

EDITORIAL OPINION

Naples Daily News

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Kudos&Kicks

Reviewing the good, the bad and the questionable

NAPLES DAILY NEWS
EDITORIAL BOARD

Kudos: Friday's sentencing of Mesac Damas to death some eight years after the most horrific domestic violence crime in Collier County history should remind us of the importance of reporting suspected abuse.

Local government leaders throughout this month have been recognizing the work of the Shelter for Abused Women & Children in Collier County for its commitment and programs to combat domestic violence.

October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month and there's no worse reminder that this scourge can touch even well-heeled Naples than the September 2009 incomprehensible slayings by Damas of his wife and five children, ages 19 months to 9 years old.

At a recent Collier County Commission recognition of the shelter, its chief executive Linda Oberhaus said there were more than 1,600 reports of domestic violence in Collier last year and law enforcement agencies spent nearly 30 percent of their time responding to such calls.

The shelter, which has one 60-bed site in western Collier, is engaged in a capital campaign to open a second shelter in the Immokalee area for victims of both domestic violence and human trafficking. Go to naplesshelter.org to find out more about the \$5.4 million project and how to donate.

The shelter also offers transitional housing for families for up to two years so they can restructure their lives, including providing training to victims to manage the financial realities they will face on their own.

Oberhaus told commissioners the shelter's work has caught the attention of national PBS series "Visionaries" that highlights nonprofits.

"They believe what we are doing in Collier County to address domestic violence is a replicable model," she said, adding that shelter, law enforcement and other local government leaders will be interviewed.

Commissioner Donna Fiala summarized why kudos are due to the shelter.

"I could never tackle the job you do," Fiala said. "Thank heavens we have you."

If you suspect abuse, the Collier Sheriff's Office tips line is 239-252-9300; if you are a victim, the shelter's 24-hour crisis line is 239-775-1101.

Kudos: Kudos to Naples City Council for unanimously joining the call to allow law enforcement officers to pull over and ticket anyone texting while driving.

Florida is one of only four states where a law enforcement officer has to pull over a driver for some other offense before a ticket for texting while driving can be issued, Naples police Chief Tom Weschler told council.

The Legislature would have to change the law to make texting while driving a so-called primary offense worthy of ticketing rather than a secondary offense, as is now the law in Florida.

Weschler said the current state law "is really not effective at all" and noted two pending bills would change it.

We couldn't say it any better than Naples Mayor Bill Barnett, who said last week in supporting the council's resolution urging a law change: "It's a no-brainer. I don't understand why everyone else doesn't see it that way."

As Weschler noted: "It can save lives."

Kick: When a vote doesn't go an elected leader's way, there's no excuse for actions that could undermine the work of colleagues who voted in the majority.

