

Editorial Viewpoint

Merry Christmas, Happy New Year

This is the season of wretched excess for those who are able. A season of envy for many who are not able to indulge, a season of accusation and remonstrance for those who would see themselves as tribunes of the less able. But it is also the season of giving, not just the bounty of excess but the substance of life from those who can to those who have need of it. From those who love to the objects of that love: family, friends, friends we have not met yet. The Salvation Army bell ringers, the Marine Corps Toys for Tots are visible signs, but not the only ones of this impulse. Think also of the nation's food banks.

You wouldn't know it from the charged rhetoric of our political leaders (both sides), but if you are blessed enough to live in the United States of America, you are truly blessed. This is brought home to us most vividly as we contemplate those souls who gather at our Southern border, so many risking everything just to get here. Don't misunderstand, I support a wall. I support all the other border control enhancements necessary to bring order and legality to the immigration process. But I am not opposed to the impulse that brings them. I am utterly opposed to the "industry" that exploits the real refugees. I oppose those who cynically weave their nefarious intentions into the legitimate yearning for freedom from fear, exploitation, murder, poverty without end of so many who just want a chance at a life in a country governed by

law not gangs with guns. Gangs with guns are bad enough here, but in the countries that spawn mass migrations like the one we have been witnessing recently, gangs with guns ARE the law. So, God bless the innocent. I wish them well, but being part of a manipulated deluge at the border does not bode well for them or us.

One would have to be unconscious not to be aware that our country is in a state of turmoil in our politics and social consciousness. For those of us highly motivated political types we on both sides have reached a point where we do not even accept the fundamental integrity of our opponents and their arguments, let alone their sources and networks. Yet we are blessed to have each other to contend with. In so much of the rest of the world this degree of contention would result in organized violence, sanctioned home invasions, assassinations, blood in the streets. Apart from some idiots who think universities are great places to riot when some attempt to present contrary voices, and some "spontaneous" riots over (often enough misrepresented) police brutality, we have been spared in this country from the worst of that. This may be because, no matter how we abuse it, our political system is so resilient. It was designed that way.

Barely two working generations after the Civil War killed or maimed nearly 10% of the working age male population,



Ed Scanlon has his opinions

over 600,000 killed outright in battle, this nation emerged as THE economic, agricultural, manufacturing powerhouse of the world. Fifty years after the guns fell silent at Appomattox General Pershing led the American Expeditionary Force to France and put an end to the "war to end all wars". Terribly misnamed, that one, but after 3 years of unimaginable carnage in Europe and the Ottoman Empire American forces and American weapons put an end to World War One. We are resilient. We must be thankful for that.

Christmas is a time when we who are Christians acknowledge that God the Father sent his Son to earth, to us, in an act of renewal. You do not have to be Christian to accept the gift. You just have to acknowledge that "Peace on Earth, Goodwill to Men" is a universal aspiration, not yet a statement of condition. Merry Christmas to you all. Spare a kind thought for everyone, even your adversaries. There's plenty of time to return to the trenches in the New Year

Family & Marriage

Resolve to Run from Pornography

"How do I know pornography depraves and corrupts? It depraves and corrupts me" – Malcolm Muggeridge

"Flee from sexual immorality." – Bible

Of the New York Times top ten best sellers in Paperback Trade Fiction at the time of this writing, five of them are advertised as being "erotic" (read pornographic).

The pornography industry is larger than the revenues of the top technology companies combined: Microsoft, Google, Amazon, eBay, Yahoo!, Apple, Netflix and EarthLink. Child pornography generates \$3 billion annually.

Many medical experts believe that pornography is just as addictive as drugs, and for basically the same reason; even though the stimulus is different, the impact on the brain is the same. Once hooked, it's hard to get unhooked. And the consequences of being hooked are severe!

One of the most destructive forces tearing marriages apart today is pornography, both written and pictorial. Consider the following adult internet pornography statistics:

- Men admitting to accessing pornography at work – 20%
- US adults who regularly visit Internet pornography websites – 40 million
- Promise Keeper men who viewed pornography in last week – 53%
- Christians who said pornography is a major problem in the home – 47%
- Adults admitting to Internet sexual addiction – 10%
- Breakdown of male/female visitors to pornography sites – 72% male; 28% female

Pat Fagan, in a paper entitled "The Effects of Pornography on Individuals, Marriage, Family, and Community, published by The Family Research Council, has the following conclusions:

- Pornography is a major

threat to marriages, the family, and the society at large.

