



## A Sense Of Community?

BY KELLY HERTZ  
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The future of Yankton's very existence twisted in the balance Tuesday night during a town hall meeting at the Summit Activities Center.

OK, I won't actually swear that's true. But as far as too many of you are concerned, that MIGHT have been on the line at the meeting.

There were only about 80 people in attendance at a meeting that, in fact, examined Yankton's sports facility needs. It featured a discussion that touched on a number of issues, including soccer facilities, baseball fields, football fields, dance and cheer accessibility, potential indoor facilities, major tournaments and so forth.

I know that more than 80 families are involved in all those activities here. (And not just soccer, which had an out-of-town game Tuesday, so that contingent had an excuse.)

And I would venture to guess that, if an opt-out proposal concerning these matters ever comes up for a vote, more than 80 people would vote against it.

So it's slightly discouraging when a public discussion on the topic could only attract a meager crowd. And of the 80 on hand, some were city personnel who were there to find out what the public was thinking, and a few were media to report on it.

I came away from Tuesday's meeting feeling that the sparse attendance was not so much a sign of disinterest in how this community will or won't proceed on the question of sports facilities, but more a symptom of something else.

To recap the meeting: There were several opinions expressed on the topic, which is actually a stew of many separate issues. While a couple of people were opposed to expanding Yankton's sports facilities, especially on the taxpayers' dime, most said that the city's current facilities were inadequate for the numbers that participate and not large enough to host large-scale tournaments that could attract hordes to town to feed the local tax base. Therein, they maintained, opportunity lies and Yankton should find a way to seize it.

One could look at the small crowd and say it belied the notion that a lot of people are involved in these activities. But I know otherwise; I've seen the crowds.

It's also possible that the small turnout reflected that aforementioned symptom: a growing lack of community within this community. We are seemingly becoming a lot of separate parts, not a unified whole, when it comes to such affairs.

But Yankton isn't alone in dealing with this affliction, for this is what our 21st century society is becoming. It's

at least a partial fallout of what I call the "television effect."

Once upon a time in the unimaginable days before TV, entertainment and social interaction were communal experiences, whether it was going to the movies or the theater, or attending other public functions on a regular basis.

These were popular opportunities to interact with other people and, in the process, become more intimately bonded to one's community and one's neighbors.

But television began changing that. Families started staying home more and venturing out less. We gradually began withdrawing, socially speaking, from the very communities in which we lived.

This has accelerated greatly in the last three decades with the coming of VCRs and then DVDs and Netflix; with cable TV and then satellite packages; with wide-screen, high-definition television experiences; with the Internet and the explosion of video games; and so on. It's so much easier now for people to withdraw from the communities around them, from the people around them, even from other family members in the same household.

It's also easier now for a family to move into a town and not really be a part of the place, at least in terms of caring about what the local governing entities are doing or what someone on the other side of town is up to. The kids in that family may play soccer or baseball, but that still isn't seen as any kind of commitment to the notion of community.

What does it take to get people involved? What does it take to get people to care?

I don't know, because in the old days, all it seemed to take was the realization that living in a community meant you were part of what was going on and where it was headed. It was an unspoken commitment.

Now, it seems to need something more. To be fair, I didn't expect the entire town to show up Tuesday because there are actually people who don't care or are not emotionally invested enough to take an interest in those activities and wouldn't mind any reasonable costs associated with expanding the facilities. That's natural.

It's the people who will complain later, one way or another, that bother me. Tuesday was a chance to get in on this discussion while it IS still in the discussion stage. But the opportunity was missed, at least for that night.

That AWOL sense of community is a hurdle we all face (ironically, I suppose). If this town is ever going to amount to anything more than it is now, it's a hurdle we must eventually overcome — preferably, as a community.

You can follow Kelly Hertz on Twitter at [twitter.com/kelly\\_hertz](http://twitter.com/kelly_hertz)



Kelly HERTZ

## A Hurricane's Powerful Lesson

BY LEONARD PITTS JR.  
Tribune Media Services

Here's what an idiot I was: I thought it was going to be fun.

