

SATURDAY, MAY 17, 2008

CONTACT
CRAIG DURRETT
459-3281 or
cdurrett@gannett.com

B

QUOTABLE ...

"Shouldn't a child's innocence last longer than a porn star's .25-ounce pot of lip gloss?"

Michelle Malkin, 3B



NOTABLE ...

Federal media shield law

JOHN MCCAIN: ... "a license to do good, to disclose injustice and unlawfulness and inequities, and to encourage their swift correction."

Cokie and Steve Roberts, 3B

CLICKABLE ...

The Times online offers a variety of multimedia content ...



Can Shreveport support its symphony?

Discuss it in a forum online.

Domestic violence has wide-ranging impact

MONICA HUDSON
OPINION



FBI statistics indicate that every 12 seconds a woman is beaten by her lover, boyfriend or husband. Domestic violence invades the lives of women, men, children, impacting families, friends, co-workers and communities. These behaviors may be in the form of physical, sexual, economic, psychological or emotional abuse. These behaviors may occur regardless of the income-level, education, age, geography, race or nationality. The majority of victims are women but there are some men. The statistics on men are usually skewed due to the fact some men will not report the abuse.

Children living in homes where there is abuse are more likely to receive mistreatment or neglect by the abuser. Children that witness abuse are victims as well. Of the children who witness abuse, 60 percent of boys eventually become batterers and 50 percent of the girls become victims. Children raised in homes where domestic violence occurs are 74 percent more likely to commit assault. These children also have a greater risk for depression, poor school performance, disruptive or aggressive behavior, social isolation, and physical complaints such as stomachaches and headaches. Affected teen girls attempt suicide more often.

A total of 64 percent of all women will be battered at some point in their lives. Another frightening statistic is that 60 percent of all pregnant women are beaten while pregnant. In fact violence can



T. Brinton

increase in frequency and intensity during pregnancy. According to the Centers for Disease Control, victims of intimate partner violence lose a total of nearly 8 million days of paid work, the equivalent of more than 32,000 full-time jobs and nearly 5.6 million days of household productivity, as a result of violence.

Battering is the single major cause of injury to women, more frequent than auto accidents, muggings and rapes combined. It is the leading cause of emergency room visits by women. Women living with abusers also have a higher risk for depression, drug and alcohol use, job absenteeism, and

physical and mental health issues. These women may have low self esteem, believe that the violence is their fault, suffer from guilt, have a history of family violence, believe they are the only ones who can resolve the situation and have an unrealistic hope for change. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health, homicide is the leading cause of death of women in the workplace. Of the 6 million American women beaten each year by their lovers, boyfriends, or husbands a total of 4,000 of them will be killed.

What do all these statistics mean? It means that we have a really big problem. We need to educate victims about what rights they have. All victims have a right to

live in homes free of fear and abuse. They have the right to request and expect assistance from police and social services. These women have a right to treatment, a place to share their feelings and protected from others when doing so. Most importantly they have the right to have their abuser legally prosecuted.

If you know or suspect someone is being abused you must realize that leaving is the most dangerous time for an abused woman. Here are some helpful things you can say if you suspect a friend or co-worker is being abused: "I'm afraid for your safety." "I'm afraid for the safety of your children." "It will only get worse." "We're here for you when you are ready or when you are able

to leave. You deserve better than this."

You can also be the friend she can turn to, the friend who will listen without judging. Allow her to make her own decisions. Reassure her that she is not the only woman who has been beaten and that love should not hurt. Find out if she is physically injured. If so, help her get to the hospital or help her with childcare or transportation. You may also be able to help her find a temporary shelter or home to stay in. If — and I stress only if — you think it is safe you may invite her to stay with you in an emergency situation. There are many reasons victims stay in abusive situations: fear, economic dependency, belief the abuser will change, isolation, social and cultural factors, religion, low self esteem, for the children, for love, failure of the system to help and social image.

We must increase public awareness of the scope of domestic violence. Furthermore we must expand services for the victims of these crimes. We must also further legislation to protect victims.

Monica Hudson is the victim assistance coordinator for the Bossier Parish district attorney's office.

Wring lessons from the flood

Having dodged most of spring's violent vagaries of wind and tornadoes, the area instead got soaked this week with record downpours that flooded an estimated 125 homes in Shreveport alone.

The misery of a flooded house or apartment can be understood fully only by those who experience it, but the impact to residents across the area was less than the floods of 1991 when hundreds and hundreds of homes were inundated by water that lingered for days.

As Shreveport public works chief Mike Strong noted Thursday, in 1991 "the water came up and didn't go down. This time the water came up and the water went down." Certainly that fact can be attributed to various improvements to drainage systems over the past 15 years, though there is no surefire hedge against receiving 10.45 inches of rain over less than two days — much of it coming in a three-hour span.

Clearly post-storm reviews are in order across a variety of fronts. Strong, for instance, says his Operational Services supervisors will evaluate how well drainage systems worked and personnel responded.

