

OPINION

OUR VIEW

The power of support

With concerns about Ebola on many people's minds, it's a good time to recognize the 100th birthday Tuesday of Jonas Salk, who helped prove the power of vaccines and the research needed to develop them.

Salk formulated the first polio vaccine, which was developed through intensive and expensive research and medical trials with a team of experts over seven years.

Polio paralyzed 13,000 to 20,000 children each year in the years just before the vaccine was developed. The effects of the virus can still be seen locally in baby boomers who suffered disabling paralysis from polio. The 1952 epidemic was the worst in the nation's history. Of nearly 58,000 cases reported that year, 3,145 people died and 21,269 were left with mild to disabling paralysis. Most of its victims were children.

A field trial set up to test the Salk vaccine in 1954 was among the most elaborate of its kind at the time. In a double-blind experiment, 650,000 school children were given the vaccine, 750,000 were given a placebo, and more than 400,000 children acted as a control group and were not given either. In 1955, the experiment was declared a success and the polio vaccine deemed safe and effective, and introduced in 1957.

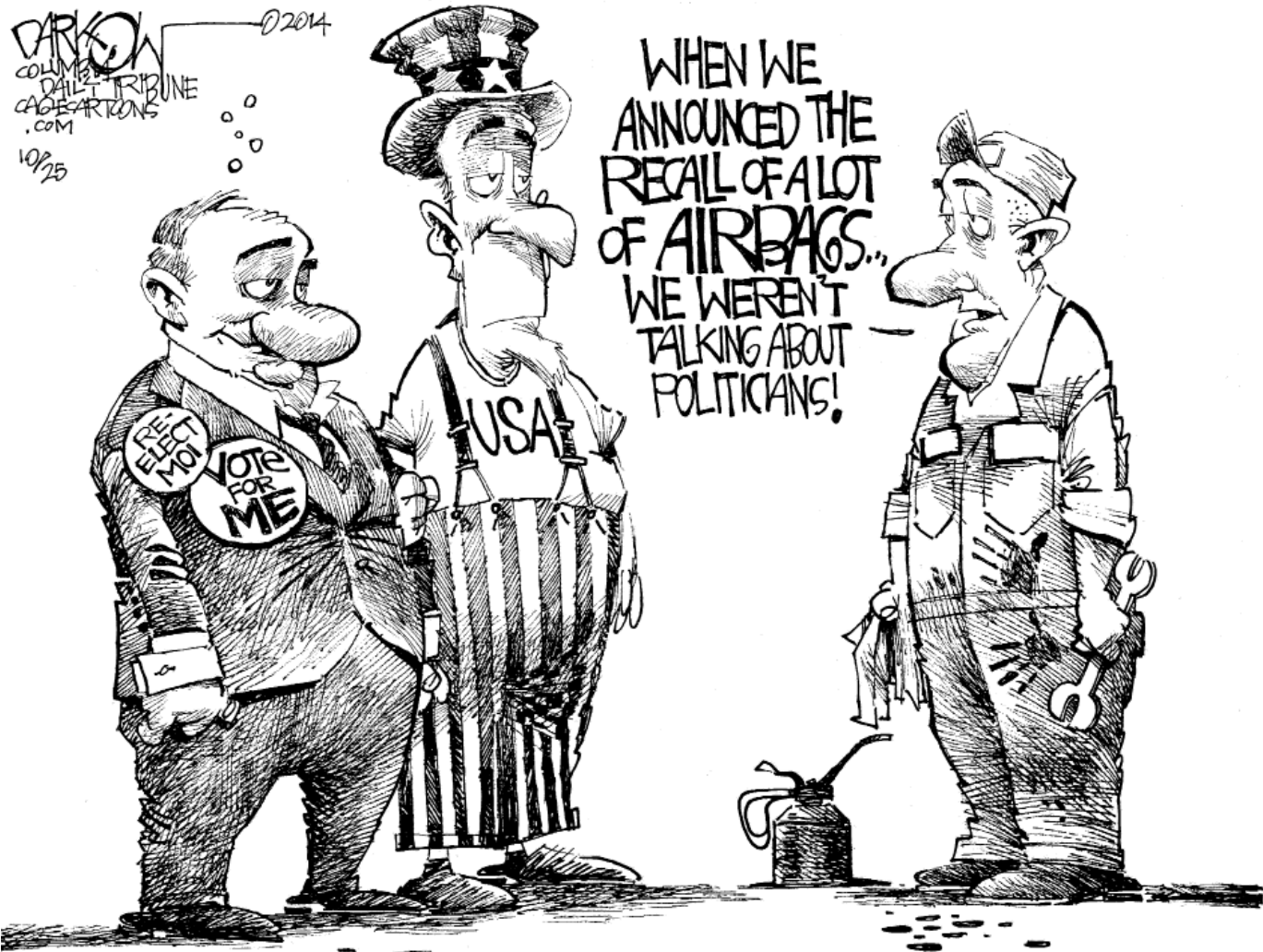
Salk didn't patent the vaccine, instead, he provided it as a gift to the American people. He likened obtaining a patent on this life-saving vaccination to seeking a patent on the sun.

