

# OPINION

OUR VIEW

## A goal worth reaching

On the heels of a day set aside to give thanks, we ask you to think about people who may not feel they have a lot for which to be thankful.

In October, the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation reported some alarming projections: At some point in the last year, 40,000 Minnesotans were homeless, with 14,000 people in such circumstances on a typical night. About half of the state's homeless people are children under age 17, with the fastest growth in numbers seen among families with young children, said the report.

Homeless people may be more visible in the cold months elsewhere in the state, where people may be seen sleeping in the heated entry areas of buildings or near heat vents. But the problem is less obvious in Borderland, where cold temperatures drive most people inside during the night. Here, people without permanent places to live may end up couch bouncing between the homes of family and friends or waiting for the warmth of day in gas stations and other places open all night.

People who find themselves in a homeless situation do have something for which to be thankful — volunteers with Servants of Shelter are doing the best they can to find solutions to address the issue.

And while the organization continues to evolve, it also continues to help people. The organization now has an apartment for people without permanent housing and it's seeking its nonprofit status,

which will allow it to seek grants.

A holiday shopping luncheon from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. today at the Backus Community Center will benefit the efforts of SOS, thereby benefiting people who have no place to call home. But if you don't make the luncheon, SOS welcomes donations. And thanks to regular contributors, it is making strides toward solutions to homelessness in our community.

Some people may believe that being homeless only happens to other people. That's not the case. Situations in life can change rapidly and impact people in ways they cannot now foresee. An affordable housing situation can change quickly with the loss of a job, change in marital status, or the addition of alcohol and drug issues. Even the most comfortable among us can find ourselves uncomfortable very quickly should we be faced with these lifestyle changes and others.

SOS can often assist people who are working toward housing permanency. In addition, the organization assists people in need to connect with other agencies and providers who can help in the other factors that have led to homelessness.

Clearly, SOS has played and will continue to play an important role in the Borderland community.

Ending homelessness in Borderland is an important goal, and with the efforts of the SOS volunteers that goal may now be within reach.

### 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



IT'S YOUR COURT

## Heroic battle with cancer

The caller ID on the phone indicated that the call was from the doctor's office. We had been anxiously awaiting the call.

The mammogram had revealed a spot that concerned the doctors and a biopsy had been performed. We were waiting for the results. I had assumed that if the news was good that we would be informed right away to put our minds at ease. We were told, however, that we had an appointment with a surgeon the next day.

We knew what that meant.

The surgeon was very professional and kind. He looked at my wife, Cynthia, and gave her the bad news... she had breast cancer. It was one of those surreal moments that you never forget and the words hung in the air for a few awkward seconds. The doctor then explained the surgical options and gave direct answers to our many questions. We met with a nurse who provided more information and scheduled future appointments.

We left the clinic with our heads spinning and a bag full of pamphlets. Life had thrown us a curveball and we had to deal with it. So we did.

Chemotherapy. Then radiation. Then hormone therapy. Cancer treatment can be arduous, but I am happy to report that Cynthia is doing well and that her prognosis is good. I am blown away with how my wife has dealt with everything as she has demonstrated nothing but courage and grace. She has



Paul  
**RASMUSSEN**  
DISTRICT JUDGE

always been my partner and the love of my life, but now she is also my new hero.

As a child I had many heroes...mostly sports figures and musicians. As a young adult that changed and my heroes were individuals who made the world a better place. In my thirties and forties my parents became my biggest heroes as I came to appreciate all they had done and sacrificed for me.

Now, I live with my biggest hero.

My wife has always been a very caring and giving person, and she has always focused most of her time and energy doing things for others. Fighting cancer has not changed her, and she still puts the needs of others ahead of her own needs, even when she is tired or when she does not feel well.

There is a saying that "adversity does not build character...it reveals it." Having observed how my wife has dealt with her diagnosis and treatment, I am now a

witness to that truth.

I started writing this column in January of 2007, but I stopped last year when my wife was diagnosed. I could not find either the time or the inspiration to write. Fighting cancer involves, however, trying to return to your normal activities so I am going to give the column another go.

My wife's battle with cancer has certainly changed things for us. The focus on her recovery has brought us closer together and I have new inspiration and a higher standard. I strive every day to be deserving of my wife's love and support and I try to emulate her courage, compassion and character. I know I will come up short, but I will do better because of the effort.

Cancer...you have certainly changed us, but cancer patients...like my wife...have a character and spirit that you cannot defeat. As for me, my wife's battle with cancer has helped me put things into perspective and I pray has made me a better husband, a better father and a better judge.

Take that, cancer. You have given me a new hero.

As always, remember it is your court.

*Rasmussen is a district court judge in the Ninth Judicial District. He is chambered in Clearwater County and works primarily in Clearwater and Hubbard counties. His e-mail address is: paul.rasmussen@courts.state.mn.us*

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## Clean up of carbon dioxide is needed

**To the editor,**  
This nation need not discontinue operating its electric power plants fueled by coal, only that something be done about "cleaning up" the tremendous amounts of carbon dioxide emitted by them.

The facts and figures quoted by Mr. Sampson are suspect. Carbon sequestration technology does exist outside of the laboratory but it is costly to retrofit existing power plants. It is the responsible thing to do even if it results in an increase in electric rates to the consumer.

The average yearly cost of electric energy for a family of four at today's rate should be approximately \$2,500. A 20-percent increase as claimed results in \$500 added over the year, not \$1,400. But, the rate increase might be closer to 8 percent if the cost of sequestration hardware was distributed over the customer base resulting in a \$200 increase.

Other figures cited are equally misleading. The quote from Paul Knappenberger is particularly disturbing. This individual is not reliable for unbiased information.

Knappenberger, along with his mentor, Pattrick J.

Michaels, are both employed by the University of Virginia and the Cato Institute. They have coauthored papers together and Michaels has written a book on climate change titled Meltdown, published by the Cato Institute. I have read this book and have found many errors in analysis and figures claimed. Not to mention obvious omissions and misrepresentation of research by others. It is not a good authoritative study. In fact, these individuals have degrees in environmental studies not climatology.

The Science and Public Policy Institute and Cato Institute have an agenda and publish papers denying climate change even though it is now settled science in spite of misinformation these institutions, books such as Taken By Storm, the popular press and radio talk shows feed the public. Temperatures have been on the rise globally contrary to Sampson's claims and have been increasing the polar regions at a rate twice than that previously estimated. Earlier there were not many temperature sensors deployed at the poles but has since been

corrected and the data coming in has surprised and alarmed the scientific community.

Society will find the cost of cleaning up fossil fuel plants to pale in comparison to the cost of adapting to a warming climate and repairing the damage caused by more violent weather and relocating citizens as a result of the warming.

Sometimes it is necessary to drive change by imposing controls on the industries that are emission sources. Do you suppose the residents of Los Angeles and Denver these days have a better life due to the reduced automobile emissions mandated since the 1970s and later years? Cleaner cars result in cleaner air.

The "brown cloud" that so plagued these cities years ago are for the most part a thing of the past. The United States and China are by far the two largest emitters of carbon dioxide. We cannot continue burning fossil fuels without consequences. The alternative to cleaning up the combustion products is to reduce the use of coal if the industry refuses to be a responsible citizen.

**George M. Hnatiuk**  
International Falls, MN

### The Journal welcomes letters from readers

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