Scary, yes — the lights would go out, the winds would howl, the windows would rattle — but essentially harmless for all that. It would be fun, in a ghost-stories-in-the-dark, shiver-up-your-back kind of way. We would camp out in the house, eating bologna sandwiches and playing board games, waiting for the lights to come back on.

We had been gone for a week, a family road trip to Washington and Atlanta, and this was before the Internet was ubiquitous, back when it was still possible to unplug from the inflow of information. I had not seen a paper or watched the news since we left Miami. So it was not until the night before we returned, when I chanced to be watching television in a Savannah, Ga., motel, that we learned a hurricane was bearing down on South Florida.

We stopped in Daytona Beach the next day and called our neighbors from a pay phone. Pam and Joe told us to, for God's sake, stay where we were, but we shined them on. I didn't want to miss the fun.

That was 20 years ago this week and, needless to say, "fun" is the last word anyone who went through it would use to describe Hurricane Andrew. Because we had not been there to board up the windows, we spent that night in a defenseless home. We didn't initially understand what we'd wandered into. At one point, water was spitting through the vent in the kitchen ceiling, and my wife was laying down newspaper because she didn't want it to ruin her floor. I pulled her clear just before the ceiling came crashing in.

That's when we understood. We huddled in a closet the rest of the night, me, her, and our five children, ages 18 years down to 23 months, listening fearfully to the thumping, howling and shattering of the storm.

Have you ever felt a wall breathing? Expanding and contracting like lungs? I felt the closet wall breathing against my back all night long. It was the first time in my

life — the only time, thank you, God — I ever felt the reality, the imminence, the nearness, the likelihood of my own death. It had, shall we say, a centering effect.

But the roof over us held and when morning came, we stepped from that bunker unscathed. Looking back, that seems miraculous to me. The rest of the house was destroyed, sunlight rushing through where the living room roof had been. Almost everything we owned was damaged or destroyed — clothing, record albums, books, furniture, my wife's car, photos, appliances. We had little food, no water. The TV was facedown in a puddle.

And you know what? It didn't matter. Not even a little bit.

Everybody says that, of course: "It's only stuff; it's not important." Most of the time, I think, that's just lip service. Ours is a culture of acquisition, where people literally kill and die for stuff, for DVD players, Jordans and iPads. I don't think you can appreciate how unimportant stuff truly is until all your stuff is gone and you, against the odds, are not.

This is the lesson the storm taught me. Twenty years later, I live in a new home with new stuff. But the lesson has never left.

The night after the storm, I wandered through that broken house in the dark, I had no idea what would happen next, how I would feed, clothe or house my family. But I do not remember feeling despair. All I remember is gratitude.

I looked up through where the ceiling had been and I could see the stars. I am a lifelong child of the city and I realized I'd never actually seen the stars; most of them had always been lost in the wash of light from the street-lamps and gas station signs of Earth. But there were no lights or signs now, and there they were, an endless field of diamonds glittering upon an infinity of black. For a long moment, I just stood there, looking up. I'd never seen anything more beautiful in my life.

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the police. These boys did damage for no reason. By leaving the American flag lying on the ground, they dishonored themselves, their families and all Americans that love this country and the flag that it stands for. These young men need to think of all the men and women that have served in the military and died for this country and the flag that it represents.

For the young ladies that were with the boys (but not involved), you might want to find other young men to be with who have better values and more common sense before they get you into serious trouble.

Fortunately for us, most of our youth and young adults are good, hard-working people and help make Yankton a great place to live.

## THE PRESS & DAKOTAN

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### OPINION | WE SAY

#### West Nile High



**THUMBS DOWN** to the seemingly unlikely resurgence of the West Nile virus, which is now seeing what the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has called "one of the largest" outbreaks of the virus since it first appeared in the U.S. in 1999. In Thursday's *Press & Dakotan*, it was reported that there have been 1,118 illnesses reported in the country so far, more than half of them in Texas, where 14 people have died. Normally at this point, there are approximately 300 cases. South Dakota and Nebraska are also seeing their share of the cases, despite the fact that drought conditions have held down the insect population this summer. But one official said the drought conditions lure birds to concentrate in drinking areas where the mosquitoes breed. As we stated a few weeks ago, it's still important to take precautions when going out, for danger still lurks.

