

Rescue story reminds to not lose adventure



Zach Vicars

At dinner time Thanksgiving evening, my friend senior Bhupendra Subedi wasn't sitting around the table with friends, family and a full belly of turkey. Instead, he was cold, tired and stranded on the lonely shore of Forrest Lake in 1,000 Hills State Park facing adventure head-on.

It all started at 12:30 p.m., when Subedi set out with two of his friends on a bike ride through Western Kirksville. Eventually, they found themselves at the start of 1,000 Hills Trail in the Rainbow Basin Conservation area and decided to give it a try.

Despite the logical emotion — fear — Subedi also was filled with something much more substantial in the long run — a sense of adventure, something easily forgotten in our busy society.

During the afternoon, the three riders navigated the rough trail with modest equipment and little mountain-biking experience. Subedi was suffering from a severely sprained wrist and was gouged repeatedly with thorns, but the mild weather and the freedom of the wilderness spurred them on.

After they had ridden about eight miles, the group realized they would not be able to turn around and make it home before dark. They also had no idea how much further it would be to the end of the trail. Like many explorers before them, they took the third option: find a shortcut. It ended up not being so short, and the adventure continued.

Why am I telling you this incredible story? Partly because it's one of the funniest I've heard all year, and all of us are in the middle of the finals push and could use a laugh.

But there's more to this story than just humor. There's a powerful sense of adventure and excitement many of us probably haven't felt since we were young, playing cops and robbers in the backyard.

When students go to college, especially Truman State students, we assume a greater level of responsibility. For most college students, some level of maturity follows close behind those increased responsibilities. Along the way, we hope students put aside childish things like spending all night playing video games, eating late-night Taco Bell and drinking Four Loko.

Maturity and responsibility are good things. They separate men from boys and women from girls. If children grew up without these important qualities, our society would be in danger of collapse. But, for some strange reason, we have chalked up adventure as childish and thrown it out with everything else that had to go after our formative years — Barbie dolls, Beanie Babies and G.I. Joes.

This apparent lack of adventure in our lives is a tragedy. Adventure renews and invigorates life, rescuing us from the tired strain of monotony. Stories of pioneers crossing desolate prairies, men conquering intimidating mountains and college students becoming lost in the dark forest help remind us our struggle in life is meaningful and real. A life without adventure isn't a life worth living. So to finish the story, they were lost.

Bushwacking through unforgiving timber, dragging their bikes as they went, the three of them were getting nowhere fast. There was no sign of a trailhead and no hope of a swift return home. Then night fell — and things started to become scary. Although raised in rugged Nepal, their upbringings in distant lands never could prepare them for the immense darkness of the North American woods.

They heard strange noises. Were there bears in Northeast Missouri? Either they couldn't remember or they never knew. One of them collected large sticks to defend the group from attack, just in case.

Then, salvation. As quickly as they had lost hope, the wandering woodsmen found it again. They reached the banks of Forrest Lake and saw the lights of civilization on yonder shore. At 7:35 p.m., Sudebi gave up, retrieved his cellphone and called 911. Half an hour later a rescue boat spotted their signal flare (a flashlight application on the iPhone) and whisked them to safety.

And, in case you were wondering, the authorities and the adventurers made it home in time for Thanksgiving dinner.

Zach Vicars is a senior philosophy/religion and linguistics major from St. Charles, Mo.

Energy assistance must remain available to needy



Connor Stangler

My Thanksgiving was just as it should be: a friendly dinner with my family, a disappointing game of Scrabble and a warm night's sleep in my own bed. For some families, however, "just as it should be" always seems to be a little bit out of reach.

I have a scholarship job with the Northeast Missouri Community Action Agency. Funded by the Missouri Department of Social Services and the federal government, the Agency runs the local Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. LIHEAP grants financial assistance to families who struggle to pay their heating and cooling expenses. The Agency also provides weatherization services for homes and other energy-related aid for low-income families.

I do simple office tasks: filing, data entry and other necessary but monotonous tasks without much significance. The shock usually comes when I come across a client whose heat has been turned off and I realize the temperature is going to be below freezing that night. It's for families like these and others that I urge the federal government to not cut funding to this program.

In the current financial atmo-

sphere, excess funding is difficult to receive. In fact, social service programs throughout the country are in danger of losing vital resources.

Congress has floated the idea of cutting, among other federal spending, \$2.5 billion from the \$5 billion energy assistance budget for low-income families, according to the Carsey Institute, a nonprofit policy organization. To trim our deficit, the cuts must be wide and often severe.

Congressmen have tossed around the phrase "shared sacrifice" but it seems as if only to appear democratic and indiscriminate. Should those who have the least resources sacrifice as much as those who have the most? Can our consciences take responsibility for not raising taxes on the wealthiest while cutting energy assistance for the poorest? If we are too quick to answer "yes," then American politics needs to be readjusted.

Even if funding remains at its current levels, fewer families will have access to assistance. The Carsey Institute points out that between the winters of 2006 and 2009, there was a 48 percent increase in households reporting energy assistance, and as of 2009, 7.7 million households in the country received energy assistance. Dangerous climate change combined with a sagging economy will lead to greater demand for assistance, and this will put more pressure on state social service departments. Seasonal extremes will become more severe at a time when families are less able to afford the increasing costs.

