

The Florida Times-Union

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FIVE CHEERS

Inspiring story

In setting the goals of the American character, the Declaration of Independence includes "the pursuit of happiness."

That doesn't guarantee we'll ever reach it. For many generations of Americans, it only guaranteed a life of toil and the hope of a better life for their children.

Ed Colleton has found a measure of happiness cleaning toilets for a living. As profiled by Staff Writer Bridget Murphy, Colleton's missteps resulted in losing a firefighter's position and the sudden need to earn a living for his wife and children.

So Colleton bid on city janitorial jobs at prices so low he didn't make a profit. But he earned confidence in himself and built credentials for future work.

Now, he is a role model for people who wonder if it's possible to rebuild a life.

Colleton's story is proof that it is.

Incredible determination

This world is full of good people, but few, if any, are as admirable as Tony Mixon.

The 45-year-old Jacksonville man has more than 100 tumors on his spine and brain, and he has undergone five surgeries to remove them.

The condition is so painful that, according to a Times-Union news story, he has trouble sleeping and his legs turn numb when running. But those problems haven't dampened Mixon's spirit.

In fact, he ran 360 miles — the equivalent of almost 14 marathons combined — over just nine days, beginning the day after Christmas.

The run, along Florida A1A from Jacksonville Beach to Miami Beach, raised thousands of dollars for the New York-based Children's Tumor Foundation, which funds neurofibromatosis research.

His story should give us all the determination and inspire us to contribute to his cause, the Children's Tumor Foundation.

If you wish to contribute, go to his Facebook site: www.facebook.com/TonyMixonFightsNF.

Kudos to our youth

"Too often we read only the negative stories about today's young people," Steven Schenker of Jacksonville wrote to us.

"I volunteered this Veterans Day and assisted where the high school bands and ROTC groups gathered in preparation to marching.

"When the last group was finally able to leave, after waiting for about

two hours in the hot sun, I was very impressed by their patience and maturity.

"The day was made even hotter for the marchers by the uniforms they wore. There was no rowdiness or unruliness, just young people having a good time and honoring veterans.

"After the last group had left, there was less than a handful of plastic bottles in the field to retrieve. All the others had been disposed of properly.

"Thank you all for giving me hope for the future. One last comment. Stay in school and keep those grades up!"

National honor

Assistant Public Defender Rob Mason has been selected for a Models for Change Champion Award by the Chicago-based John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, which promotes human rights and other goals, according to a news release.

Mason is director of the juvenile unit in the 4th Judicial Public Defender's Office.

Mason is the lawyer who persuaded the Florida Supreme Court to restrict the shackling of juveniles in court appearance.

Also, he is featured in a recent issue of The Florida Bar News, in which he discusses direct-filing against juveniles.

The national award is a good reflection, not only on Mason but on the office as a whole.

BEAM to the rescue

Beaches Emergency Assistance Ministry — or BEAM, as it more often is called — is the gift that keeps on giving.

For the fourth year, the Jacksonville Beach-based ministry is offering free tax preparation for families at the Beaches, reports a news release.

BEAM will accept appointments beginning today. The number to call is (904) 241-2326.

Last year, 375 clients saved \$75,000 in tax preparation fees — about \$200 each.

In these tough economic times, many people desperately need help. BEAM's core services are running a food pantry, providing rent and utility assistance and helping people apply for food stamps.

But tax preparation is an important service.

For the past quarter of a century, BEAM has played a major role in the Beaches communities.

GUEST EDITORIAL

Taking action on pill mills

Note to readers: An editorial from the Naples Daily News.

Florida Gov. Rick Scott has called for a ban of new small-business regulations.

It is part of his "let's get to work" campaign for less red tape and more freedom for the private sector.

We understand. But there can be exceptions to sweeping declarations, and we believe one is at hand.

The Florida Board of Medicine met the other day and approved emergency action against pill mills — businesses that appear to be clinics while actually only feeding the habits of addicts and pumping up the inventory of illegal narcotics on the street.

