

OP/ED



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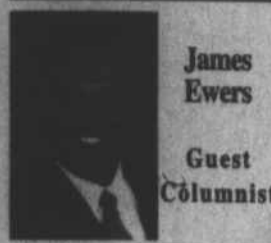
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Being Socially Responsible



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Jerry Brown

friends who have been injured seriously because they didn't want to follow the advice and the instructions.

Drinking and driving is a topic that we have received a lot of instructions and counsel about, yet we have not done a very good job of adhering to the advice. Do you remember the driver's education classes? I am an old school guy, yet this problem is as acute today as it has ever been. There are many national organizations such as MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) and AAA (American Automobile Association) that continue to provide advice, yet we don't follow it. Why? I will let you ponder the answer to that question.

Recently in Dallas, Texas, Dallas Cowboy Jerry Brown was killed because his teammate, Josh Brent, was driving while intoxicated. Now two families will have their lives altered forever. It is a tragic set of circumstances that should give us pause as we reflect on how to prevent something like this from happening again. I am a firm believer in the proposition that we are our brother's and sister's keeper.

Companies that produce alcohol make drinking look glamorous. At the end of alcohol commercials they will say "Please Drink Responsibly." After you have watched so much visual pizzazz, are you really paying any attention

to "Please Drink Responsibly?"

There must be a way for these companies to get a better message out about the dangers of drinking and driving. College athletic programs must implement stronger anti-drinking programs for their student athletes. Colleges must strengthen their stance about the hazards of alcohol consumption. Programs and activities regarding drinking and driving should begin as early as elementary school. Why? Because children are impressionable and they watch these advertisements and think that it is cool to drink.

Fortunately, many high schools and civic organizations are sponsoring alternative programs and activities. Professional sports teams must engage pro athletes in a deeper way about the negative effects of alcohol consumption. Mandatory sessions throughout the year should be started. Bars and taverns should be on the lookout for people who have reached their "limit." As individuals, we have to understand that everything that has a bow around it and a seal isn't necessarily good for us.

Let us hope that through the pain of what happened to Jerry Brown we can improve our decision-making and make better choices. It will require us to have more discipline and better communication, because without them the consequences may just become deadly.

Winston-Salem native Dr. James B. Ewers Jr., perhaps the city's most accomplished tennis players, is vice president for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management at Jacksonville, Fla.'s Edward Waters College. He can be reached at james.ewers@ewc.edu.

Our lives revolve around making decisions. Each day, we have a set of choices in front of us and our decisions will impact our paths in life. It sounds like a rather simple axiom yet it is really complex. How do we learn how to make good decisions? If your answer included parents, relatives, friends, teachers, coaches and men and women of faith, you are probably right.

When I was young, my mom would tell me not to touch the hot stove with my hand because I would get burned. After receiving the information from my mom, I had to decide whether I would use the information to my benefit. The other alternative was not to use it and have a hard head about it. If that was the case, I would have to deal with the negative consequences, namely getting my hand burned.

As we age, our bad decisions and/or poor choices have more severe and sometimes deadly consequences. Some years ago now, I wrote a piece about the ills of texting while driving. At that time, there were few laws regarding texting and driving. During this time you simply did what you wanted to do with no legal repercussions. If you fast forward to today, states are much more aggressive about this matter. We have the instructions that say do not text while driving, yet we are doing it in record numbers.

The consequences are sometimes fatal, yet we don't believe that we can become a statistic. Some of us know relatives and

Talking to Children About School Safety

The following tips are offered by the Mental Health Association of America, via the Mental Health Association of Forsyth Inc., www.triad-mentalhealth.org.

School violence and the resulting intense media coverage bring school safety issues to the forefront for all of us. However, children, in particular, may experience anxiety, fear, and a sense of personal risk. Knowing how to talk with your child about school safety issues could be critical in recognizing and preventing acts of violence and will play an important role in easing fear and anxieties about their personal safety.

To guide parents through discussions about school violence, Mental Health America offers the following suggestions:

- Encourage children to talk about their concerns and to express their feelings. Some children may be hesitant to initiate such conversation, so you may want to prompt them by asking if they feel safe at school. When talking with younger children, remember to talk on their level. For example, they may not understand the term "violence" but can talk to you about being afraid or a classmate who is mean to them.
- Talk honestly about your own feelings regarding school violence. It is important for children to recognize they are not dealing with their fears alone.
- Validate the child's feelings. Do not minimize a

child's concerns. Let him/her know that serious school violence is not common, which is why incidents such as Columbine and Conyers, Ga., attract so much media attention. Stress that schools are safe places. In fact, recent studies have shown that schools are more secure now than ever before.

