

EDITORIAL

Letters to the Editor

Jeremy Busch provides at best a partial analysis in his column last week on the legacy of Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez.

Busch ignores significant material advances that took place under Chávez's mandate. His policies cut unemployment in half, reduced poverty in half, and slashed extreme poverty by more than 70 percent. He vastly increased access to healthcare, education, and housing for the country's poor majority. The result was that economic inequality fell to the lowest level in the region.

Before Chávez's initial election in 1998, most of the country's wealth and political power was concentrated in the hands of the top 20 percent of the country's population. Not only did Chávez more equally distribute that wealth across society, but he also dramatically increased citizen participation in politics.

Chávez's charisma and nationalistic appeals were important to his political success, but more significantly he used that success to benefit the lower classes rather than himself. Unlike what Busch incorrectly states, these were not false promises but concrete achievements.

Under Chávez's presidency, Venezuela did not become a repressive society. He did not engage in the genocidal massacres such as those for which U.S.-backed General Ephraim Rios Montt is currently under trial in Guatemala. Venezuela does not have political prisoners such as American Indian Movement activist Leonard Peltier or African American militant Mumia Abu-Jamal who have languished for decades in United States prisons.

Yes, Venezuela has unacceptably high crime rates. Rather than responding with an increased police presence as many countries have done, Chávez sought to address underlying structural and causal issues of poverty but more still needs to be done.

But what the mainstream media sources on which Busch bases his analysis conveniently ignore is that Honduras has an even higher murder rate than Venezuela. Honduras, however, has a conservative, pro-United States government. Not incidentally, it also has much higher poverty and inequality rates than Venezuela. The partial and distorted nature of this coverage points to the ideological nature of the attacks on Chávez's legacy.

Those who rejoiced at Chávez's passing were from Venezuela's wealthy elite classes who benefited from the exclusionary policies of previous governments, and United States corporations that extracted the country's natural resources. They want to return to a past of oppression, exclusion, and poverty.

Far from being a cruel dictator, Chávez implemented policies that for the first time delivered the benefits of Venezuela's wealth to the common people in the country. While these actions earned the former leader the condemnation of the wealthy and powerful, he blazed a path forward designed to benefit the majority of the world's marginalized population.

Marc Becker
Truman State history professor

Our View

Publicity must not be primary motivation

During this past Saturday, more than 1,300 Truman State students participated in the annual day of service, known as "The Big Event," according to a March 23 Heartland Connection article. While we applaud the students that did participate during this coordinated giving-back to the Kirksville community, the event has become more about the positive publicity for Truman and the campus organizations whose members participate and less about the service to the community.

When one volunteers throughout their community, one's only motive should be serving others. Positive acts should be reinforced, and we don't take issue with coincidental positive reinforcement via media coverage of this volunteer work. However, volunteering when one's primary motive is to solicit attention for themselves or their organization morally is questionable. Can this shameless grab for the limelight be considered true altruism?

If all of these 1,300 Truman students had a true, unadulterated interest in serving their community, there are plenty of opportunities to volunteer every day. One can volunteer for the local humane society or Adair county schools, pick up trash of their own volition or raise funds for a chosen cause. The catch is that these volunteer opportunities won't be accompanied with guaranteed media coverage.

We understand that organizations must constantly be concerned with their public image. However, the organizations whose members participated in "The Big Event," cannot hide behind the thin guise of true altruism.

We are not attempting to discourage individuals from participating. "The Big Event" provides undoubtedly much-needed services free-of-charge to the city of Kirksville and its residents. We must constantly, however, be conscious of individuals' motives — especially when they superficially seem to be out of the goodness of one's own heart.

Web Poll

Do you feel well informed about Truman State's upcoming DQP assessment program?

No:
100%

Out of 20 votes.

On Tuesday, April 2, Kirksville will go to the polls to elect two new members to the City Council. I humbly recommend Glen Moritz as a candidate for this position. Glen was raised in Kirksville, and graduated from high school right here in 1970. He went on to obtain a Masters in Counseling from Seattle Pacific University, and worked for fifteen years as a counselor in psychiatric hospitals and drug/alcohol treatment hospitals in Seattle. Glen returned to Kirksville to spend time with his family, and has since opened his own paint and restoration company.