- Married men who are involved in pornography feel less satisfied with their conjugal relations and less emotionally attached to their wives.
- Pornography use is a pathway to infidelity and divorce, and is frequently a major factor in these family disasters.
- Couples affected by one spouse's addiction usually experience a loss of interest in sexual intercourse and good family relations.
- Both spouses perceive pornography viewing as tantamount to infidelity.
- Pornography viewing leads to a loss of interest in good family relations.

Gene McConnell, Keith Campbell, in an article published by Focus on the Family, suggest five stages of addiction:

- Early exposure. Most guys who get addicted to porn start early.
- Addiction. You keep coming back to porn. It becomes a regular part of your life. You're hooked.
- Escalation. You start to look for more and more graphic porn. You start using porn that would have disgusted you when you started. Now it excites you.
- Desensitization. Eventually, you start to become numb. Even the most graphic, degrading porn doesn't excite you anymore. You become desperate to feel the same thrill again but can't find it.
- Acting out sexually. At this point, many men make a dangerous jump and start acting out sexually. They move from the paper and plastic images of porn to the real world.

Now that we know that pornography is pervasive and destructive, how do we resist it?

Society in general seems to be bent on making all kinds of pornography acceptable. Internet, movie, TV – sex is everywhere and extremely



Roger Rollins, Family and Marriage Coalition

accessible, with just click on the mouse or the channel selection button. Even the ads on the sports programs use sex to sell their products. All of this emphasis on sex leads to more deviant forms of sexual expression: soft and hard pornography.

Our first step in avoidance is to make sure our values clearly define what is acceptable, and what isn't. I suggest the Bible as a good foundation. The obvious next step is careful implementation of those values on a continuous basis – relentlessly!

We must be aware of the universal presence of pornography, and be alert to avoid it where possible, particularly in protecting our children. Filters on the computer and on the TV are a big help. Admit that it attracts and run from it. Confess and get help if needed.

Finally, fill your time with good things: time with the family, friends, healthy hobbies, fulfilling work, community involvement – activities that enhance your values, e.g. prayer, Bible reading, church involvement. Keep those relationships healthy; it's the best protection from pornography.

The Family and Marriage Coalition of Aiken, Inc. (FAMCO) provides resources for you to succeed in your marriage and families. Roger Rollins, Executive Director, FAMCO, 803-640-4689, rogerrollins@aikenfamco.com, www.aikenfamco.com.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor, I am remembering the blessings of this past year, and one of those biggest blessings to me has been the completion of the new "destination" playground in Stevens Park! Walking through the playground again yesterday, I marveled at the amazing design and construction of this new playground, and the wonderful play and development opportunities that it affords for the children of our community and the enhancement of the park for the entire community. It all makes my heart smile! God is good to us!

I wanted the community to know the people who have worked so very hard to develop and communicate the vision, raise the funds and organize the building process to make the playground a reality for everyone. Those who have served so diligently this past year on the Kershaw Community Park Council (KCPC) Board of Directors include: Vice President Doug Murray, Recording Secretary Joan Clyburn, Corresponding Secretary Ann Marie Green, Treasurer Gary Burton, Doug Davis, Rosemarie Baker, Janet Blaich, Spencer Briggs, Rebekah Clements, Wilson Davis, Annette Gause, Genny Hendrix, Sheila Hinson, Devin Jones, Al Poston, Dr. Jim Timmons, Beatrice Walker, and the KCPC Administrator, Frances Moreland. In addition, those who served on the Board in the most recent previous years include: Jim McKeown, Tommy Northern and Martie Tiller. I also wanted to publicly thank the men who volunteered and dedicated their time and construction expertise during the building process. Without these men and their skill and hard work, this playground

