

VIEWPOINTS

Guest Commentary:

Parents must set example behind the wheel

With the holidays rapidly approaching, many teenagers will be behind the wheel visiting family and friends ... and often copying the driving behavior of their parents. But, is that a good thing? Not necessarily.

New research from SADD and Liberty Mutual Insurance reveals an alarming example of "do what I say, not what I do" when it comes to distracted and dangerous driving.

For example, 66 percent of teens believe their parents follow different rules behind the wheel than they set for their children, with approximately 90 percent of teens reporting that their parents speed and talk on a cell phone while driving.

Parent Driving Behavior
Specifically, the survey found teens observe their parents exhibiting the following driving behavior at least occasionally:

- 91 percent talk on a cell phone;
- 88 percent speed;
- 59 percent text message;
- 20 percent drive after drinking alcohol; and
- 7 percent drive after using marijuana.

In addition, teens report that nearly half of parents (47 percent) sometimes drive without a seatbelt.

What's the harm?

Prior driving research from SADD and Liberty Mutual points out that parents are the number one influence on teen driving behavior.

Teen Driving Behavior

Thus, it may be no surprise that teens repeat these driving behaviors in almost equal numbers to their parents:

- 90 percent talk on a cell phone;
- 94 percent speed; and
- 78 percent send text messages.

Also, 15 percent of teens report driving after using alcohol.

Modeling Driving Behaviors
In short, the link between the

observed and self-reported driving behaviors indicates that parents are modeling destructive driving and that their teens are following suit.

"These findings highlight the need for parents to realize how their teens perceive their actions," says Dave Melton, a driving safety expert with Liberty Mutual Insurance and its managing director of global safety. "Kids are always observing the decisions parents make behind the wheel and may see unsafe driving as acceptable."

Teens Can Influence Parents
Similar to past data showing the power of teens to correct poor driving behavior by peers, the same holds true for a car being driven by their parents: nearly three-quarters (70 percent) of the teens surveyed reported that their parents listen to them and change their poor driving behavior when they point out dangerous driving practices.

Unfortunately, not many do.

So, job one is to empower young people to make their discomfort with unsafe driving known to drivers, whoever they are!

What else might help keep kids and adults safe and alive?

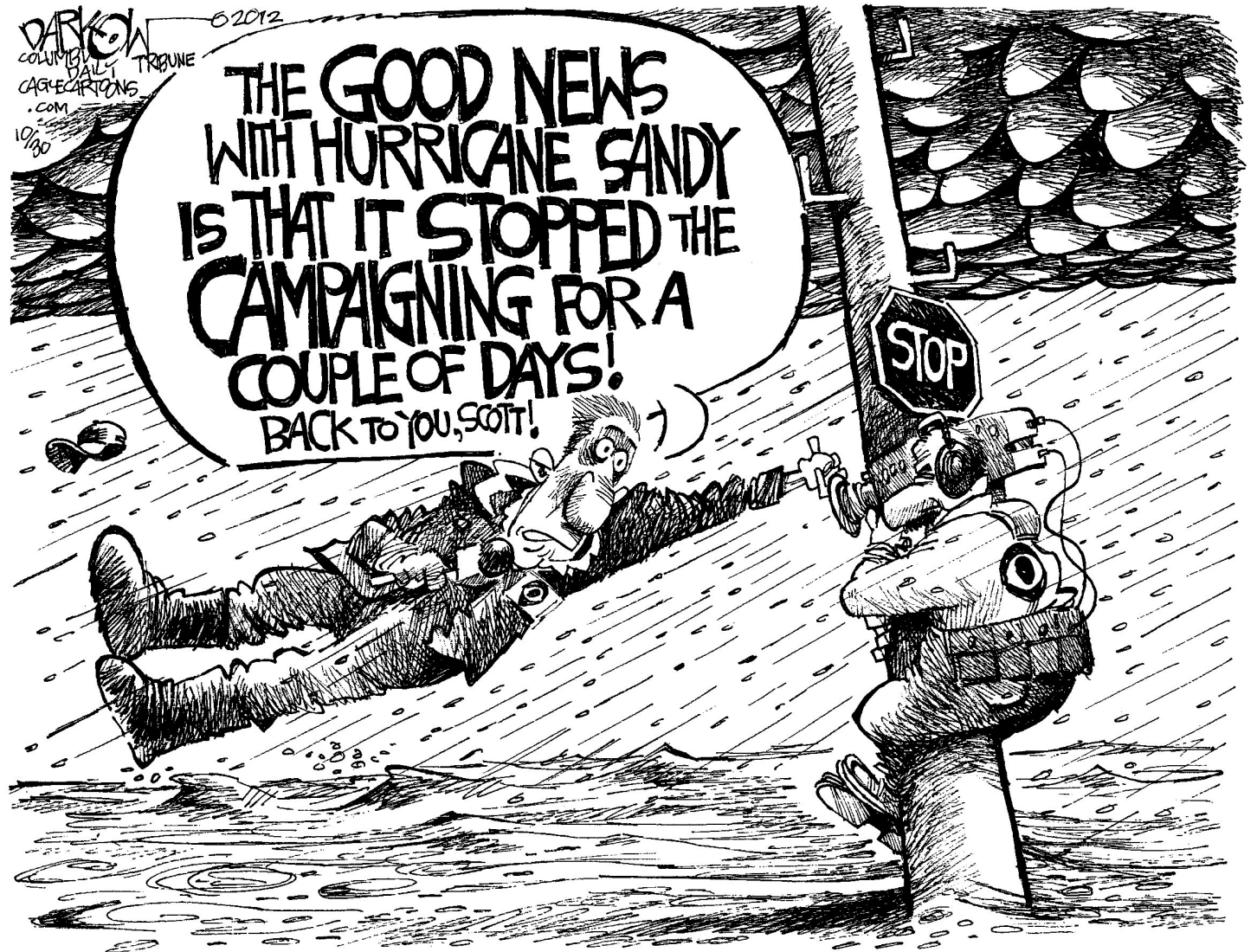
Ongoing family dialogue about rules for the road that apply equally for everyone.

