

VIEWPOINTS

The Best Way...
to be human

By Alan Dale
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Most of (all of?) the human race wishes it weren't suited up for the marathon.

No not the 'living' part, but the 'human' part.

We probably have all said, 'I'm only human,' by the time we were old enough to go to school, work a job, drive a car, graduate from college, get married, have kids, and ultimately start seeing the pie in the sky.

It's our go-to, bail out, safe words that we can throw as a trump card whenever we screw up, intentionally or not.

And boy, do we all mess up.

A lot.

A ton.

Whoa Nellie, you just goofed up while I was typing ton.

But do we really, truly believe 'I'm only human' when we say it?

Do we accept it?

Well for many of us, we use it as a 'Get out of Jail Free' card and then proceed to see history repeat itself, again, and again and again.

And again.

To be human means realizing you really are a human being and figuring out how to be better than that.

Crazy huh?

You see, it's not about making mistakes, it's about how you rise from the wasteland of error attrition that consumes you and forces you to question yourself and reevaluate your ability to do right.

In my past I have learned that it's not the mistakes you make, but the multiple layers of how you evolve following them that defines you.

Humor me...

Let's say you make mistake A.

You say you are sorry for making mistake A and swear it will never happen again. Then you do it again the next day.

Is it because you are still figuring things out or you just don't care?

That's for the ones who play witness to the mistake to decide.

But, what if mistake A is no more and mistake B happens a few days later.

That's called a new mistake and the same challenge that faced you after A, rises again.

Can you overcome?

Life is full of successes and failures and a person's character is defined by how one handles both – we have all heard that cliché.

But is it more about the kinds of mistakes you make or rather your recovery from them that defines you as well?

Bad news, humans will make mistakes all the time until life runs out. It is a sad truth and it is an eventuality.

I am going to go and make a few probably within five minutes of typing the last letter of this column.

I want to make new mistakes though. I don't want to be someone who people look at it and count on to not shock them and go back to the well of contaminated water.

"Oh he's at it again..." are words I have avoided all my life and I plan to continue to treat that statement like Ebola if I live another day, week, month, year, or multiple decades.

I am proud of that.

But, I also know I will make plenty of new ones and I will continue to get angry at my complete inability to be perfect.

Then it will become the competition within myself to find the tools to improve from those mistakes and evolve.

Ladies and gentlemen the punch line is...we evolve to get better to make mistakes.

So maybe we should challenge ourselves to move on from the mistakes that plague us and find new ones to make us shake our heads and clench our fists before shouting "I am only human!"

At least we would be moving forward from what held us back and we can get better and better...

Well until the next mistake rears its ugly head.

Ah humanity, ain't it grand?

Well we're stuck with it so we might as well do the best we can.

Make no mistake about it.



Playing drums is like coming home...

If you want your troubles to melt away, be sure to attend a concert by Sheltered Reality somewhere near you.

Or better yet, invite the choreographed drummers to perform at your next civic, school or church function.

When I attended a Sheltered Reality concert in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, I instantly became a baptized believer in this inspiring ministry.

At the event, after playing a few numbers, director Steve Schlosser asked for volunteers in the audience.

I don't know what got into me, but I raised my hand.

"Not yet," Steve smiled. "I'm saving you for the next number."

Next number?

Fear and exhilaration washed over me as I let his words register. Replaying my encounters prior to the show, I remembered telling a lady at the door about my love for percussion.

Word must have spread quickly.

Waiting patiently for my turn, I felt a new sense of confidence envelope me. After all, Sheltered Reality's theme is rooted in personal success and in helping others.

Founded in Iowa in 1996, the nonprofit organization is a composite group of individuals from all walks of life, using the power of percussive music to engage and motivate others to advocate for those in need, especially children and families.

With statistical facts and real-life stories, Steve, a brilliant musician himself, conducts the musicians while interacting with the audience.

MY STORY YOUR STORY



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Creating a stirring conversation between hope and despair, self-confidence and self-doubt, acceptance and rejection, Sheltered Reality promotes personal empowerment, anti-bullying, and the prevention of alcohol, drug abuse and suicide, among other negative behaviors.

When it was finally time for the next number, Steve called me to join the long line of drummers stretching across the stage. My heart raced as I took my place.

You have to understand, I had never played a drum in my life. I don't know the first thing about drums, drum music or anything associated with drums.

Besides, I don't have a musical bone in my body.

There I was with drumsticks in hand, following Steve's gentle message to never give up – no matter what. Suddenly, the magic of this ministry began to take hold.

