

OPINION

OUR VIEW

Finding a better way

Randomly drug testing students attending public schools in Minnesota may be well intentioned, but will miss the target.

The Duluth school district is considering a plan to randomly test students involved in sports and other activities in its high schools in 2015 in an effort to curb abuse and get help for kids who need it.

If the district adopts the proposal, it would be the first in Minnesota to do so. We urge school officials to further consider whether random testing students for drugs — alcohol, cocaine, methamphetamine and marijuana — works.

Earlier this month, a national study found drug testing to have no effect on students' drug use. Instead, the study found a positive school environment helped to cut down the number of students who start smoking cigarettes and using marijuana.

Should Duluth proceed with the plan, it would randomly test students who play sports, join clubs or park in the school lot. We hate to generalize, but it seems the students who may be doing drugs and need the

most help may not be among the school's athletes and active members of the clubs and organizations.

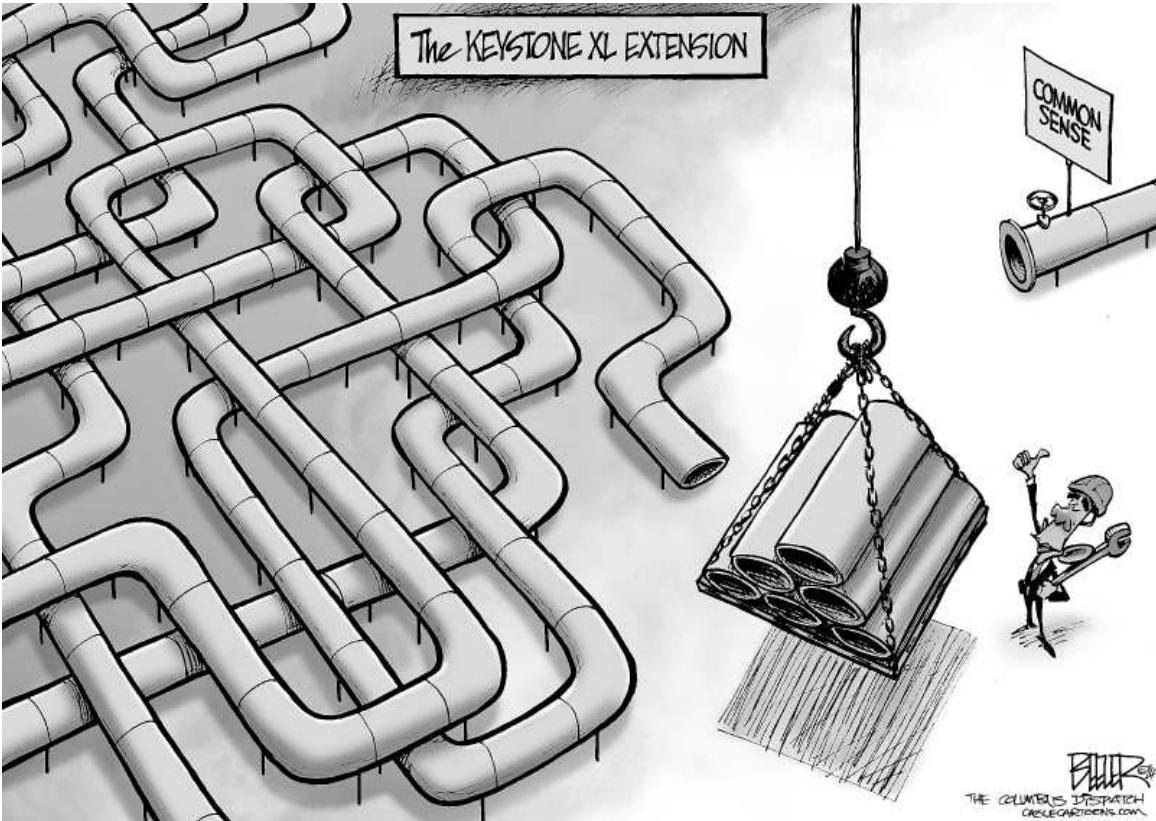
Despite concern from parents and others who say suspicionless drug testing violates civil rights and fuels a school environment of mistrust, federal courts have allowed drug testing of students who volunteer in activities.

Superior, Wis., students have been randomly drug tested since 2006. To participate in co-curricular activities, consent to be drug tested is required by a student and their parent.

But in Minnesota, students already must sign an agreement not to take drugs or drink alcohol to participate in sports. Schools have repercussions in place for violating the rules.

Random drug testing active, well-rounded students who do not exhibit symptoms or violate rules is a negative attempt to drive students to higher achievement. Instead, creating a positive learning environment that compels students to do well and avoid drugs is a better, lasting way to help our youth prepare for a world full of temptation.

FIRST AMENDMENT "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press or the right of people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."



Battling with addiction

Actor Philip Seymour Hoffman was found dead of an apparent drug overdose in his New York City apartment late Sunday morning. He was 46 years old.