Some positive notes: **Emergency responders.** Fire and police and public works crews are getting pretty high marks for working through the night to help clear congested streets, rescue motorists from stranded cars and make repairs on the fly.

Special kudos. Strong's team revised its water customer-notification plan since January's water plant mishap and got the word out early this time to both the public and the media about a water line break between Mansfield Road and Interstate 49. When debris in a drainage ditch broke a water main, the city conducted a mass "call out" beginning at 6 a.m. Wednesday to advise 7,900 customers of a precautionary boil order until water quality could be assured. The media got word at 3 a.m. The same system was used to quickly send out an all-clear notice early Thursday

morning.

Some areas to review:

Drainage improvements. How well did major drainage improvements since 1991 perform? Normandy Village residents who lost cars, carpets and couches to the floodwaters as well as residents on high-tide Riding Club Lane would say not so well. Others might report an improvement with the widening of Bayou Pierre, a major drainage artery through the eastern part of Shreveport. And what about the major drainage work that was done on Youree Drive south of Southfield?

More and more concrete. How well did water retention systems perform, particularly regarding the massive retail development south of East 70th Street? After 1991, city ordinances that govern construction required that developers have retention systems that could handle an extraordinary weather event that might occur once in 25 years and in some cases meet a 100-year standard. With so much farm and pasture land now covered by concrete, how well did these standards minimize rapid runoff?

Oversight. In 2003 the Shreveport City Council set up a Planning and Infrastructure Committee to monitor issues ranging from streets to water and sewer. The committee did not meet often under the previous council, apparently satisfied with twice-yearly reports from Operational Services. The current council hasn't even appointed members to the committee. This week's flooding certainly indicates a need for increased council awareness of drainage needs. A good place to start, particularly for council members in soggy areas, would be activating this standing committee.

Schools. With eight of its schools closed because of the broken water main, Caddo Parish school officials decided to keep the rest of the system open, though intermittently heavy rains and sloshy streets persisted well into the morning. Then the decision was made later to close all schools for the afternoon — as the rains tapered off.

CONTACT US

Your comments and thoughts are a welcome addition to our Conversations. Letters can be sent by e-mail to shreveportopinion@gannett.com, by mail to Letters to the Editor, The Times, 222 Lake St., Shreveport LA 71130-0222 and by fax to (318) 459-3301. Comments on editorials, letters or columns can be made by going to shreveporttimes.com and registering. Letters to the editor and articles submitted to The Times may be published or distributed in print, electronic or other forms.



File/The Times

A Centenary College graduating senior looks for an employment opportunity at a past commencement.

Today's graduates may fade away, but they won't soon be forgotten

It's that time of year: not the season for allergies or flu, but an epidemic is making its rounds all the same. It's the time of year for senioritis. College and high school seniors alike have been counting down the days until the final one, when they no longer need their books and when exams are finished and their time to graduate is hovering over them.

Schools are handing out diplomas to students who have worked for years to earn them. With Tech's graduation ceremony set for today and many other schools' graduations looming or already past, even those of us who aren't getting the coveted degree are caught up in the excitement and impatience of the new graduates' beginnings and endings.

Three years ago, I graduated from high school. In nearly every senior classroom, there

A.J. KING
OPINION



was a countdown in the corner of the chalkboard, numbers decreasing until the last day. On that last day, the senior class piled into the Caddo Magnet High courtyard and counted down the last few seconds of high school. I know many more friends who have been counting down until today, a day that is, for most, their last day as Tech students. For high school students and college students alike, a personal era has ended, and they are facing change.

From there it is a matter of moving across town, across the

state or across the country for new schools or new jobs, each with a challenge ahead as they transition into the real, working world. But a new environment, perhaps, is not the biggest change; rather, the people left behind and people newly met are the ones who will have the most meaning.

After high school, I and my friends scattered to the four corners.

Some went south to LSU and Southeastern and Tulane, others went west to Texas A&M and UT, others still went north and east to their respective universities. And now, as another year of college has ended, and the years are staggered more among friends, I have comrades leaving the campus where we had gathered together to garner an education. And it's not just friends and classmates, either. I still

think often of my high school teachers and the things they have taught me: the regular reading, writing, arithmetic and science, but also the things that are necessary to live life. I've already picked out several teachers at Tech who I will remember with fondness long past after I have graduated.

This time of year, with the onset of spring and summer, brings a sort of sad optimism into the air as lives change. I wish all the graduated seniors well in their endeavors, even if I can only think of them like old soldiers. As they go their own way, the graduates leave behind friends and family, sometimes fading away from lives they have touched. But I won't forget them.

A.J. King, of Shreveport, is a student at Louisiana Tech and a Times intern.

WEIGHT LOSS

"DON'T WAIT TO LOSE WEIGHT"
PROGRESSIVE Weight Loss Has the
"3 STEP FAT ATTACK PLAN"

- Step 1: In and out of the clinic in 30 minutes or less
Step 2: Powerful prescription weight loss enhancing medications
Step 3: Diet recommendations and weekly meal plan

At PROGRESSIVE
We Always Get Results
CALL: 797-1899

000040315