Bolstered with a great sense of ease and confidence and hardly missing a beat, I took my new place under Sheltered Reality's wing, where I learned how to play a number right there in front of a large audience.

In doing so, they ensured my success by providing me with an invisible parachute of encouragement, friendship, support, and unconditional love.

Talk about miracles! I was playing the drums for the first time ever – live and in person.

Standing wide-eyed with amazement, I felt totally accepted and might I add...accomplished. Glory be!

Every time Sheltered Reality does its thing in cities across Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, Missouri, Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa and South Dakota, this remarkable group casts a wide net of peace and harmony, crossing socioeconomic, cultural and generational lines.

Gathering doubts, fears and hurts into the strong arms of love, Sheltered Reality aptly sows positivity at concerts, fairs, festivals, school programs, conferences, church gatherings, youth lock-ins and community awareness meetings.

After the show, just when I thought it couldn't get any better, Steve invited me to participate in practices and performances in my region.

Like I said, reaping the benefits of Sheltered Reality is a cinch. All you need to do is visit www.sheltered-reality.org for a concert schedule and to book a show. Then, sit back and count down the days until the magic of the music begins.

You will not regret encountering this inspiring mission.

[Yesterday, I was not a drummer. Today, I am a drummer. Tomorrow, I will continue to be a drummer. Forever, I will be a drummer at heart.]

SOURCE: <http://www.sheltered-reality.org/>

Capitol Notebook:

Seven steps to preventing a repeat of the EB-5 grab

By Bob Mercer
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE – There are less than 40 days before the Nov. 4 elections and voting began Sept. 19. Yet South Dakotans still don't have clear answers about what former Gov. Mike Rounds knew or didn't know, and what he approved or didn't approve, regarding the secret EB-5 foreign investment program in his administration.

Setting aside those unresolved questions for now, what's clear is that Richard Benda and the EB-5 program's guru, Joop Bollen, operated in a shadow world of state government.

Secrecy is one of the characteristics of economic development at the state level in South Dakota. Secrecy cloaked the actions of Benda, who was Rounds' secretary of tourism and state development, and Bollen.

Slick operators will continue to work the shadows, to the detriment of South Dakota and U.S. taxpayers, without changes

that reduce the secrecy in state government's economic development activities and its grant-making authority.

Here are seven steps. All would make fraud in state grant programs more difficult.

1: Require the state attorney general's office review all grant and service contracts, and require all lawyers representing state government answer directly to the attorney general, other than special circumstances such as when an independent counsel is required.

The attorney general's office doesn't represent the Governor's Office of Economic Development. GOED uses private counsel. AG Marty Jackley said he didn't see the state contract signed by Benda and Bollen in 2009 outsourcing EB-5 to Bollen's company, SDRC Inc. of Aberdeen.

2: Prohibit changes in

amounts and conditions of state grants without the signatories' approval.

Benda appears to have changed a condition of a December 2010 grant agreement that was signed by Rounds for \$1 million to the Northern Beef project at

Aberdeen.

Benda also appears to have increased amounts of two Future Fund grants in December 2010 to the South Dakota Development Corporation that were ultimately intended to assist Northern Beef.

3 and 4: State grants should be listed on a website under control of the state auditor when the request for payment is submitted, with a minimum 10-day waiting period from the listing until the payment is made.

This would allow people to see whether a grant is submitted as intended. Rounds said he didn't know Benda made changes in

those three Future Fund grants for Northern Beef during the final month of governorship.

5: Assign responsibility to the state Department of Legislative Audit to randomly check grants for compliance and accuracy during the 10-day waiting period. DLA wasn't aware of the 2009 state contract with SDRC Inc.

6: List grant contracts, regardless of amount if any, on a state website.

The 2008 contract Bollen signed as director of South Dakota International Business Institute and his SDRC Inc. would have shown up. So would the 2009 contract between Benda's office and SDRC Inc.

7: Grant withdrawals should be publicly listed on the website.

Outgoing governors make many grants. Incoming governors sometimes withdraw some of them.

Many tens of millions of dollars flow from state government in grants each year. Taxpayers should be able to follow their money.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR POLICY

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Please limit letters to 300 words or less. Letters should deal with a single subject, be of general interest and state a specific point of view. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in mind.

In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the Plain Talk will accept no letters attacking private individuals or businesses.

Specific individuals or entities addressed in letters may be given the opportunity to read the letter prior to publication and be allowed to answer the letter in the same issue.

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