

OPINION

OUR VIEW

A change of season

Labor Day is just around the corner and we will turn attention from the dog days of summer to a new school year.

The fourth annual Labor Day community picnic Monday is the perfect kick off to the change of season.

Hosted by the city of International Falls and the Koochiching Labor Assembly, the Labor Day picnic is set for 4-7 p.m. Monday at Smokey Bear Park. In addition to a free meal, activities for children are set to begin at 2 p.m. and entertainment starts at 3 p.m.

While Labor Day gives many of us a break from the workaday world, it should also serve as a day to celebrate the nation's labor movement, which has brought American workers work place rights and employment benefits that we have come to take for granted. We encourage everyone to take a moment to reflect on the contributions and sacrifices American workers have made for the well-being of the nation and to help educate our young people about the subject.

And educating our youth is the next big day on the calendar, as locally many schools start classes Tuesday.

We urge area parents

to take some time to reacquaint their children with the rules associated with walking to and around schools. The best way to do this is to walk with your children to help teach them about crossing the road, watching for cars and many other valuable skills they will need.

We also urge all drivers to slow down and remember that around any corner or between any parked vehicles a young child eager to get across the road may suddenly appear.

Many children are entrusted to the care of bus drivers to reach their schools. Drivers must be prepared to stop for a school bus when its overhead yellow lights are flashing. Minnesota law requires vehicles stop for a school bus when its red overhead lights are flashing, regardless of the direction from which the driver is approaching. Drivers must not proceed until the school bus resumes motion and the red lights stop flashing, or until signaled by the school bus driver to proceed.

Let's embrace this new season by reflecting on the true meaning of Labor Day and jumping into a safe and productive school year.



Challenging others, creating criticism

Is there a bad way to give money to charity or raise awareness for a good cause?

Over the past month, millions worldwide have seen a good test case for that question via the ALS ice bucket challenge.

ALS stands for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, and is a progressive neurodegenerative disease affecting nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord. Basically, if you're diagnosed with ALS, it's only going to get worse, and you lose the ability to walk, speak, eat, and use your arms and hands.

As many as 30,000 Americans live with ALS, with a little over 5,600 people diagnosed each year. It's 100 percent fatal, and there's only one drug approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to treat ALS, which only extends survival by two or three months.

The ALS ice bucket challenge first went viral in late July, and since then, millions of people have participated. The challenge involves someone filming themselves dumping a bucket of ice water on their head. Before the splash, they say who nominated them to take the challenge, and nominate others to take part.

As with any viral meme, the exact details surrounding the ALS ice bucket challenge are fuzzy. The basic premise



is if you don't participate within 24 hours of being nominated, you have to donate to ALS research. If you do participate, you can still donate, though. Some have used video views or Facebook "likes" to dictate how much they give, saying for every view or "like" they'll donate a certain amount of money.

According to the ALS Association, as of Monday, it has received \$79.7 million in donations since July 29, compared to \$2.5 million during the same period in 2013. These donations have come from existing donors as well as 1.7 million new donors.

I was nominated for the challenge last Tuesday, and I completed it Wednesday night. I nominated five people, and for everyone who completed it, I would donate \$10. Only one of the nominees completed the challenge within the required time limit, though.

Tons of actors, athletes, musicians, business figures, and celebrities have taken the challenge

as well. Some have kept it simple, while others have tried to be creative and extravagant with their videos.

Despite the unbelievable increase in fundraising and awareness, there has been some backlash and criticism to the ALS ice bucket challenge. There are two major criticisms, the first being the basic premise is flawed. If the choice is between donating or dumping a bucket of ice water on your head, if the majority are going with the ice water, doesn't that mean people are glorifying not donating to charity?

Some have combated this by taking the route I did, where if the people they challenge complete it, they'll donate. More famous participants have used video views or Facebook "likes" to dictate how much money they'll give. I understand this criticism, but someone only has to do some quick research to find out the challenge has also raised a ton of money, as well as awareness.

The other, more reasonable, criticism I've heard involves responsible water use. According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, as of Aug. 19, 40 percent of the U.S. is a classified drought area, with the worst conditions in California and the western U.S. Isn't it then a little tone-deaf for millions of people to film themselves dumping water on the ground?

I understand the concern by drought-stricken areas, but I think they were under drought conditions before the ice bucket challenge became widespread. Many factors contribute to drought conditions, and I frankly don't see how the ice bucket challenge is more of an issue than things like overly long showers, which no one has been making a fuss about.

With social media tools like Facebook and Twitter, as well as blogs, we live in an era when anyone can make their feelings known instantly about any topic. In this constant chatter, all praise gets lumped together, and the only thing that stands out is criticism. People realize it's easier to drive traffic by coming up with a contrarian viewpoint, so they take a negative stance on anything they can.

The ALS ice bucket challenge was seen as a positive, feel-good story to raise awareness and money for a good cause. People realized they could gain a larger audience by picking it apart over the Internet, which is why there's now a backlash to a unique, successful fundraiser.

In the end, I think the positives greatly outweighed the negatives, which is why I chose to take up the bucket when challenged, and to open up my checkbook. There's no use crying over spilled ice water.

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