As result of that vaccine, by 1979 polio was eradicated from the United States.

A huge part of this success story was the support the American public showed by gaining knowledge of the virus and giving, even if just 10 cents, to the organization that funded Salk's research and tests, the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, now known as the March of Dimes Foundation.

But this story must be contrasted with the reaction of the public to inaccurate information published in a 1998 report that purported to show a link between the MMR vaccination and autism. Since that report, despite studies showing no link, incidences of measles and mumps have risen greatly because some people have chosen not to get their children vaccinated.

Clearly, without public support and funding to develop vaccinations protecting society from large scale public health risks like polio would be impossible. That's why we urge people to find out the facts before they decide not to vaccinate.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Bronco Pride is alive and well

To the editor,

On the side of the high school is a sign that says "Bronco Pride."

After years of playing and watching Bronco sports, whether the team was winning or losing, I have witnessed the true definition of Bronco Pride.

The 2014 Bronco football team started the season with low numbers,

(24 sophomore/junior/seniors) and suffered a variety of season ending injuries (8). The team basically played the last half of the season with 16 players of which only three were seniors. Regardless of the score or the outcome, these remaining 16 teammates played every minute of every game as hard as if they were ahead by

1 point until the final seconds of the game counted down.

I can't explain the pride as a parent and a Bronco fan I have felt this entire year. My hat goes off to all the coaches who were able to keep their focus, which in turn, they instilled in all the players the will to stay focused all the way to the end of the game, give it your all and finish strong.

This group of players and coaches are the true definition of what Bronco Pride is all about.

We don't quit. We give it our all no matter the circumstances. We finish the game and know we did our best.

A very proud football parent and former Bronco player,

Mark G. Koerbitz
International Falls, MN

GUEST COLUMN

Society failed to give help, support

BY ASHLIE WORTHMAN

I was a friend of Katie Schneider. I am also an addict in recovery and it is a daily struggle. I am also a mother who does not have custody of her children, as I gave up my rights when I realized I had a serious problem and couldn't be the mother they deserved. I have had suicide attempts, not for attention but rather a cry for help. I have been to a mental illness facility three times at different hospitals. I have been to detox, in jail and in a treatment facility. I am telling you these things because I have been to my rock bottom, and then found that my rock bottom could always get worse. I understand the pain and loneliness of losing everything and only having your addiction for false comfort. I understand being a mother and realizing that at some point your disease gained total control and realizing that you are completely powerless to a substance

I have lived, and still live, with the pain and guilt of knowing a substance was stronger than me and demoralized, even dehumanized me to something I thought I would never become. I entirely and wholeheartedly understand the want to have peace and the desire to leave it all behind, with the thought that perhaps it would be better for everyone. I am writing this letter because I feel that an addict with mental illness, once determined to end their life, will do so no matter how they have to do it. With that being said, I think blaming a jail for the death of a vulnerable, mentally unstable adult is absurd. Perhaps there are faults with the jail and

procedures that were or weren't followed correctly. Perhaps Katie seemed fine when checking in and then took a turn for the worse. I understand checking in to a "safe place" and then coming down and realizing you no longer have your drug, realizing you are again in the same place you once were, and realizing that your life has perhaps gone completely wrong and then being bombarded with the feelings of shame and guilt topped with the sickness of wanting your substance. It's a pretty awful feeling. The bottom line is that Katie was a person who is no longer with us.

A mentally ill person or addict will take their life wherever they decide to do it, under whatever circumstances. We can blame the jail all day long, but in the end we should really be blaming addiction and mental illness. Katie had been to several treatment facilities prior to her last jail visit. The Narcotics Anonymous book says an addict who does not find sobriety will ultimately find jails, institutions and death. So I want to blame someone other than the place where our society sends criminals. Yes, I also have a DWI from 2007, and understand what a criminal is.

