

Black Friday shoppers should rethink priorities



Jackie Gonzalez

Every year, there comes a day when millions of people abandon their senses in a futile effort to score the best bargains. People are out with their game faces on, prepared to tackle any potential threats that may prohibit them from accomplishing their goals for the day. Some might be injured, but that's the risk they take by participating in this unnecessary survival of the fittest. Clearly, the day I'm referring to is Black Fri-

day — a day that somehow continues to grow in absurdity each year.

A shopping center in Kansas City was giving away \$25 gift cards to the first 1,000 people in line when stores opened at midnight. My boyfriend and I, mildly interested in the gimmick, arrived at about 10:30 p.m. to find people in tents, camping and playing on laptops. We heard there had been 1,000 people in line by 8 p.m.

Sure, I'd consider that a bit excessive, but there is a bit of excitement to all of this. But all this excitement can lead to poor judgments, greed and obsession. Year after year the intensity increases as individuals prepare themselves for the dangers ahead. Just like every other year, I expected to hear the dozens of stories of accidents, injuries and cutthroat

competition on the radio.

But this time, it went way too far. Tragically, an employee was trampled to death at a Wal-Mart in New York. Even more sickening was that the witnesses couldn't have cared less. The city's police commissioner said "Those hundreds of people who did make their way into the store, literally had to step over or around him or unfortunately on him to get into the Wal-Mart store," according to an Associated Press article. And apparently this is not the first time an incident like this has occurred.

So now people are placing more value on trivial material objects than on physical safety and even on others' lives. There is no way a flat screen TV is worth more than a human life. There are no excuses or defenses for that kind of sinister

behavior.

People are satisfying their innate animal impulses by utilizing violence for the sake of a good sale. Since when have we stooped so low as to harm others so that we can boast about a successful shopping trip? I don't know about you, but I could never feel good about buying a discounted item knowing I fought off a lady from Manor Care to acquire it.

People are employing their carnal instincts in vicious battles to claim petty shopping victories. Even here in Kirksville I heard that a few shoppers were injured at the local Wal-Mart. Thanksgiving night, instead of being an evening to spend with family or friends, is becoming a time to get ahead and grab a good spot in line. People bundle up, bring a cooler and literally camp out to save twenty

bucks on a television. So go ahead and ditch your family — you only need one person to play Xbox, right?

Today, I hereby declare that Black Friday officially has gotten out of hand. We are just becoming way too materialistic. We're searching for holiday happiness in all the wrong places. I know we've all heard it a hundred times before, but the holidays really are about spending time with the people you love. Are the stresses, the war paint and the mayhem a surefire way to have a great holiday season? Absolutely not. If you must get shopping out of your system, just shop online — there's zero crowds and never a wait in line.

Jackie Gonzalez is a senior communication and history major from San Diego, Calif.

Truman students deserve better health care options



Jean Kaul

Until a week and a half ago I was quite boastful about my health.

Yes, I have the same nagging colds and flu everyone else seems to get — that cold Kirksville weather will do it to you every time. But, I always was proud to say I never had to visit the hospital or the emergency room on my own account. No broken bones (astounding, considering the adolescent clumsiness I have yet to outgrow) or strange allergies for me! Well, karma bit me on the ass, and I earned two trips to the emergency room last week.

No, there weren't any broken bones, but there were allergies — an allergic reaction to sulfur in medication I was taking for an infection. I won't go into medical TMI (don't worry, my dear squeamish readers) but suffice it to say, having a full-body rash isn't an experience I would like to repeat. Just writing about it makes me feel itchy.

After a few rounds of antibiotics and some ice baths. I was back in tip-top shape, but something had changed. My belief in my own medical invincibility had waned a considerable degree and I began to ask myself a few questions. My allergy had been severe and sudden, but was a trip to the emergency room really necessary? Unfortunately, it was. As my roommate anxiously drove me to the hospital Sunday morning, the phone conversation I had with my mother 10 minutes before ran through my head. I had asked her what I should do — I was scared, rashy and feverish. Her first two suggestions: an urgent care office or the University's Student Health Center. My answer: In a city with a medical school and a fairly large number of qualified health professionals, neither of those two options were open to me. Kirksville has no urgent care facility, and the health center is only an option five days a week, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. The lesson Kirksville medical establishments were teaching me: Don't get sick.

