

OPINION PACKAGES

GUEST VIEW

Unhealthy Workers, children shouldn't go uninsured

From The Sacramento Bee, Sacramento, Calif.

Except for narrowly partisan debate over whether the Republican Congress' efforts to restrain Medicare spending was a "rescue" of the system or an "attack" on it, health care practically disappeared as a serious issue this fall. But as a new study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association makes plain, the central embarrassment of the U.S. health care system — the 40.6 million Americans without health insurance — hasn't gone away.

The researchers from Harvard and the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation surveyed a broad cross-section of adults about their experience in receiving and paying for health care. They found that 19 percent were uninsured or had been uninsured during the previous year, most of them working people who did not have health insurance because their employer did not offer it and they could not afford to buy it on their own.

Of the uninsured, nearly half reported that they had been forced to go without needed care in the prior year because of cost. More than one-third said they had trouble paying medical bills for services they had received; many said they had outstanding medical bills of more than \$1,000 and that the debt had created problems with their jobs or in paying for food and shelter.

Defenders of the health status quo often argue that having 40 million people without health coverage isn't a major social problem, because people who really need medical care manage to get it, either through charity care or paying for it out of pocket. The evidence in the study points to a less rosy conclusion. Many of the uninsured do get by; but just as many do not.

A generation ago, the country rightly decided that it could no longer leave to chance whether elderly people, the disabled and the poor had access to health care. Why should it be any less ashamed today that millions of workers and their children are playing, and often losing, health roulette?

Providing a health insurance safety net for them would be a far less difficult undertaking than Medicare was, since most of the uninsured are young and need less high-tech care. Beginning with universal health insurance for children would be easier still, since health care for children is even cheaper and the payoffs for preventive care are large.

A country that can work itself into a political shouting match over a \$10 billion-a-year difference in Medicare spending for retirees but doesn't even notice the millions of workers who are going without needed care has lost its sense of perspective. It's time to get that perspective back.

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CARTOONIST'S VIEW



LETTERS

COPYRIGHT INTERESTS

In regards to the article on the University Bookstore and copyright laws, I would like to make a few comments. In the article, Paul Carlson, vice chancellor for business and finance, stated they may have jumped the gun but they served the students well, and they were not going to apologize for that. Since the University Bookstore is willing to break the law to help students out, maybe they could get into something more lucrative than copyright infringement. How about a couple of bank robberies and send the proceeds to the students?

Another great statement by Carlson was, "We anticipated the approval process coming through. There was a very small risk." So is he trying to say, "It's OK if you don't get caught." Does the bookstore feel that way about its property? Is it OK to steal from the bookstore as long as you don't get caught?

The bookstore should find out exactly what the law is and follow it. If they have a sound legal argument why they can copy the material early, go ahead. But don't try to justify things by saying you are doing it for the students.

Troy Johnson
Third-year law student



JASON GILDOW/DN

several months ago. Congratulations to her and her partner. It was neat to see how her parents also (particularly her mother) responded to the marriage of her and her partner. I guess there is some acceptance in Nebraska!!! Hurray for some tolerance!

Lots of good wishes to everyone and hope to hear more and see more about gay/les/bi/trans issues related to the University of Nebraska.

Rev. Rodney A. Bell, II, D.D.
UNL GALA

SHOW OF SUPPORT

The show "Turning Point" that aired on Thursday night on most ABC stations was about gay marriages and also child-raising by gay/lesbian couples. I want to personally congratulate Annette Friskop and her partner for their bravery and dedication to something they believe in — marriage and child-raising.

Those of you who did not see it, that's too bad. It was a wonderful show about three or four gay/lesbian couples going through a marriage ceremony, relatives' responses, Annette and her partner's journey to have a child through artificial insemination and a nice coverage of this issue.

Annette is a 1986 University of Nebraska alumna, and she wrote me.

STUDENT STUPOR

OK, I'll bite. I usually admire the obvious, and sometimes black, humor of your columnists, but this time it's gone too far.

I've seen lame attempts at justifying college drinking, and have even heard some almost-convincing arguments, but this just completely threw your, and the entire Daily Nebraskan staff's, credibility out the window and down the sewer drain.

Overconsumption of alcohol is dangerous, and you and your staff have tried to justify it by making it a "cool," funny, stress-relieving activity. Tired of studying? Just drink. Trouble with women? Just drink. Life got you down? Just drink. Bummed out in general? Just drink.

Bored? Just drink. Happy? Just drink. It's OK, it's great fun watching your friends make fools of themselves and others for the sake of your stress relief. It's no problem. The bars are only a few blocks away. You can make it back to your dorm, sorority, fraternity, apartment, etc. Just drive real slow. Hooray, you weren't pulled over!

Dammit! Don't you heathens realize the danger you are inflicting upon yourselves and the public? Oh, I know, I know... you're invincible. You have no cares in the world. You're safe, because you can put down 18 beers and then still drive back home — you haven't killed anyone so far.

And I know, you'll be able to stop at any time. Just as soon as you graduate. You certainly won't become an alcoholic, or a wife beater, or child abuser, or family deserter, or a homeless person, or a LOSER. You can handle it.

You know, while you're at it, why don't you visit some of the local junior high and high schools to promote your cure for stress relief? I mean, you've got the answers! You've even figured out how to equate alcoholism to ambition. Way to go, you've cracked the code.

Steve Willey, if you drink to try to solve problems, relieve stress, escape, or if you think that drinking is the only way to have a fun evening, etc., then that is alcoholism. (By the way, drinking a six-pack to "begin" your evening of drinking is NOT responsible drinking.) Just stroll on down to your local AA meeting and talk with some of those invincible people after whom you've modeled your life. I believe they may be able to define "ambition" a tad better than you.

I know that I have probably made no impact on any drunk, alcoholic college student, because you all know everything through the miracle cure of alcohol, but I still have hope that at least one of you will see what you are doing is dangerous and not cool. In the meantime, I hope to God you don't kill anyone.

Annie Nau
staff
UNL Distance Education

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