#### Small Numbers



**THUMBS DOWN** to the poor turnout at Tuesday's town hall meeting concerning Yankton's sports facility needs. This is a complicated issue, and there are several questions that must be addressed and a number of options that can be pursued. With nothing set in stone or even at the proposal stage, this was a good opportunity to submit your views on why Yankton should or shouldn't pursue all or some of these avenues. A Thumbs Up certainly has to go out to those residents who took the time to air their views and add to what was an interesting discussion, but more voices are needed.

#### Get Connected



**THUMBS DOWN** to the lack of broadband Internet access in many rural areas such as South Dakota. According to a recent Federal Communications Commission report, about 14.5 million rural Americans, or 23.7 percent, did not have access to a speedy connection as of June 2011. That compares to 4.5 percent of Americans living in non-rural areas. In West Virginia, 45.9 percent of its population has no access to broadband, which transmits at a speed of at least four megabits per second. The FCC says more than 3,000 people in Yankton County don't have access, while only about 70 of Knox County's approximately 8,600 residents do have access. The FCC has a program to subsidize the expansion of services in rural areas with the goal of having universal access by 2020. For those who want to keep up with today's economy, broadband isn't a luxury, it's a necessity. South Dakota needs its citizens to be on the fast track and not falling behind.

#### Winding Down



When it comes to this year's historic drought and temperatures, we have to struggle to find anything we like about it. But **THUMBS UP** to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration may have given us one golden kernel. According to the *Kansas City Star*, preliminary data gathered by the NOAA shows "that fewer tornadoes skipped, dragged or plowed across the United States in July than during any other July in the 60 years since reliable numbers began being recorded. The same analysis shows that the summer of 2012 may break the record for the fewest tornadoes for any U.S. summer." Between mid-April to late July, the U.S. normally has about 850 tornadoes, which is the vast majority of the approximately 1,300 that occur annually. This year, the April to July figure will be less than 300. The reason? Very few thunderstorms. Well, we'll take what good news we can get, though we'd really like to see some thunderstorms (sans tornadoes).

### ONLINE OPINION

The results of the most recent Internet poll on the *Press & Dakotan's* Web site are as follows:

#### LATEST RESULTS:

**Do you think the government should temporarily waive the ethanol mandate as a way to hold down the price of food items?**

Yes .....59%  
No .....29%  
Not sure .....11%  
**TOTAL VOTES CAST .....422**

*The Press & Dakotan Internet poll is not a scientific survey and reflects the opinions only of those who choose to participate. The results should not be construed as an accurate representation or scientific measurement of public opinion.*

#### CURRENT QUESTION:

**How closely do you plan on following the upcoming political conventions?**

To vote in the *Press & Dakotan's* Internet poll, log on to our website at [www.yankton.net](http://www.yankton.net).

### TODAY IN HISTORY

#### By The Associated Press

Today is Friday, Aug. 24, the 237th day of 2012. There are 129 days left in the year.

**Today's Highlight in History:** On Aug. 24, 1992, Hurricane Andrew smashed into Florida, causing \$30 billion in damage; 43 U.S. deaths were blamed on the storm.

**On this date:** In A.D. 79, long-dormant Mount Vesuvius erupted, burying the Roman cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum in volcanic ash; an estimated 20,000 people died.

In 1572, the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre of French Protestants at the hands of Catholics began in Paris.

In 1814, during the War of 1812, British forces invaded Washington, D.C., setting fire to the Capitol and the White House, as well as other buildings.

In 1821, the Treaty of Cordoba was signed, granting independence to Mexico from Spanish rule.

In 1912, Congress passed a measure creating the Alaska Territory. Congress approved legislation establishing Parcel Post delivery by the U.S. Post Office Department, slated to begin on Jan. 1, 1913.