Most of the state's 932 pain clinics have five or fewer employees and only one doctor, and qualify for no-

new-rules protection.

The scourge is rampant in Florida's big cities, and Southwest Florida authorities are trying to be proactive against pill mills here.

The Medicine Board wants to require pill mills to actually test clients to prove medical conditions justifying pain killers. Also suggested: Better staff training, clearer clinic surroundings, a ceiling on the number of prescriptions per day and a mandate for counterfeit-proof prescription notepads.

Some medical officials call for a special session while lawmakers will be in Tallahassee anyway for preliminary meetings, saying the drug crisis is so deadly — claiming seven lives per day from all drug sources, not just pill mills — that it can't wait for the regular session.

Sounds like a plan to us. Sounds like more freedom from predators.

GARY MARKSTEIN JOURNAL SENTINEL



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LETTERS FROM READERS

NUCLEAR POWER FOR JEA

A step in the right direction

The recent Times-Union report that JEA is pursuing 140 megawatts of nuclear generation capacity is good news.

Except for hydroelectric power, nuclear energy has been the most cost-effective method of generating electricity for the past 25 years.

The fuel tab for 440 megawatts of nuclear energy for a year is about \$27 million. The equivalent cost for coal is about \$110 million.

The fuel savings over coal amounts to over \$80 million per year and \$5 billion over the 60-year life of a nuclear plant.

From the standpoint of maintenance, nuclear plants are cheaper to operate than other energy sources. The plants are so dependable that availability is 92 percent for nuclear vs. 70 percent for coal.

The fuel cost for nuclear is also less than natural gas.

There is the matter of fuel avail-

Look at the cost at the meter and not the initial high capital costs.

ability. Both nuclear and coal are abundant fuel sources; however, nuclear is easier to obtain.

We have enough uranium and plutonium from decommissioned weapons and in so-called "nuclear waste" to meet all of our energy needs for several centuries. This would even be longer if we use breeder reactors.

We have nuclear fuel available

without mining any more uranium.

How do we pay the \$2 billion in capital cost? We can bond this expense; we still save over other types of energy when other costs are factored in. Another possibility is paying as we go. If the completion is 10 years away, we pay \$200 million per year (about 10 percent of JEA's annual revenue) until the project manager receives the \$2 billion. This avoids interest costs.

Look at the cost at the meter and not the initial high capital costs. If we do, we will support JEA in obtaining nuclear energy.

JEA needs to go a step further and expand its goal beyond obtaining 30 percent of electricity from nuclear by 2030. A much better goal would be 60 percent.

BRUCE A. FOURAKER
Jacksonville

HUNGER SWAT TEAM

Making a difference

The Times-Union's report that food stamps help 1 in 5 in Jacksonville came as no surprise to us.

Since late 2008, the members of the Hunger SWAT Team — 14 Jacksonville area nonprofit organizations — have joined forces to build awareness of growing hunger in our community and the ways that citizens can help.

With the support of countless contributors and volunteers, we have found ways to work together to make one dollar go further. But the sad fact remains that too many people in our community are hungry, too many people lack a safe place to live, and too many people lack the employment that they need to provide for themselves and their families.

Rebuilding our economy and providing the necessary jobs will take time. In the meantime, we encourage you to support the organizations that feed the hungry among us. To learn more, visit www.fightshungerjax.org.

BY THE HUNGER SWAT TEAM

- Beaches Emergency Assistance Ministry (BEAM)
- Catholic Charities
- City Rescue Mission
- Clara White Mission
- Community Connections
- Dignity U Wear
- Downtown Ecumenical Services Council
- Elder Source
- Jewish Family and Community Services
- Lutheran Social Services/Second Harvest Food Bank
- Salvation Army
- Sulzbacher Center
- Trinity Rescue Mission
- Urban Jacksonville, Inc.