A friend found him with a syringe and what appeared to be heroin, according to law enforcement officials. Hoffman battled long-term addiction, discussing it in a 2006 "60 Minutes" interview, saying when it came to drugs and alcohol, "I liked it all." After a long stretch of sobriety, he checked into a rehab facility last year after a brief relapse.

I was saddened when I heard the news Sunday afternoon, and wasn't sure how to react. I didn't even know Hoffman battled addiction, as he was a private person who preferred to let the roles he played speak for themselves.

I ran down the list of his films I had seen in my head, fondly remembering his versatility as well as his talent for playing a character just right. In high school, my friends and I watched "Along Came Polly" constantly, quoting the hilarious one-liners his character Sandy Lyle spouts throughout the film. In "Punch Drunk Love," as the manager of a phone sex hotline, he has a loud, profanity-laced phone confrontation with Adam Sandler's character in a classic scene.

In 2006, he won the Academy



Spenser BICKETT  
STAFF WRITER

Award for best actor for portraying Truman Capote in "Capote," the film about Capote writing his classic novel, "In Cold Blood." In my favorite film of his, "The Master," he plays Lancaster Dodd, the charismatic leader of a cult-ish organization. He got an Academy Award nomination for best supporting actor for his work opposite Joaquin Phoenix, who played Freddie Quell.

Home from naval service after World War II, Quell drifts aimlessly until he finds and attaches himself to Dodd. At first, Quell views Dodd as an infallible father figure, but over the course of the film, discovers Dodd is just as flawed as himself. It's a universal theme, the realization the people you look up to are actually as flawed and mistake-prone as you are.

We look up to actors, but often forget they fight the

same battles we do. Addiction doesn't discriminate or care if you're an actor, athlete, doctor, or celebrity. It will take hold of you and crush you if it can. In comedian Rob Delaney's book, "Rob Delaney: Mother. Wife. Sister. Human. Warrior. Falcon. Yardstick. Turban. Cabbage," he outlines his life-long struggle with addiction. He emphasizes respecting the power of addiction, and how seeking out help is necessary in order to conquer it.

Drug courts like the Borderland Substance Abuse Court use a problem-solving approach to helping alcohol and drug addicted offenders in the judicial system. Using different treatment methods, court participants like judges, prosecutors, and probation officers work to help defendants deal with addiction.

There's also Rainy River Recovery, a non-residential chemical dependency treatment service. It can evaluate your needs and develop a plan to fit those needs in order to help you live a sober life. The agency can be reached by calling 218-285-7029.

I understand in the grand scheme of things, Hoffman's death doesn't affect the daily lives of most people. But for those struggling with addiction, he could serve as a warning sign, and be the push they need to reach out and find the help they need.

How to contact your lawmakers

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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.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Decision by some impacts many

**To the editor,**  
Thank you doctors (Douglas) Johnson, (Samantha) Crossley, and (Jeri) Vergeldt for your letter to the editor in regards to health care in our community.

It is time the community pays attention to the decisions which have been made by a few but which affect us all. And let it be known these are not the only doctors expressing their concerns. A recent visit to Essentia Health in Duluth

initiated conversation with another physician who visits our clinic. According to him, Essentia Health has worked hard to recruit and keep doctors at our clinic. And were it not for the decision of a few individuals, we would have had a new Essentia hospital built here by Essentia.

What has been decided by some members of the hospital board is just craziness. Whose health and wellness do they

have in mind?  
Considering the economics of our community at this time, the motives and "politics" of turning down a new hospital by Essentia, starting a rural health clinic and who knows whatever else they are thinking, needs to be questioned.

**Susan Fraik**  
International Falls, MN  
*Editor's Note: This letter was also signed by George Fraik.*

RLRHC opened to fill a need

**To the editor,**  
At Rainy Lake Medical Center we're dedicated to one thing – providing the International Falls community with access to high quality healthcare, close to home. One way we're fulfilling that commitment is through the opening of our new Rainy Lake Rural Health Clinic.

We decided to pursue the establishment of a Rural Health Clinic because we saw a need in our community and wanted to address the lack of access to healthcare providers. We agree with many local residents who feel it is unacceptable to ask patients who need care to wait weeks or even months to see a provider. And we agree that it's completely unnecessary for

residents in the International Falls area to make the drive out of town for routine procedures and diagnostics.

With the addition of the new Rural Health Clinic, residents will have additional access for receiving medical care locally and in a timely manner. We hope to work together with other practitioners to provide this great community with a wide range of quality healthcare services.

Koochiching County's population is facing above average unemployment, with a significant number of residents living below the poverty level. The Rainy Lake Rural Health Clinic is open to everyone; however, it provides an additional benefit to uninsured,

low income families. The clinic will use a sliding fee scale for eligible patients that will discount charges based on annual income and family size.

Rainy Lake RHC is a benefit to our community. It will help keep jobs local and increase our residents' access to a greater variety of medical services. The goals are to help our community experience excellent care by all providers you know and trust, available when you need it, and located here in town, for your convenience.

**Dr. Jon Talsness**  
International Falls, MN  
*Editor's note: This letter was also signed by Robert Anderson, Don Billig, Brian Briggs, Susan Congrave, and Bonnie Erickson.*