In 1932, Amelia Earhart embarked on a 19-hour flight from Los Angeles to Newark, N.J., making her the first woman to fly solo, non-stop, from coast to coast.

In 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty came into force.

In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the Communist Control Act, outlawing the Communist Party in the United States.

In 1968, France became the world's fifth thermonuclear power as it exploded a hydrogen bomb in the South Pacific.

In 1970, an explosives-laden van left by anti-war extremists blew up outside the University of Wisconsin's Sterling Hall in Madison, killing 33-year-old researcher Robert Fassnacht.

In 1981, Mark David Chapman was sentenced in New York to 20 years to life in prison for murdering John Lennon.

In 2006, the International Astronomical Union declared that Pluto was no longer a planet, demoting it to the status of a "dwarf planet."

**Ten years ago:** The FBI uncovered human remains in an outbuilding behind the Oregon City, Ore., house of Ward Weaver III, a suspect in the case of 2 missing girls who lived across the street. (Authorities recovered the remains of 12-year-old Ashley Pond and



13-year-old Miranda Gaddis; Weaver later pleaded guilty to aggravated murder and was sentenced to 2 consecutive life terms in prison.)

**Five years ago:** A judge in Inverness, Fla., sentenced John Evander Couey to death for kidnapping 9-year-old Jessica Lunsford, raping her and burying her alive. (Couey died in 2009.) James Ford Seale, a reputed Ku Klux Klansman, was sentenced to three life terms for his role in the 1964 abduction and murder of two black teenagers in southwestern Mississippi. (Seale died in 2011.) Major wildfires broke out in Greece, burning half a million acres and claiming 65 lives in 11 days.

**One year ago:** A defiant Moammar Gadhafi vowed in a broadcast to fight on "until victory or martyrdom" and called on residents of the Libyan capital and loyal tribesmen across his North African nation to free Tripoli from the "devils and traitors" who had overrun it. Steve Jobs resigned as CEO of Apple Inc.; he was succeeded by Tim Cook. Mike Flanagan, a Cy Young winner and part of the Baltimore Orioles' 1983 World Series championship team, was found dead outside his home in Monkton, Md.; he was 59.

**Today's Birthdays:** Former Education Secretary Shirley Hufstetler is 87. Actor Kenny Baker ("Star Wars") is 78. Composer-musician Mason Williams is 74. Rhythm-and-blues singer Marshall Thompson (The Chi-Lites) is 70. Rock musician Ken Hensley is 67. Actress Anne Archer is 65. Actor Joe Regalbuto is 63. Actor Kevin Dunn is 57. Former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee is 57. Actor-writer Stephen Fry is 55. Actor Steve Guttenberg is 54. Baseball Hall-of-Famer Cal Ripken Jr. is 52. Actor Jared Harris is 51. Talk show host Craig Kilborn is 50. Rock singer John Bush is 49. Actress Marlee Matlin is 47. Retired NBA All-Star Reggie Miller is 47. Broadcast journalist David Gregory ("Meet the Press") is 42. Country singer Kristyn Osborn (SheDaisies) is 42. Actor-comedian Dave Chappelle is 39. Actor Carmine Giovinazzo is 39. Actress Beth Riesgraf is 34. Actor Chad Michael Murray is 31. Christian rock musician Jeffrey Gilbert (Kutless) is 29. Singer Mika is 29. Actor Rupert Grint ("Harry Potter" films) is 24.

**Thought for Today:** "Show me a man who cannot bother to do little things and I'll show you a man who cannot be trusted to do big things." — Lawrence D. Bell, American aircraft manufacturer (1894-1956).

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### YOUR LETTERS

#### Questionable Values

##### Ron Galvan Sr., Yankton

Riverboat Days was wonderful as usual, the parade, the fireworks, all the events in the park and around town. I have worked the parade for many years and have enjoyed that as well.

This year there was a down side. I live within two blocks of the park so we get a lot of parking and foot traffic by our house. Saturday morning I get up to find out that in the early hours of the morning, some young men decided to break and knock down our flag pole. The American flag and Patriot Guard flag were on it.

A neighbor saw them and reported the problem to