The bitter reality leaves no community unharmed but strikes with a particular ferocity on towns and cities such as Kirksville. Rural areas,

especially in the Midwest and Northeast, have the highest rates of energy assistance, according to Carsey. Rural homes usually are less energy efficient than urban homes. Additionally, rural, low-income, single-parent households are much more likely to report energy assistance than urban and suburban single-parent households. Single parents with two or three children should be able to focus on raising their children without worrying if they will be shivering at night.

But will their voice be heard? If their funding is cut, can they take the time to protest? I trust, perhaps naively, that politicians have their constituents' best interests at heart. But when faced with a critical budget decision, will they cut assistance to the destitute, or raise taxes on the wealthy donor who easily can cease all campaign donations? If they are just, our representatives will choose the latter.

I complain about a morning trudge to Barnett Hall or McClain Hall through inches of snow and a biting wind, but I know I eventually will return to a warm house where the heat turns on regularly. I hear the click of the furnace and the whirring of machinery, but I don't stop to think about the absence of those sounds. I take them for granted. Some can't afford to take them for granted.

If you're going to exercise your rights as citizen, exercise them for this. It's a cause worth fighting for.

Connor Stangler is a junior English and history major from Columbia, Mo.

Did you participate in Black Friday shopping?

"I did not, because I was working for 12.5 hours."

Caitlin Bladt
junior



"No, I did not. I didn't want to deal with the hassle. Plus, you can find good deals online."

Zack Buckler
senior



"Yeah ... after 10 in the morning because I wanted to take advantage of the sales, but didn't want to get up that early."

Penny Schutter
sophomore



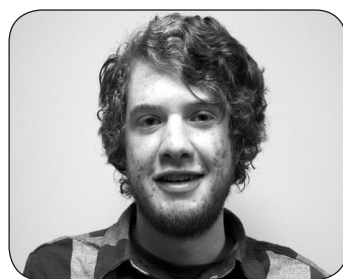
"I really wanted a DVD for \$5, so I braved that storm. I also worked, so I did both. It was insane."

Mason Einspahr
senior



AROUND THE QUAD

Black Friday 'holiday' overpowers essence of Thanksgiving



Bob Overmann

I "celebrated" the American pseudo-holiday of Black Friday for the first time. While it was an interesting experience, I don't think it's one I'd choose to repeat.

We began at 10 p.m. Thanksgiving and shopped until 3:30 a.m. Friday morning, visiting Walmart, Target and Kohl's. Lines stretched around stores, shoppers puzzled through their store maps and tensions ran high as thousands competed for a few ridiculously low-priced items. I was astounded and slightly horrified at the massive crowds packing the stores: Parking lots were filled to capacity, aisles were impassible and any concept of a

"personal bubble" ceased to exist.

Black Friday has become almost as pervasive as Thanksgiving throughout the nation. Last weekend, a record 226 million shoppers participated either in stores or via websites, according to CBS News. In a nation of 307 million people, that's almost three quarters of the population. This pseudo-holiday might be stimulating to the economy and financially important to the nation, but we shouldn't lose focus of the Thanksgiving holiday spirit.

In a first-world nation, we should take the time to appreciate our good fortunes and seemingly endless list of reasons to be happy. Instead, many Americans have begun to use the evening for planning their early morning shopping adventures.

Thanksgiving began as a celebration of the good fortunes and hospitality shown to early Plymouth colonists in 1621 by the Wampanoag tribe and it has been widely celebrated across the United States since. Families get together, eat copious amounts of food and share their thanks. It's a holiday explicitly set aside to celebrate what we have, our good fortune

and the happiness in our lives. No other holiday celebrated by so many Americans can lay claim to this sort of positive, universal message. In contrast to Thanksgiving, Black Friday is a much more recent addition to American culture. The 1990's marked the beginning of the American shopping holiday, according to Time Magazine. So unlike Thanksgiving, Black Friday has only been celebrated for two decades, yet its popularity is booming.

Black Friday has been growing consistently each year, both in participants and intensity. Shoppers camp out, argue and even trample each other. In addition to a growing number of participants, Black Friday also has begun to encroach on Thanksgiving. This year, Wal-Mart opened at 10 p.m. Thursday, an evening set aside during the past for family and appreciating what we have.

This is where I take issue: I appreciate my first-world comforts as much as anyone else, but let's not allow our materialistic lifestyle and consumerist culture to take control of this noble holiday. Christmas, a previously purely religious

holiday, already has been consumed by this American materialism — let's not doom Thanksgiving to the same fate.

I have no doubt many have great memories shopping and competing for the great deals available during this shopping holiday, but we shouldn't allow Black Friday to become more important than Thanksgiving.

I'm doubtful that, with the success of this season's Black Friday, stores will revert to Black Friday actually being celebrated exclusively on Friday, but before heading out next Thanksgiving evening to hunt for the season's best deals, we should ask ourselves whether the monetary savings are worth the sacrifice of time with our family.

Bob Overmann is a freshman English major from Cape Girardeau, Mo.