Now, don't get me wrong. The care I received at the Northeast Medical Center emergency room was fast and thorough, and the hospital has received commendations for its service. I was asked if I had a personal physician. Yes, I answered, 350 miles away. I was a medical refugee.

Luckily enough, my first visit to the emergency room and a subsequent one (my symptoms worsened Monday evening when the Health Center was closed — fancy that, sickness doesn't follow a 9 to 5 schedule) were covered by my parents' insurance. Never before had the privilege of being fully insured ever resonated so strongly within me. I began to wonder about my fellow classmates, some of whom might not be so lucky. If being sick at college was scary for me — someone who would be reimbursed for the expense of a trip to the emergency room or a visit to a doctor outside of the auspices of

the health center, what must the experience be like for the uninsured, financially strapped college student?

Like other departments at Truman, the health center is full of hard-working, caring individuals suffering from understaffing and a lack of funding. These problems make me think the University doesn't understand what a scary maze it is for newly semi-independent students negotiating health care hell on their own for the first time. An office with limited hours is not the answer. At times, too, the health center suffers image-wise. A running joke among my friends is the only part of the human body the health center cares about treating is the vagina. I know for a fact this isn't true, but sometimes the health center seems more like a Pez dispenser for birth control than a facility that can offer options to treat the entire human body.

After this experience running the gauntlet of Kirksville health care, I realized exactly why the nationwide health care debate is such a polarizing one. In a country that is the wealthiest in the history of the world, its citizens (and Truman students) need more medical options. "Don't get sick" just doesn't cut it.

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AROUND THE QUAD

What is your favorite holiday tradition?



"Having all my family at my house on Christmas, eating dinner and opening presents."

Nicole Eckelkamp freshman



"My favorite holiday is Halloween. I like to dress up."

Beatriz Parks sophomore



"Spending Christmas Eve with my family because we have different themes."

Kortney Holeman senior



"Eating dinner on Christmas Eve — it's the only time my dad lets my mom cook."

Sarah Jahnke junior

Students require stress relief



Kelsey Landhuis

If there's one adjective that describes the vast majority of the student body's mindset at this time of the semester, it's this one: stressed.

Sure, life might occasionally have been a little hectic before now. A couple of research papers here, a test or two there. Taking a "study break" every 20 minutes to text your BFF Jill didn't help your assignments get done any faster, either. Isn't it amazing how procrastination always seems to kick in at the worst possible moment? It's like — Hang on a second, Facebook just notified me that I got invited to an event! I'd better go check it out...

No, I will not be attending "International Answer the Phone like Buddy the Elf Day." But thanks for asking, I guess.

Now, what was I talking about? Oh right, stress. The week right before finals is unquestionably the most stressful part of the entire semester. Papers, presentations and projects all come due. Final tests loom large. Last-minute extra credit opportunities are negotiated. You frantically calculate percentages and probability, figuring out what grades still are within your grasp and whether it's even worth your time to study for that statistics test. Maybe you should think about starting that online Missouri Statute course

sometime soon? In comparison, Finals Week itself is a cakewalk. (Two words: Reading Day)

Where does all this stress really come from? My stress level has much more to do with my own frame of mind than with any external circumstances. Basically, I stress myself out. I get all worked up about how much I have to do and how little time I have to do it, and before I know it the day is over and I haven't accomplished a single objective except for complaining about how stressed I am. It's only when I stop whining about having so much to do and actually start doing it that the stress seems to go away. Eliminating stress is a 99-percent mental game, like baseball or Jenga.

There are some people for whom stress is a much more serious problem. Anxiety disorder is a legitimate mental health concern that affected 14.2 percent of Truman students in 2007, according to the University Counseling Services Web site. If you think you might have this disorder, UCS is a good resource for information about diagnosing and treating it.

But I suspect that many of you are like me, causing your own stress and perfectly capable of controlling it. In 2007, 41.4 percent of Truman students reported that stress had an effect on their academic performance, beating out the next most significant factor in academic performance, sleep difficulties, by almost 10 percent, according to the UCS Web site. This statistic also exceeded the national percentage of students reporting stress by more than 7 percent.