- Empower children to take action regarding school safety. Encourage them to report specific incidents (such as bullying, threats or talk of suicide) and to develop problem solving and conflict resolution skills. Encourage older children to actively participate in student-run anti-violence programs.

- Discuss the safety procedures that are in place at your child's school. Explain why visitors sign in at the principal's office or certain doors remain locked during the school day. Help your child understand that such precautions are in place to ensure his or her safety and stress the importance of adhering to school rules and policies.

- Create safety plans with your child. Help identify which adults (a friendly secretary, trusted teacher or approachable administrator) your child can talk to if they feel threatened at school. Also ensure that your child knows how to reach you (or another family member or friend) in case of crisis during the school day. Remind your child that they can talk to you anytime they feel threatened.
- Recognize behavior

that may indicate your child is concerned about returning to school. Younger children may react to school violence by not wanting to attend school or participate in school-based activities. Teens and adolescents may minimize their concerns outwardly, but may become argumentative, withdrawn, or allow their school performance to decline.

- Keep the dialogue going and make school safety a common topic in family discussions rather than just a response to an immediate crisis. Open dialogue will encourage children to share their concerns.
- Seek help when necessary. If you are worried about a child's reaction or have ongoing concerns about his/her behavior or emotions, contact a mental health professional at school or at your community mental health center. Your local Mental Health Association or the National Mental Health Association's Information Center can direct you to resources in your community.

Mental Health America also provides informational brochures on children's mental health issues, such as a "Teen Survival Guide to Surviving Stress," "Teen Depression," "Coping with Loss," "Youth Violence" and "What Every Child Needs for Good Mental Health."

Learn more at www.mentalhealthamerica.net.

Reynolds

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with its members. The resolution encouraged "every state to declare that evidence-based youth tobacco prevention education is an important part of meaningful health education for every student."

"We are eager to work with you on the issues you care about because, as we've seen from how well the issue forums at this year's conference were received, our elected

women care about the very same issues," NFWL said in a letter to Gorman.

"Right Decisions Right Now" is designed to aid educators, parents and grandparents in helping young people, especially those in grades 5 - 9, say no to tobacco products. The youth tobacco prevention program was rolled out in 1991. RAI states that national tests have found the program to be successful. The company is also touting the University of Michigan Monitoring the Future study, which found

last week that teen smoking rates declined this year and are now at a historic low.

"This was a great opportunity to highlight our youth tobacco prevention efforts and we'll be following up with legislators who expressed interest in helping us to accelerate the decline in youth tobacco use," Gorman said. "It was encouraging to hear that some of the legislators were even interested in personally teaching the RDRN curriculum in their schools."

Films

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A number of popular films and television shows have been shot in North Carolina this year, including "Iron Man 3," the second season of the

award winning television drama "Homeland" and "You Are Here," which was largely filmed here in Winston-Salem.

State officials say that much of the success from the past two years for the film industry can be attributed to the bi-parti-

san, tax credit incentive legislation championed by Gov. Bev Perdue in 2010. Under the incentive, productions receive a 25 percent refundable tax credit based on their direct in-state spending on goods, services and labor.

NCCU

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unexpected death of her grandmother. Becton also recognized one of the youngest graduates, Crystal Cotton, 20, who received a Bachelor of Arts degree in mass communication with high honors. Cotton graduated in 2010 from the Josephine Dobbs Clement Early College High School, which is housed on the NCCU cam-

pus. The school, operated by Durham Public Schools, provides motivated students with opportunities to take college-level courses for credit and get a head start on their higher education. Cotton was able to complete her degree requirements in two-and-a-half years.

Rudolph Bailey, who graduated with highest honors with a Bachelor of Science degree in recreation administration, was also praised. A transfer stu-

dent from Durham Tech, Bailey had a perfect 4.0 grade point average during his two years at NCCU, but his more remarkable achievement was his community service. Undergraduates are required to perform 15 hours of community service per semester. Bailey exceeded his 60-hour requirement many times over, reaching a total of 1,058 hours.