Where along the road did Katie get missed? Obviously, it was known of her mental illness and disease of addiction so why are the doctors, the psychologists, the counselors, social workers, case workers, the inpatient facilities, the outpatient facilities, the court system, the family or the friends not being blamed? How was she not committed by the county? If we are going to blame someone blame all of

these people and places that let Katie slip away.

If Katie was offered all of these resources and had been committed to actually follow through with them would she still be alive? And if she was offered these resources and following through with a plan for a mentally ill addict to live a fulfilling sober life, then blame the addict that made the choice to end her own life. If a mentally unstable addict takes their life in a county jail, or safe environment, then blame the facility. Ultimately though, a person such as Katie with her mental illness and previous suicide attempts should have been committed into a long-term treatment facility or mental hospital. How did it go so far that this once innocent woman feeling so alone and so desperate that she was willing to take her life and leave her child? I want to know how so many addicts and mentally ill get so isolated and slip through the cracks.

I understand that our society and probably Katie's family needs someone to blame and for most it is hard to blame mental illness and addiction. I just want Katie's suicide to be recognized for what it really is. A person who was sick that is no longer with us. I absolutely hate how this has turned into blaming people and places. This is not about who the sheriff is, and a ploy for advertising and campaigning. This is not a place to be breaking down all of the resources in our community, but rather should be a time to come together and see what could have been done to prevent this long before a tragic end.

This should be a huge eye opener for the need for a mental facility in Koochiching County, or

possibly the need for a position in the jail for someone trained more with mental illness such as a psychologist or psychiatrist to be staffed within the jail. Had we had that Katie perhaps would have received the care she needed.

We need to offer more resources for this in our community and make them more accessible. It is absolutely unacceptable that Katie's addiction and illness got this far. I want people to understand that Katie didn't just waltz into jail for the first time and then decided a few hours later to take her life. I want people to understand that Katie struggled with this for years. So if you need to blame law enforcement or the county Jail then go ahead. She did actually take her own life in their care. I want to reiterate the fact that law enforcement is there to make sure people are law abiding citizens and to offer protection, to keep peace in communities. The jail is the place where our society sends the criminals. The criminals are the people who are unable or unwilling to be law abiding because of negligence, resistance, illness, or addiction.

Katie had a mental illness and an addiction and I think that's where the blame should go. Somewhere along the lines Katie was let down and slipped through and was lonely enough, ashamed enough, desperate enough, hopeless enough to think that ending her own life was a better option than fighting to live. I think that's not a faulty jail, but a huge failure for the help and support that Katie needed and perhaps had, but clearly was not enough. H.O.P.E – Hold On Pain Ends

How to contact your lawmakers

FEDERAL OFFICES

President Barack Obama
Democrat
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C., 20500
202-456-1111
Website:
www.whitehouse.gov
E-mail:
president@whitehouse.gov

U.S. Rep. Rick Nolan
2447 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20515
202-225-6211
Website: www.nolan.house.gov
Facebook: US Rep Rick Nolan
Twitter: @USRepRickNolan

Duluth Office of
Congressman Rick Nolan
11 East Superior Street
Suite 125
Duluth, MN 55802
Phone: 218-464-5095
Fax: 218-464-5098

Brainerd Office of
Congressman Rick Nolan
Brainerd City Hall
501 Laurel Street
Brainerd, MN 56401
218-454-4078

U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar
Democrat
302 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
202-224-3244

Minnesota Office:
1200 Washington Avenue

South, Suite 250
Minneapolis, MN 55415
612-727-5220
Website:
www.klobuchar.senate.gov

U.S. Sen. Al Franken
Democrat
Senate Hart Building 320
Washington DC 20510
202-224-5641
Website:
www.alfranken.com
E-Mail:
info@franken.senate.gov

STATE OFFICES

Gov. Mark Dayton
130 State Capitol
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN, 55155
800-657-3717
E-mail:
Mark.Dayton@state.mn.us

Rep. David Dill
571 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-2190
800-339-0466
rep.david.dill@house.mn
Assistant: Joan Harrison

Sen. Tom Bakk
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Capitol, Room 226
St. Paul, MN 55155-1606
Capitol Office phone:
(651) 296-8881
Email:
www.senate.mn/
senatorbakkemail

The Journal welcomes letters from readers

Letters should be limited to 500 words or less. Longer letters may be edited. Letters must be signed and include the telephone number and address of the letter writer. Only the author's city address will be published.

Mail letters to The Journal, 1602 Highway 71, International Falls 56649. Letters can also be sent by e-mail to laurel@ifallsjournal.com.