PROPOSED LAW

'Hysterical reaction'

State Rep. Jason Brodeur, R-Sanford, is sponsoring a bill to make it a felony for a physician to ask a patient if there is a gun in the home. The penalty: A fine up to \$5 million or up to five years in jail.

Are you kidding me? Talk about a knee-jerk hysterical reaction to a simple question.

You have the right to say, "I prefer not to discuss it." An unsecured gun can be a serious health hazard, particularly to children, and I applaud any doctor who asks if such a risk exists.

Chill out people, your doctor's not going to take your gun away, just remind you to keep your family members safe.

KATHRYN THOMPSON
Jacksonville

UNFUNDED CITY PENSIONS

Taking responsibility

It seems that every time a current or retired police officer writes about their pension and salary problems, they use the same argument. They should not be held responsible because the city did not fund their pension plan correctly. Welcome to my world!

I am nearing retirement age, having paid Social Security taxes for my whole life. The federal government took that money and spent it, leaving the Social Security trust fund with IOUs.

The solution of federal officials is to progressively move up the retirement age, safe in the knowledge that they have a wonderful federal retirement plan.

So when I am looking for someone to blame, the first place I check is the mirror. I should have demanded that my representatives, in Congress, fund the plan.

I suggest an end to all the complaining and take a deal to save what is left of your pension.

THOMAS OSSMANN
Jacksonville

REPLY: GUN CONTROL

Reasonable limits

The Times-Union printed two letters in rebuttal of my argument for only permitting the ownership of a pistol to those who can demonstrate a need for one.

One reader correctly pointed out my error in stating that no national sportsman goes hunting with a pistol. It turns out that folks do hunt with long-barreled pistols, and those sportsmen would surely qualify for handgun ownership under my definition of need.

The other reader stated a belief that the Second Amendment guarantees a citizen's right to own firearms without restriction. This conviction is incorrect.

Federal law prohibits ownership of machine guns and sawed-off shotguns. Federal law prohibited ownership of assault rifles for 10 years until 2004, when Congress inexplicably allowed the ban to expire. The Brady Act requires a background check prior to legal purchase of a firearm.

Most significant, the Second Amendment applies only to federal law. States and cities may enact their own restrictions of firearm ownership for residents.

Citizens should ask themselves if the Tucson tragedy is likely to have occurred if the apparently deranged, but undiagnosed, shooter had been unable to purchase a pistol, particularly one able to fire 30 rounds without reloading.

It is not the gun's fault that the

massacre happened. But why should we stand by while pistols, the instruments of human death, are available to almost anyone?

We license motor vehicles and their drivers, which also kill people. Why not handguns?

ALAN DONALDSON
Amelia Island

ABORTION

Support available

I'd like to speak on behalf of the men and women on the First Coast who are lost and forgotten, and I'd like to deliver a message of hope.

These are the men and women who live in silence and bear the emotional and psychological wounds of abortion.

We bear you, we are standing up for you and we know the pain.

From the Silent No More Awareness Campaign stand and give our testimony about what our abortions did to us so that we may educate all and send the message of hope and healing in programs such as Rachel's Vineyard are right here in Jacksonville.

We know your cries may be silent. We, who know the truth, hear them.

We resolve never to be silent again and to stand until each one of you receives the help and healing you deserve.

MARY HUSTON,
regional coordinator,
Silent No More
Awareness Campaign,
Jacksonville

LETTER POLICY

Find us on the Web: jacksonville.com/opinion

Letters of about 200 words are preferred. Letters are edited for space, clarity and newspaper style. All letters should include a name, address, occupation, telephone number and, except for e-mail, a signature. Only the name, city and occupation (when relevant) are published. Letters with a clear, concise message have the best chance of being published.

E-mail is preferred: letters@jacksonville.com

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Letters From Readers
The Florida Times-Union
P.O. Box 1949
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A VERSE
FOR TODAY

He who digs a pit will fall into it ...

— Ecclesiastes 10:8