would not have been a reality. Matt Walker, and Scott and Luke Croxton, our local paid contractors worked alongside Lee Archin of Play by Design and his six skilled contractors in overseeing the construction of the playground. Our local men who volunteered their skills were: Alan Blackmon, Gary Burton, Jack Cauthen, Col. Roy Croxton, Donnie Faulkenberry, Frank Ferguson, Ernie Green, Tim Hegler, Hank Horne, Tracy Hilton, Elliot Jordan, Jesse McDonald, Jack Orvin, Mike Ratterree of Bethune, CW Reece, Tim Roberts, Lee Sowell, Reggie Taylor, Dr. Jim Timmons and Pat Turner. Chris Johnson, Doug Murray, Travis Robbins, and Scott Whaley served in overseeing the site set-up and safety. Other local skilled individuals who worked to build the playground were Beau Beaumont, Joey Bell, Ryan Blaich, Larry Catledge, Mark Catoe, Dustin Cauthen, Corey Clyburn, Manwanza Drakeford, Pandora Faulkenberry, David Harris, James Izzard, Lakendrick Miller, Tyler Muckenfuss, Charles Perry, Summer Plyler, and Jarvis Ponds. In addition, Pam Johnson assisted me as the materials procurement director, and Ann Marie Green served as the director for food and of the construction site entrance desk. Rosemarie Baker, Janet Blaich, Rebekah Clements, Carolyn Dease, Pam Johnson, Beth McDonald, Frances Moreland, Debbie Ratterree of Bethune, Sandra Reece, Martie and Kathryn Tiller, and Eleanor Young all volunteered at the site entrance desk. The North Central High School National Honor Society students along with their teacher sponsors Christina Sims and Cheyanna

and Jakob Elliot worked hard in picket setting and mulch spreading as did Youth Build of Lancaster County and its staff. The final mulch spreading was completed by Cami Armbrust, Rebekah Blackmon, Charles Ammons, Martie and Kathryn Tiller, Mitch Lucas and Jim and Beverly Timmons. The brick walkway was created by Sidney Alexander, and Vic Truesdale and his crew. I am deeply thankful for all of these who assisted in this building process! A special thank you to Kershaw Builders Supply and Kershaw Hardware, our local businesses who stored and moved materials for the playground build. Fifteen different churches and including individuals Nell Robinson, Glenda Truesdale and Nina Walker contributed meals and snacks for the workers. Gus's House of Pizza, Subway, 521 Filling Station and Yoshi's also contributed meals. These were all invaluable services to the construction weeks build process.

There is not space in this letter to list every individual who donated funds to the playground. We could not have built this without your donation! Some gave \$5, \$50, \$500, \$1000. Others bought bricks and pickets and playground benches and other components! Thank you sincerely to each and every person who sacrificed and believed in the value of this playground for our community. Our largest donors of course, were the big Foundations and Corporations. We appreciate the support of the J. Marion Sims Foundation, Oceana Gold, the John T. Stevens Foundation, the State of SC Parks Tourism and Recreation Division, the Town of Kershaw, and the Springs Close Foundation. Other local businesses who gave sizeable donations include Bella Family Dentistry, Mike Borquez and the Auction House, Comporium Communications, Hinson's Heating and Cooling, Kershaw Family Pharmacy, Lynchess River Electric Coop, Thaxton Insurance Company, Walmart of Lancaster and Williams Fabrication. A special thank you to Mack and Janet Blaich for their large item raffle contribution, and to the local PTO's of Kershaw Elementary and the AJ Middle School who contributed funds for components.

We are continuing to work on revitalizing and upgrading our very special park! As you reflect back on the past year and look to the new year of 2019, consider how you can be a part of contributing to and/or promoting this Master Plan for Stevens Park. Please make plans to use the park for fun and outdoor exercise and