Stress is a major problem at the University, but it also has some

fairly simple and painless solutions. One obvious solution would be to procrastinate less — go lock yourself in some basement where there's no cell phone reception or Internet connection. But procrastination is an integral part of the college experience, and I would be a hypocrite if I told you to stop doing it, so — Wait, my roommate is telling me I have to watch this sweet YouTube video...

Dude! Can you really do that with Diet Coke and Mentos?

Anyway, there are other effective measures for reducing stress. One is to simply step back and look at your situation from a different perspective: In the grand scheme of life, does it really matter if you end up with a B in Public Speaking or a C in Organic Chemistry? Take a deep breath and realize that regardless of what you accomplish during the next day or the next week, everything will be OK.

For some of you, the stressful part of the semester might be over already. Or maybe it never even happened. (I'm looking at you, freshmen. Enjoy it while it lasts.) Unfortunately, the people who need to read this column the most, the ones who still have two 20-page research papers to write and five tests to study for, are the same people who are wa-a-a-a-ay too busy to read the newspaper today. Those of you who did have the time to leisurely peruse the Index should try not to gloat about the fact that you only have one final, and it's an open-book, open-note test. Next semester you might be the one who needs the deep-breathing exercises.

Kelsey Landhuis is a senior English major from Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Obama staff picks show change



Andrew Kindiger

On Monday, Barack Obama introduced his national security team, officially turning a former rival into a friend. When Obama introduced Sen. Hillary Clinton, he prefaced her introduction by calling her "my dear friend." Nominating Clinton for Secretary of State is not only a good political decision in terms of her strong qualifications, but it also reflects the Democratic Party's effort for change.

Clinton said she was eager to pursue a difficult and exciting adventure as a member of Obama's Cabinet, also putting the hostility from the primary season behind her. Both Clinton and Obama seem to be resolved in moving toward economic stability and promising international cooperation.

At the end of his speech, Obama fielded questions and was asked how he decided to pick Clinton as the Secretary of State. Obama said it was a light bulb moment and that he always was interested in finding ways that he could

collaborate with Sen. Clinton after the primaries were over. He also apologized for his explanation not being as "juicy" as some would have liked to hear, making reference to the previous animosity that grew between him and Clinton during the election.

Obama casually dismissed the magnitude of the reporter's question, but the motivation behind such a question should not go unnoticed. Clinton pretty much disappeared from the public eye after the primaries were over and then the idea of her being involved in Obama's Cabinet seemed to vanish after Joe Biden was selected to be the vice-presidential nominee. Public sentiment seemed to be that Obama and Clinton had irreconcilable differences because of their efforts to diminish each other's policies and ideas. Yet despite the tension that grew during the election, Clinton now can be called a dear friend to Obama as well as a member of his national security team.

Selecting Clinton as a Cabinet member shows that Obama is ready to move past politics and onto important issues facing his administration. When he was asked questions during his speech about his previous debates with Clinton, he was quick to dismiss notes of hostility and assure his audience, and future colleague, that all past aggressions had dissipated. Both Obama and

Clinton seem content and enthusiastic about the direction of the new administration.

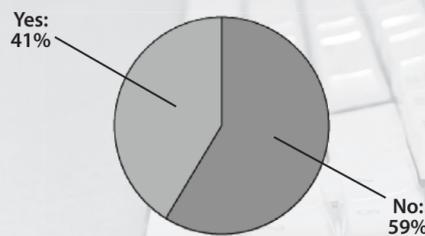
This cordial association of former feuding politicians should speak volumes to the American public about the value of placing petty politics aside after an election to work together. Clinton and Obama are from the same party, but Democrats and Republicans still are susceptible to internal political feuds. Turning a fierce political competition into a future working relationship sets an excellent example of political tolerance for a nation needing more direction toward cohesion in respect to political decisions.

Currently the United States is dealing with two wars, an economic crisis and a myriad of other domestic and international concerns. This calls for political action, not political rivalry. Obama's administration seems willing to place political hostilities in the past in order to build a better future and so should the American public. It's time to start moving forward by learning from the example set by politicians who are willing to embrace a true change with respect to government and the future of our nation.

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WEB POLL

Has the economy affected your holiday travel plans?



This week's question:

How much time did you spend with your family during the holidays?

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