Indeed, more than a decade of research by SADD and Liberty Mutual point to the potency of open, honest conversations between parents and teens ...

conversations often made easier and more effective by the signing of behavior contracts that make clear the expectations for both sides.

The Parent/Teen Driving Contract is one such tool and is available for free at www.LibertyMutual.com/TeenDriving

This way, "Do as I say" becomes synonymous with "Do as I do."



Anatomy of a hoarder

After greeting Jane at the apartment door, which she had cautiously cracked ajar – just enough to see a slice of her worried eyes, I peered in.

This was a milestone, a monumental moment in my relationship with the old woman, a church member my family and I had adopted years ago.

You see, when giving Jane rides to and from church, the store or to our house for holidays, she never met us at her apartment door. Not once. Rather, she waited on the curb, the porch or in the foyer of the dingy early twentieth century three-story home converted to dreary flats.

Standing pensively behind the door, her tiny stature framed by rubbish. Trash. Clutter. Everywhere.

Walls lined with stuff; mainly papers, piled so high there appeared to be only a narrow path for her to maneuver. I looked down to see stacks of old newspapers beneath her feet. If she had invited me in, which did not happen, I would have had to step up about six inches to enter.

Glancing over her shoulder, rigidly pressed on the back of the door, I peered past the neatly dressed woman, beyond her head matted with pin-curl gray hair, and caught a glimpse of her bathroom. The door was propped open by wide columns of tattered magazines – the bathtub chockfull of soiled rags, dirty sheets, discolored clothes and whatnot.

It was true – the rumors of her hording were real. I should have known by the looks of her handbag. She carried it wide open – all kinds of stuff hanging out the top, the sides. Not to mention those shopping bags she carried stuffed with plastic bags, scraps of paper, wrappers and the like.

What I observed of Jane, I can see hoarding is a complicated disorder.

Wanting to better understand, I did some reading and found these common characteristics.

Hoarders suffer from depression and anxiety. They have family histories of hoarding and/or perfectionism and difficulties processing data, paying attention, remembering, categorizing and decision-making.

Hoarders have dramatic emotional attachments to inanimate objects, giving them human-like qualities. Conversely, hoarders feel safe, sane surrounded by stuff.

Possessed by strong feelings, hoarders do not throw away anything. They repurpose almost everything, even the plastic on a cured ham. No kidding. When Jane was over for Easter dinner some years ago, I attempted to toss a ham wrapper in the garbage and she gasped aloud and then gave me a royal tongue lashing.

Even though a hoarder's sensibility is encased in an emotional quagmire, there is help and hope. Emphasizing that hoarding can take years to overcome, Dr. David Tolin, director of the Anxiety Disorders Center at the Institute of Living at Hartford Hospital, offers these tips:

1. If you can't use it, don't keep it.
2. More is not better.
3. Don't overthink decisions.
4. You don't have to be perfect. Be

good enough.

