auxiliary 113. Her email address is ala113@consolidated.net.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Ending child abuse

It's a tragic fact that Region 5 of the Texas Department of Family & Protective Services investigated 634 cases of children who were reported as abused or neglected in fiscal year 2021. In Region 5, there were 12 child deaths due to abuse or neglect in 2021. Unfortunately, one death was in Angelina County. In 2021, in Angelina County alone, there were 252 confirmed cases of child abuse/neglect involving 126 children. There were 68 children removed from their home setting in Angelina County.

We cannot ignore this problem. April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. It is time to focus on ways not only to protect children, but also to prevent abuse and neglect from ever occurring. As a community, this is our opportunity to make a difference in young lives.

Child abuse comes in many forms: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect and abandonment.

The causes are many: substance abuse, mental illness, poverty, lack of education, family violence, family dysfunction, families separated by immigration laws, family disintegration and more.

Law enforcement cannot prevent all crimes against children. Child

Protective Services cannot stop all child abuse and neglect. We cannot expect our school districts to be solely responsible to recognize and report suspected child abuse.

It is the responsibility of every person to report suspected child abuse and/or neglect. Do not hesitate to call the Child Abuse Hotline to report your suspicions — reports are confidential and will be investigated. Please call (800) 252-5400 or go to txabusehotline.org if you suspect child abuse and/or neglect. The call is anonymous, and you could save a child.

Wayne D. Haglund, president Angelina County Child Welfare Board, on behalf of board members: Kathy Barrett, Rose Boyd, Carol Chmielewski, Dr. George Fidone, Mary Goodwin, Pat Merriwether, Barbara Peterson, Allan Riddle, Daniel Spikes, Michelle Briley and Kimberly Garcia.

Overriding residents

Is a real crime of "violation of open meetings law" so severe one loses his elected position? Did we lose our vote because the locals are more powerful? Why is the penalty from an allegation enough for officials to refuse a judge the right to defense or finish serving his term?

Is it true that people who commit murders escape less ugly media than Judge Don Lymbery received?

Was the judge an "outsider" who needed to work with the Lufkin insiders? Can the public not enjoy a 25-year veteran of the Air Force who has a track record of honesty and dependability? Why would we have to elect a retired 30-year city employee to fill this position? Can locals not think outside of the box?

Remember the corruption of the \$75 red-light camera tickets for which people were illegally fined? While most of the cities stopped this before it got started, this city wronged the people by continuing it for years. Lufkin had more red-light cameras posted than the city of Austin. I believe Keith Wright was the city manager while this was going on.

Before Lymbery's arrival, weren't the commissioners court meetings closed to the public? Was that a violation of the open meeting laws? Is it ironic now that the locals have charged him with conducting business in a closed meeting?

The truth will prevail but not before the locals tried to smear his character. Truly, Lymbery has more integrity and morals than any of those who have employed their dirty politics against him.

TODAY IN HISTORY

The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, April 6, the 96th day of 2022. There are 269 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On April 6, 1896, the first modern Olympic games formally opened in Athens, Greece.

On this date:

In 1862, the Civil War Battle of Shiloh began in Tennessee as Confederate forces launched a surprise attack against Union troops, who beat back the Confederates the next day.

In 1864, Louisiana opened a convention in New Orleans to draft a new state constitution, one that called for the abolition of slavery.

In 1909, American explorers Robert E. Peary and Matthew A. Henson and four Inuits became the first men to reach the North Pole.

In 1917, the United States entered World War I as the House joined the Senate in approving a declaration of war against

Germany that was then signed by President Woodrow Wilson.

In 1943, "Le Petit Prince" (The Little Prince) by Antoine de Saint-Exupery was first published by Reynal & Hitchcock of New York.

In 1945, during World War II, the Japanese warship Yamato and nine other vessels sailed on a suicide mission to attack the U.S. fleet off Okinawa; the fleet was intercepted the next day.

In 1954, Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy, R-Wis., responding to CBS newsmen Edward R. Murrow's broadside against him on "See It Now," said in remarks filmed for the program that Murrow had, in the past, "engaged in propaganda for Communist causes."

In 1968, 41 people were killed by two consecutive natural gas explosions at a sporting goods store in downtown Richmond, Indiana.

In 1974, Swedish pop group ABBA won the Eurovision Song Contest held in Brighton, England.

HEADLINES IN Local HISTORY

- APRIL 6**
- Five years ago**
 - Huntington reestablishes a curfew of 10 p.m. on weeknights and midnight on weekends for youth under the age of 17 following several late-night non-criminal incidents and accidents involving teens.
 - Family Crisis Center of East Texas hosts Prevention in the Park event as part of Sexual Assault and Prevention Month.
 - Ten years ago**
 - Mercer Nissan breaks ground on a new

state-of-the-art dealership that will include electric charging stations for Nissan EVs on South Medford Drive.

■ Federal agents execute a search warrant at Loper's Pharmacy in Huntington.

Twenty years ago

- Huntington Elementary's Destination Imagination team to compete for state title after winning the regional competition.

From the pages of The Lufkin Daily News, compiled by The History Center, TheHistoryCenterOnline.com.

MALLARD FILLMORE



By Bruce Tinsley