Glen will be an active voice for good on the Kirks-

ville City Council. He understands the best interests of Truman, and will work to strengthen the ties between our university and the City of Kirksville. Glen's time as a counselor made him an incredibly effective communicator, and these skills, coupled with his cool head and sound judgment, make him an ideal candidate for Kirksville City Council. I respectfully urge my fellow students to cast a ballot in Truman's best interests by voting for Glen Moritz on April 2.

Aaron Malin
Truman State student

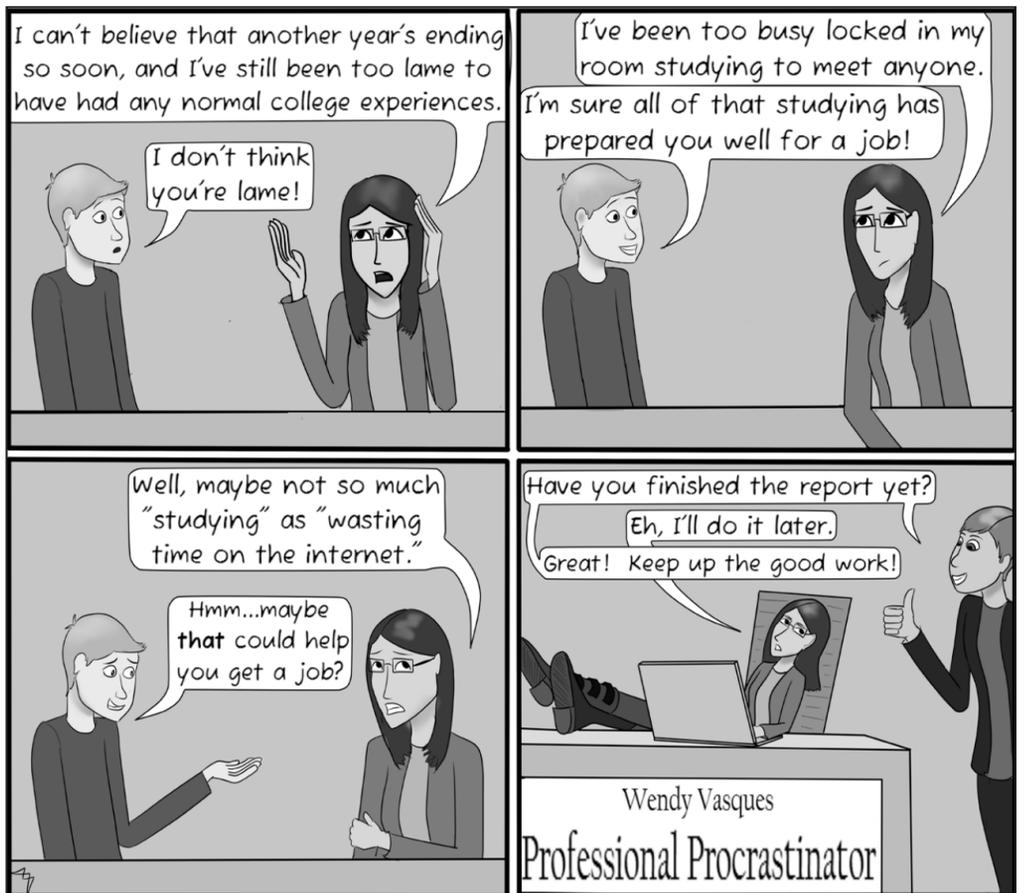
Corrections

The "Body found at Sugar Creek" story in the March 21 Index incorrectly stated that the body was found Feb. 16. The body was actually found March 16.

To submit corrections or to contact the editor, please email index.editor@gmail.com, call us at 660-785-4449 or send a letter to Index, 1200 Barnett Hall, Truman State University, Kirksville, Mo., 63501.