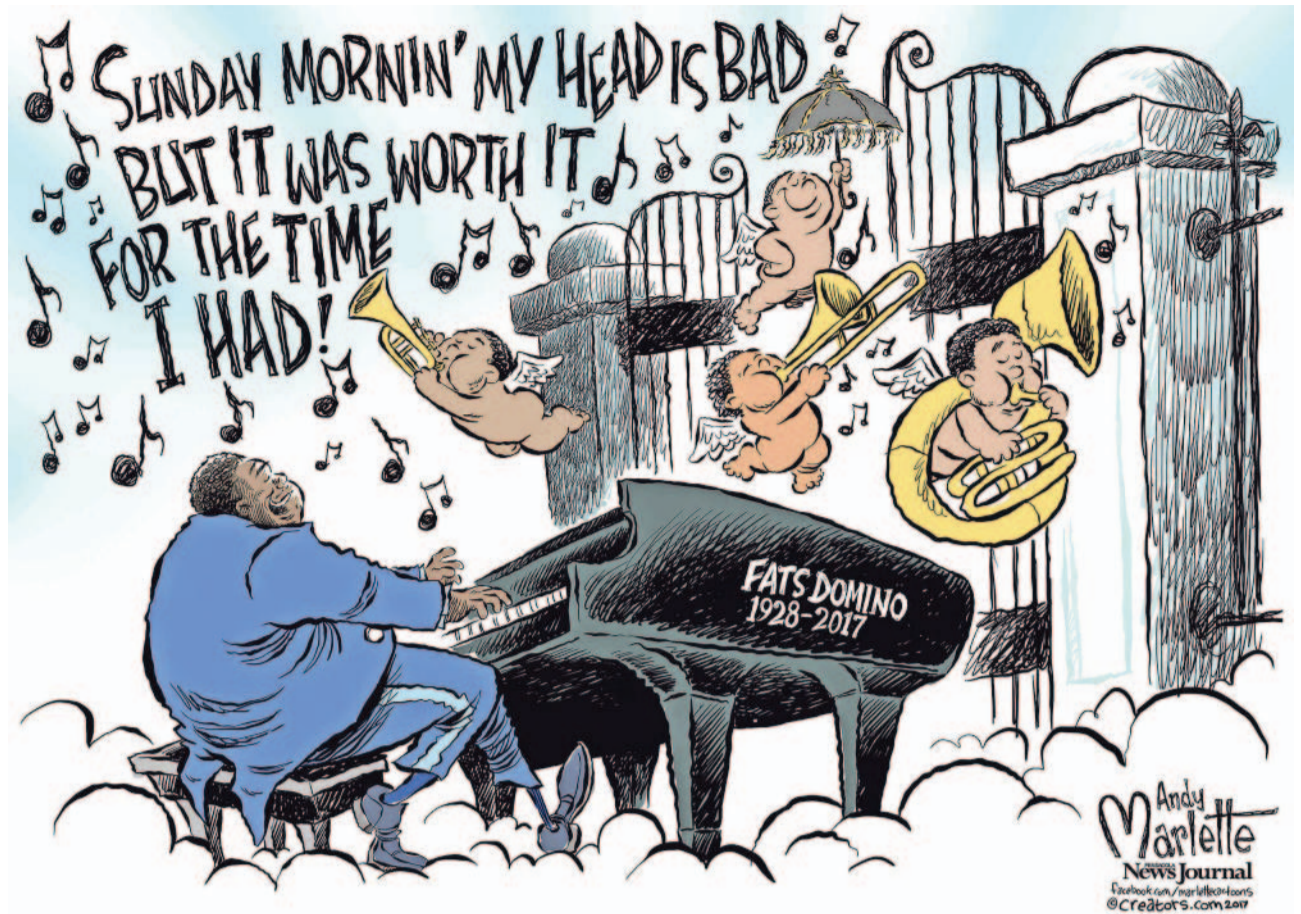
Unfortunately, that again surfaced in the approach of Marco Island City Council members Joe Batte and Bob Brown as the city moves on from parting ways with its former manager. The city has engaged in two searches for a replacement.

The latest episode came last week when semifinalist candidates' resumes were presented to the council to consider in a process that had been discussed multiple times and established by council.

At the meeting to choose finalists, Brown and Batte wanted to instead hire the interim manager, who officials said hadn't formally applied. Their request was rejected by council.

Brown and Batte then didn't offer their preferences among the semifinalists, leaving it to the other five council members to choose.

It takes five of seven votes to hire the next manager, perhaps the most important responsibility for each council member — that means it's a duty of all seven.



Letters

Preserve green space

Breakscapes, the patches of natural land that dot our community, play a vital role in human health, environmental balance and future economic viability. Unfortunately, breakscapes are falling before an unchecked eruption of beige community after beige community.

If you take out the trees, compact the earth and lay concrete, you increase the absorption of solar energy, raising local temperatures and reducing water flow. We all know that concrete is less permeable than dirt and is hotter than forest floor. Who hasn't burned the soles of their feet at least once?

We have seen the outcome recently; the altering of the water flow caused enormous flooding. In some areas, it was because of poor drainage systems, but most of those systems would have been fine if the flow was just slower. Guess what forests and grasslands do? They break the flow of raindrops and their roots dig channels into the soil and rock, creating pockets and spaces for the water to go, not just quickly in one direction, but slowly and in lots of directions.

Instead, the water surges through drainage pipes straight to our river.

Usually, water flows slowly and is "scrubbed clean" by the soil and rocks, but not now. All of the nutrients, metals and toxins go straight to the river. The new, warm, nutrient-rich conditions encourage algal blooms, poison fish and open up avenues for weird outbreaks of bacteria. Instead of tourists on our beaches, we get MRSA super bacteria with the possibility of infections.

Breakscapes are a way for ecosystems to take a balancing breath between onslaughts of urban sprawl and help mediate anthropogenic actions. Unfortunately, they are becoming as endangered as the wood stork. Shouldn't we conserve them?