Hair

from page A1

cerns about hair care and maintenance) was coming up a lot so I thought that may be a barrier for a lot of women, not just the women that I'm talking to."

Together with a team of researchers, McMichael began surveying patients who came into her office. The team amassed a group of more than 100 women ages 21-60 who identify as African American.

"I think the women were excited to even be participants in the study," McMichael remarked. "I think people were very excited to have someone look at this."

The 40-question survey that participants responded to confirmed McMichael's expectations: hair care and maintenance were a factor that kept many women from establishing regular exercise routines. Forty percent of survey respondents said they avoided exercise because of hair-related issues. McMichael was not surprised. As an African American woman with relaxed hair, McMichael said she is well versed in the time consuming routine that is required to maintain chemically straightened hair, which often frizzes when it is exposed to sweat or other forms of moisture.

"I kind of had a notion that this was going to be an issue, and I thought that if I said it in a paper, people were going to question it," said the mother of two. "...So I thought that it would be good to actually prove it, because once you prove it, you can begin to address it."

Sharon Cunningham, founder of U-Fit2 Health and Wellness, said she isn't surprised to hear that hair issues are one of the reasons why black women choose not to exercise.

"For black women, it's a major concern," said Cunningham, who has spent more than 25 years in the fitness industry. "It's the number one problem that they can overcome."

U-Fit2 is behind the popular U-Move Praise, which fuses praise and worship with exercise and is offered at several area churches, including during Union Baptist Church's monthly Sweatsuit Sundays. Cunningham said that with the deck often stacked against blacks when it comes to disease and chronic conditions,



Sharon Cunningham



Jameil Weldon

good health and wellness must be the paramount concern.

"Our mission and motto is restoration," Cunningham said. "We want to stop health disparities before they start."

Though hair remains a big issue in encouraging women to exercise, Cunningham said with natural hairstyles becoming so popular, many women are opting to ditch chemical treatments in favor of natural styles that often are less difficult to maintain in concert with a fitness routine. Cunningham said she encourages all her clients to make physical activity a top priority in their lives.

"I say, 'Don't use it as an obstacle,'" she said of her hair issues. "Find a way to get around it, no matter what it takes."

Jameil Weldon, lead ambassador for the local Black Girls Run organization, which establishes jogging groups for African American women across the county, said she hasn't encountered many complaints about exercise interfering with hairstyles among her members.

"It's definitely an issue that has arisen on multiple occasions across the nation for Black Girls Run groups, but I have not heard a whole lot about hair being a hindrance for people working out here," said Weldon, who started the local BGR chapter, which now has more than 500 members, in August 2011. "I think people, once they get to the point where they really want to make a lifestyle change, hair is not going to stop them."

With that being said, Weldon, who has worn her hair in every configuration from relaxed to natural to her current dreadlocks, conceded that some women may still allow their hair to play a bigger role in their physical health, or lack thereof, than it should from a logical standpoint.

"I think hair is definitely still an issue," remarked the 30 year-old. "You don't want to go

around looking crazy just because you like to work-out. I would say it could be a deterrent, but it shouldn't be."

McMichael, a Pennsylvania School of Medicine alumna, found that other factors, such as lack of childcare and funds to pay for fitness center memberships and concerns about neighborhood safety also stand in between black women and exercise. She feels these factors may have played an even larger role in deterring physical activity than hair concerns. McMichael added that she is planning to conduct another study in the coming year that will look at best practices as well as incorporate other ethnic groups, such as Caucasian women, who have also reported hair care being a barrier to exercise, she said.

McMichael said she has found ways to maintain her hair without sacrificing her workout routine, such as keeping her hair pulled back in a bun while exercising and saving the more strenuous workouts for the end of the week, near the time she plans to wash her hair. She said she is hopeful her study will help other women and their health-care providers realize that hair can be a hindrance to a woman's health if she allows it to be a barrier to exercise, and that there are ways to maintain the hairstyle you want and the healthy body you need.

"There's not one cut out way that it's going to work for everyone, and that's part of the message that I want to say," she commented. "We have to come up with better products, better options and think of more innovative ways to help people overcome this barrier."

For more information about Black Girls Run, which is starting a new Couch to 5k program for beginner runners in January, find Black Girls Run Winston-Salem on Facebook. For more information about U-Fit2, visit www.ufit2.org.