Cartoon

By Megan Archer



High-stress lifestyle can dissatisfy



Robert Overmann

A couple years ago, I was fortunate enough to have an opportunity to go sailing in the Bahamas. Although a mere 200 miles off the eastern coast of Florida, I noticed a stark contrast between the relaxed lifestyles of Bahamians and the rushed, stressed lives of American citizens. I encountered a bank open only one day per week from 11 a.m. until 1 p.m. — business hours, I'd wager, unheard of throughout the U.S. Most citizens only drove golf carts, content to meander toward their destinations at a lazy 10 miles per hour, and ice cream stands seemed the most prevalent business throughout the Bahamian Cays. If this lifestyle sounds impossible and frustratingly unproductive, I'll tell you something that might surprise you — I have yet to encounter a happier, seemingly healthier or more satisfied community.

I'm under no delusions that my readership will, after reading this column, suddenly throw away their daily planners,

drop out of college or quit their day job — that isn't what I'm advocating for. In the fast-paced, high-stress environment of modern America, however, we must realize life is much more than crossing the next item off our to-do list. As the old adage goes, stop and smell the roses.

I'm guilty of it myself — I'm admittedly obsessed with productivity. When I go to bed at night, I judge my day by how much I accomplished — how many assignments I finished, how many errands and chores I was able to squeeze into my waking hours, how productive I was at work. I chastise myself for downtime, for taking a nap when I should have been busy studying or doing laundry.

But let me tell you, a constant focus on productivity can make for a terribly unsatisfying existence. My social relationships come secondary, if at all, during a busy day. I never watch television, rarely watch movies and rarely read for personal pleasure anymore. I seldom eat meals with others simply because it lengthens the duration of the meal — time during which I could be doing something more productive. I have a feeling most Truman State students can commiserate.

This high-stress, fast-paced lifestyle is taking its inevitable toll on us. Chronic stress can result in health problems ranging from high blood pressure to insomnia, muscle pain, anxiety and a weak

immune system, according to a Feb. 7 Time magazine article. You might not be surprised to learn that young adults aged 18 to 33 are America's most stressed-out generation, according to the Time article. In addition to the measurable health risks, chronic stress can compromise our most treasured relationships and result in lower life satisfaction.

Unfortunately, we live in a culture that makes leading a slower-paced, less-stressed life difficult, if not impossible. Consider the automobile, an icon of modern civilization. What does it say about the lifestyle we've collectively chosen for ourselves that we are willing to place our lives at significant risk multiple times per day simply to commute to work or school? We deem our tasks important enough to put our lives in substantial peril every day.

Of course, we must carry on with our jobs, our schoolwork and our everyday errands. But, consider how you assess the previous year of your life. Do you feel a holistic sense of satisfaction with your life because you aced the previous three Spanish tests? Or do you value life instead because of the meaningful relationships you've cultivated and the enjoyable experiences you've shared with friends and family? My guess is you, like me, consider life gratifying because of the latter. During our pursuit of the daily grind, we must take care not to neglect our pursuit of happiness.

Robert Overmann is a junior English major from Cape Girardeau, Mo.

Editorial Policy

The Index is published Thursdays during the school year by students at Truman State University, Kirksville, MO 63501. The first copy is free, and additional copies cost 50 cents each. The production offices are located in Barnett Hall. We can be reached by phone at 660-785-4449. The Index is a designated public forum, and content of the Index is the responsibility of the Index staff. The editor in chief consults with the staff and adviser but ultimately is responsible for all decisions. Opinions of Index columnists are not necessarily representative of the opinions of the staff or the newspaper. Our View editorials represent the view of the Editorial Board through a majority vote. The Editorial Board consists of the Editor-in-Chief, managing editor and opinions editor. The Index reserves the right to edit submitted material because of space limitations, repetitive subject matter, libelous content or any other reason the editor in chief deems appropriate. Submitted material includes advertisements and letters to the editor.

Letters Policy

The Index welcomes letters to the editor from the University community. Letters to the editor are due by noon the Monday before publication and become property of the Index. Submissions are subject to editing, must contain a well-developed theme and cannot exceed 500 words except at the discretion of the Editorial Board. Letters containing personal attacks will not be published. All letters to the editor must be typed, double-spaced, signed by at least one individual and include a phone number for verification. They must be submitted by email to index.opinionseditor@gmail.com or on our website at <http://tmn.truman.edu/theindex>. Include the words "letter to the editor" in the subject line of the e-mail. The Index does not publish anonymous letters to the editor. No individual may submit more than one letter a week.

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