5. If you're repeatedly handling stuff by moving it from pile to pile, stop, make a decision to discard it and move on.

6. Face your fears; take risks with your hoarding compulsions.

7. Consider what's the worst that can happen if you throw out something?

8. Focus on small victories. Clean out one room or a section and congratulate yourself.

9. Sort things as they come along. Five minutes a day is better than nothing.

10. Know when to ask for help. Hoarding can be a serious mental health issue requiring treatment.

Jane is gone now. If it weren't for her hoarding, the loneliness may have done her in much sooner. Hoarders keep others at a distance for fear of being "outed," worse yet, evicted. Jane was evicted more than once.

I can still see her standing pensively behind the door, her tiny stature framed by rubbish. Trash. Clutter. Everywhere.

SOURCE: "How to Overcome Hoarding," Dr. David Tolin from *Steketee & Frost* (2003), *Clinical Psychology Review*, 23, 905-927.

2012 © Copyright Paula Damon.

A resident of Southeast South Dakota, Paula Bosco Damon is a national award-winning columnist. Her writing has won first-place in competitions of the National Federation of Press Women, South Dakota Press Women and Iowa Press Women. In the 2009, 2010 and 2011 South Dakota Press Women Communications Contests, her columns have earned eight first-place awards. To contact Paula, email boscodamon.paula@gmail.com, follow her blog at my-story-your-story.blogspot.com and find her on Facebook.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Donations appreciated

This week, the Southeast CASA Program in Yankton received a generous donation from USD's Kappa Alpha Theta Sorority from proceeds raised during their "Colors for CASA" 5K fun run/walk. We extend our sincerest thanks to the Kappa Alpha Theta Sorority and those in the Vermillion community who participated in the "Colors for CASA" fun run/walk. What a great event and we are very appreciative of Kappa Alpha Theta's continued efforts to support our program!

CASA stands for Court Appointed Special Advocates. The Southeast CASA Program has been in existence for over one year and we currently have nine trained volunteers and we are actively serving children in the community, who through no fault of their own, are involved in abuse and neglect court proceedings. One of our goals is to expand our services into surrounding communities.

Receiving donations from events like the "Colors for CASA" fun run/walk goes a long way to support our mission of providing a voice for children in need and our long-range goal to expand our services.

Again, thanks to the Vermillion community and especially Kappa Alpha Theta for its great work to promote our program and provide needed support.

Elizabeth Fullenkamp
President, Board of Directors
Southeast CASA Program

Vote No on 16

When you go to the polls on Tuesday, you have the opportunity to fix the mistake made by last year's state legislators when they ramrodded HB1234 into law by a one-vote margin. That law is on the ballot as Referred Law 16, and it deserves your NO vote.

The governor proposed this bill under the guise of "educational reform," barely one year after

proposing a budget which slashed state funding of education by 10 percent. (By the end of the legislative session, that figure was reduced somewhat, but it still sent school boards reeling, forcing them to lay off personnel and reduce offerings to students.) If RL16 were actually concerned with reforming education, it might include measures incorporating research on how children's brains work, encouraging districts to start foreign language study in the primary grades and start school later in the day for teenagers. It might address issues like aging infrastructure, inadequate and unreliable funding, and the crippling effects of poverty. RL16 does none of these things.

What RL16 does do is create six new committees in Pierre, involving over 90 people, to invent and impose standards on every school district in South Dakota. No one knows exactly what that will entail (or what it will cost), but it seems likely that new standards will have to be evaluated with new standardized testing. South Dakota students already rank eighth in the country on the ACT and SAT scores, so there does not appear to be a pressing need for even more testing.

RL16 also creates, but does not fund, a merit pay system for teachers, despite the fact that there is almost no research correlating merit pay for teachers with higher achievement for students. It creates, but does not fund, financial bonuses for teachers of math and science, despite the fact that there is currently no documented shortage of teachers in those areas. (There are shortages in other areas, but no bonuses are offered to teachers of those subjects.)

No one wants actual education reform more than your children's teachers do, but RL16 does more to expand state government than it does to truly address student achievement. Please help take this law off the books by voting NO on 16.

Becky Rider

The Associated Press

Aberdeen American News: Oct. 25, 2012

All information needed when voting

The secretary of state is charged with making sure the election process runs smoothly in the state.

On that count, Jason Gant failed in one significant way this cycle.

Gant did not put "pro" and "con" statements about measures on the statewide election ballot. Circuit Judge Mark Barnett said South Dakota law directs that the secretary of state shall perform that duty.

Sen. Stan Adelstein, R-Rapid City, sued the state for not including the "con" statement on the ballot for Constitutional Amendment P, which requires South Dakota's governor to propose a balanced budget.