New Year an opportunity to rededicate ourselves good government

By Richard Eckstrom, S.C. Comptroller

We can all afford to better ourselves in some way, and this time each year many us resolve to do so – whether it's adopting a healthier lifestyle, working a little harder toward a goal, or learning a new skill. And for those of us in public office, this season of resolutions is an opportunity to reflect on our own service and consider ways we can do better. So as I do each New Year, I've taken it upon myself to offer a few goals I believe everyone in public leadership – elected officials, agency heads, bureaucrats, and members of various public boards

activities, for relaxation, family gatherings and enjoyment! The opportunities are also there for environmental education for your entire family. Tell your friends and neighbors about our park, and invite them to come and use the indoor and outdoor facilities that are available. Eat at the Spare Time Grill, hike the walking trail, get up a family volleyball game on our awesome sand volleyball court, or sit and read or listen to music in our lovely garden plaza. Bowl in our first class bowling facility and of course, play in the playground! Visit our web site on line at kershawpark.com and consider purchasing a brick, a picket, a Stevens Park T-shirt, park water color stationery or a plant identification sign. All these purchases contribute to the upgrade and maintenance of our park. Become a Friend of the Park and receive a Stevens Park t-shirt for free. Send us an email if you have any questions or ideas of how you might like to help or get involved. Our email address is kershawpark@gmail.com.

With many, many thanks to all of our Kershaw community for your support of our park! It has been a wonderful 2018 year! It is a pleasure to work with you and for you as we grow our community!

Sincerely,
Beverly Timmons
KCPC President

and commissions – would do well to commit:

- Take it easy on the taxpayers. Politicians spend the fruits of their constituents' labor ostensibly to provide services that improve those constituents' lives. But we know that a lot of politicians have a wildly differing view than Joe Taxpayer does about what constitutes prudent use of public dollars. Consequently, the cost of local, state and federal government has become unduly burdensome for far too many. Conscientious public officials will remain mindful of the pinch that their decisions put on people's wallets, and will remember that one sure way to improve people's quality of life is to let them keep more of their own money.
- Commit to transparency. Government best serves the people when the sun is permitted to shine in, so we ought to make it a priority to show citizens how decisions are made and how tax dollars are spent. Make sure public records are readily available to citizens. Publish as much information as possible – including all itemized expenditures – on the web. Ensure meetings are livestreamed on the web if possible, and held with plenty of advance notice to maximize citizen-participation. Transparency holds public officials accountable, makes problems easier to catch, and fosters trust between government and the governed.
- Respect those who ask the tough questions. Just about every public body has one: the citizen watchdog who attends every meeting, often sitting in the front row. They often pose uncomfortable questions, write letters to the editor, and sometimes use open-records laws to request information. Though they may be annoying to the politicians, their role is a vital one. In holding their leaders' feet to the fire, these good government warriors are laboring to improve their government. They're uncovering waste, rooting out abuse, and generally putting public officials on notice that someone's watching. Besides, in a time when most folks go to work, come home, and learn about the day's events on the evening news, citizens who care enough to become involved in the process deserve our respect – yes, even those who ask the tough questions.
- Evaluate priorities. The



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current \$24 billion deficit in the state pension system for teachers and public employees is perhaps our state's most critical issue – with far-reaching ramifications – yet it doesn't receive nearly the focus it deserves. And therein lies one of the fundamental challenges to quality government: Elected officials frequently devote their attention to issues they view as having political benefits – such as those designed to generate headlines, appeal to a favored constituency, or gain advantage over political adversaries – while leaving unaddressed the more mundane, but often more substantial, matters. The wise will remember that the glitzy issues aren't always the most important, and it's often those with less headline-grabbing appeal – particularly those related to finance – that are of greater consequence.

□ Elevate the debate. One of the hallmarks of a healthy political system is the ability to disagree amicably. Unfortunately, with each passing year we seem to drift further and further from that ideal. Public debate has descended into rancor and demonization. And if this current climate discourages good people from entering public life, the cost is indeed high. Public officials at all levels can – and must – take the lead in restoring civility. We should strive to set the right example... to demonstrate that it's possible to advocate our views – even to fight for closely-held convictions – without descending into the gutter. Those who have confidence in the strength of their positions should never hesitate to take the high road. Our election campaigns are a good place to start. Positive, issue-oriented campaigns help establish a standard for others, and help voters make informed decisions. There's not a person in government who doesn't have at least some room to improve how they serve the public. Let's dedicate ourselves to doing so in 2019.

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Andrew T. O'Byrne, Sr., Publisher, Kershaw News-Era
Kershaw News Leader

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