Kelly Percivall, Fort Myers

Country before party or candidate

I still believe this is a great country with many kind, caring and wonderful people, but there is a pall over the nation now.

Many people have chosen to stop being guided by rational thought and allowed the propaganda and dogma of others to be their thoughts. You can hear the way they repeat the single-line answers for a given question, not even understanding what they have just said or what it means, but sure that this is the mainstream, proper answer of a good Christian conservative that makes it clear they are not the evil left-wing liberal that their television tells them is out there attempting to destroy the country that good loyal Americans love.

The sad truth is that despite their belief, these people are not Christian, conservative nor even Republican anymore and that is assuming that they actually were at some time. They simply represent disgruntled, nationalistic, prejudiced, xenophobic anarchists who watch way too much conspiracy TV and actually believe that this evil liberal cabal exists.

Through the years I have come across people from all over the political spectrum and only very few extremists: This includes the Middle East and Europe. In almost everyone I have met, there is a general sense of fairness that they all share and different views on how to achieve it, a common understanding of right and wrong with some vastly different views on punishment, but also a common thread to live their lives and raise their families in peace with security.

I detest political parties and those who support party over principle or candidate over country. I am an American.

Robert Martin, Naples

Misleading terminology

I take umbrage with your jump line for the story headlined "Estero panel rejects ban on dispensaries for medical marijuana; council to decide." The phrase "Pot shops" could easily lead people to a

misconception of what medical marijuana is.

It is not "pot," which is associated with illegal use, or which is sold in states that have fully legalized marijuana for recreational use. Medical marijuana can only be dispensed with a physician's prescription; it is not for recreational use.

Whether or not an individual supports medical marijuana, the jump line is misleading.

Caitlin O'Reilly, Estero

Taking a knee to Trump

While white conservatives hide behind the fake kneeling issue, they refuse to talk about racism.

They refuse to mention that the FBI warned about white supremacists infiltrating the FBI or that Terrence Cunningham, president of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the largest police organization in the US, apologized for the "historical mistreatment" of minorities. Nope, no Naples conservatives with their gated minds hiding in their white gated communities have mentioned this.

When President Donald Trump smeared our generals as "stupid" and routinely mocked the military strategy in Mosul, Iraq, those conservatives were silent. No letters. Nothing.

When Trump smeared Sen. John McCain's combat record, which contrasted so starkly with five deferments of "President Bone Spur," conservatives were silent. No outrage. Nothing.

When Trump told Bill O'Reilly that he "respects" Russian President Vladimir Putin, O'Reilly said: "He's a killer." Trump incredibly responded, "We have killers too" and cited our troops in Iraq. Trump equated the U.S. morally with Russia and smeared our troops, comparing them to Putin's mass murder, and these fake patriots were as silent as a cadaver. Like Trump in Vietnam, conservatives' patriotism was AWOL.

When Trump invited Russia to hack Hillary Clinton's emails; did not tell the truth about the fact that Russia cyberattacked us and there were many contacts between Trump, his campaign officials and Russian officials, and refuses to do anything to protect America, conservatives side with Trump and Putin against America.

Trump and his supporters have doggedly supported Trump's aiding and abetting of an enemy over supporting America. I take a knee to Trump and his supporters. That's called patriotism.

Bill Linehan, Naples

New group meets

Most of us live in Southwest Florida because we love nature and greatly appreciate the beautiful beaches, woodlands and the Everglades.

Now we are cleaning up after Hurricane Irma and recovering from the stress of living through a natural disaster. Irma brought us together as caring communities looking out for one another and helping however possible. We want to keep the spirit of caring for nature and one another going, knowing we have much more in common than that which has divided us in the past.

Too often we forget we are part of nature and everything is interconnected. We enjoy the day without thinking how our actions are harming the environment that will have grave consequences for future generations. The crisis of Irma wakes us up to possibilities for coming together as caring communities in a setting where every voice is heard with compassion, where by listening and sharing, we find solutions and discover and celebrate our commonalities.

The dream for the newly formed Community Café Coalition is to bring people of all ages together using a simple conversation format that helps to shift us from small talk to meaningful results and allows children and youth, who have fresh ideas, to participate.

Our first event will be on Nov. 7 from 7 to 9 p.m. at Christus Victor Lutheran Church, 15600 U.S. 41 N., in North Naples.

Ann Smith, Naples