Amendment P was one of four constitutional amendments that did not include a "con" statement. The "pro" statement for Amendment P was submitted by Gov. Dennis Daugaard.

Gant's defense was a line in state law that said statements from proponents and opponents should be included "if any can be identified."

In this case, Gant clearly didn't work very hard to identify the opponents.

Gant says he sent 51 letters to state officials, including some in the Legislature.

The secretary of state has done

many things right during his tenure, including access to information on a website that is intuitive for anyone in the state to use.

A more thorough search should be made, including Gant's secretary of state website, for instance, soliciting "pro" and "con" statements – or, at the very least, using that to solicit likely parties.

More effort should be made during the legislative season to alert lawmakers that, if particular laws make it to vote on the ballot, that their opinions could be necessary and welcome.

Reaching out to party heads to find their own statements is also a simple but likely effective way to ID those statements.

Unfortunately, thousands in the state have already voted without the benefit of those con statements explained on their ballots.

Judge Barnett was wise to note, "The failure to get complete information out to the first 16,000 (voters) does not somehow negate the obligation to get this legislative-directed information, the other side of the coin, out to the rest of the voters."

He ruled that the pamphlets must be reprinted, so at least voters at this stage of the process, at least, are able to get a clear understanding of the pluses and minuses of an initiative.

Gant is tasked with making sure every candidate and ballot measure is on the ballot legally and fairly. By excluding these statements, voters are

getting only part of the information necessary to make wise decisions when they are in the booth.

Watertown Public Opinion: Oct. 25, 2012
Learn the facts, voter

One of the worst things voters can do during an election is to take anything they see or hear at face value. Keep in mind that political speeches, advertisements, mailings and other forms of campaigning are all designed to make a point in favor of the person saying whatever is being said. And also keep in mind that point is designed for the sole purpose of benefitting whatever person or cause it is supporting; as a result, truth is often clouded.

P.O. Capital Correspondent Bob Mercer brought that point home the other day in one of his blog items that appear on the Public Opinion's website. Mercer referenced a TV ad in support of Initiated Measure 15 which seeks to raise the state sales tax by a penny and divide the money between education and Medicaid.

The speaker claims that when video lottery was approved by voters that the money was intended for education funding. The problem is that's not the case. True, when the debate about video lottery was going on, a lot of people assumed the money was going to go to education. The problem is the state never made such a promise. The Legislature refused to dedicate lottery money to education because they had seen the experiences in other states

where lottery revenue started high and tailed off. Further, as a result of the 1994 property-tax revolt, the Janklow administration passed a 30 percent property tax freeze and used proceeds from video lottery revenues to replace lost property taxes for schools.

Voters need to remember whether the issue is an initiated measure, a referendum, a constitutional amendment or a candidate, those speaking publicly either for or against it are making a point supporting their own point of view. As a result they will make the strongest selling point possible to convince people to come around to their way of thinking and support their position. They are not trying to be objective and there's nothing wrong with that. They are supporting a position that in their opinion is the right one and are trying to convince as many people as possible to agree with them.

In the end, the final decision is up to the voter and it's the voter's obligation to decide what is in their own best interests, and those of others, when it comes time to decide how to cast their vote on whatever item is before them. That's why it's important we all inform ourselves as best we can on the issues at hand and make our decisions on an objective basis instead of relying on one-sided pitches supporting one cause or another. Know the facts, both pro and con, before casting your vote. It's in your own best interests.

Vermillion

Since 1884 • Official County, City and School District Newspaper

201 W. Cherry, Vermillion, SD 57069 • Publication No. USPS 657-720

Publisher: Gary Wood • Editor: David Lias

PLAIN TALK

Published weekly by YANKTON MEDIA, Inc. • Periodicals postage paid at Vermillion, SD 57069.

Subscription rates for the *Plain Talk* by mail are \$27.56 a year in the city of Vermillion. Subscriptions in Clay, Turner, Union and Yankton counties are \$41.34 per year. Elsewhere in South Dakota, subscriptions are \$44.52, and out-of-state subscriptions are \$42.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Plain Talk, 201 West Cherry Street, Vermillion, SD 57069.

Vermillion Plain Talk Staff

News Staff: Travis Gulbrandson. **Advertising Director:** Michele Schievelbein. **Advertising Sales Rep:** Carol Hohenhaner. **Composing Staff:** Kathy Larson & Jamie Selves. **Reception Office Manager:** Susan Form. **Distribution & Circulation Manager:** David Jeffcoat.