

OUR VOICE

Farm Rescue making social change

As a pilot for UPS Airlines, Bill Gross would look down from the window of his plane on the patchwork quilt of farmsteads and see a disturbing sight.

"[F]ewer farms, less children per family, fewer neighbors," he recounts on the Farm Rescue website.

It bothered him that the farming way of life might be fading away.

So, in 2005, Gross, a North Dakota native and former farmer, created Farm Rescue, a grassroots movement in every sense of the word.

The term "grassroots" can refer to either ordinary people or to the agricultural or rural areas of the country. And in this case, both.

Built on the concept of paying it forward, and perhaps paying it back, Farm Rescue offers assistance with "Planting, harvesting and haying to farm families who have experienced a major injury, illness or natural disaster," for up to 1,000 acres, according to farmrescue.org.

This nonprofit organization relies on donations of equipment and money, and volunteers who show up from as far away as Texas. Some of these volunteers had themselves once been a beneficiary of Farm Rescue.

And this truly is a uniquely Midwest phenomenon. The central office is in Jamestown, N.D., and has assisted more than 300 farms, mostly in North Dakota and South Dakota, but also as far as Chester, Mont., and Carlisle, Iowa.

Any one of a number of disasters can befall a farm family; farming is truly a risky business. Accidents from farm equipment or cattle; burns, back and knee injuries, detached retina, respiratory problems, cancer, stroke, heart attacks and Alzheimer's disease. The farm itself can be damaged by fire or tornadoes.

A single bad year can devastate a farm family. If they can't get a crop planted or, if once planted, it cannot be harvested, the income lost might prove to be the final death knell for a farm that has stood for more than 100 years.

And for farmers who are already dealing with the expense of lengthy medical treatment, the problem is compounded tenfold.

Family farms are already an endangered species. No one wants to see any more lost due to bad fortune.

But thanks to the foresight of Bill Gross, hundreds of farms have already been helped and hundreds more will be in the future.

Only a few miles away from Aberdeen, a team from Farm Rescue, as well as several concerned neighbors, stepped in to harvest the crops of Steve Schaller. Schaller, who developed a severe infection after a rotator cuff injury, was simply unable to do it without help. "It was tough to see so many doing my work," he said.

Sure it's tough, because farmers are nothing if not independent. And it can be hard to swallow one's pride and accept help.

But in the case of Farm Rescue, the help given to 300 family farms may be causing a ripple effect of social change.

Remember the words of anthropologist Margaret Mead: "Never underestimate the power of a small group of committed people to change the world. In fact, it is the only thing that ever has."

— American News Editorial Board

Letters to the editor

Letters are limited to one every 30 days and priority is given to those from the Aberdeen area. They are limited to 325 words. A daytime telephone number and street address are needed for verification, though they will not be printed. Letters represent the opinion of the writer and do not reflect the opinion of the American News.

Submit your letter online at

www.aberdeennews.com/news/opinion/submit

email

letters@aberdeennews.com

AmericanNews

ESTABLISHED 1885

American News Editorial Board:

Cory Bollinger, publisher
J.J. Perry, executive editor
John Papendick, managing editor
Lori Salfrank, finance director
Tyler Oliver, marketing director
Gretchen Mayer, special sections coordinator
Victoria Lusk, special sections coordinator

American News editorials reflect the views of the editorial board. Other opinions in this column or on this page are those of the writer expressing them. We welcome your opinions and thoughts.

Send letters to Public Voice (325-word limit) and guest columns (500-word limit) to letters@aberdeennews.com.

Viewpoints

BY THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH
 @COLUMBUSDISPATCH
 COLUMBUSDISPATCH.COM



COLUMN

Fixing a broken political system

Thank goodness the Nov. 4 elections are behind us.

It seems the older I get, the more cynical I become.

I wasn't always this way. I used to believe that the political process worked. Now, I am more inclined to agree with Frank Zappa, that "politics is the entertainment branch of industry." By nearly all accounts, the political process is broken, so here are my suggestions on how to "fix" this folly:

- Establish term limits. Legislative service was never intended to be a career. It was intended to be public service by participation in one's own governance. But politicians today spend more time raising money for their next election than they do trying to solve real problems and with real solutions. Without a fixed amount of time to get some-



Alan Neville
Aberdeen

thing done, inaction and partisanship have become the norm. We even joke about Congress's utter inaction, which occurs largely because there is more politician loyalty to the two dysfunctional and monopolistic parties than to the people who elected them.

Term limits would enable lawmakers to focus on the tasks at hand without concerns of where they might be in 10 years. Terms should be limited to four years.

- Reform campaign financing. Whenever politicians are beholden to large donors, or even large parties, they are not acting in the best interests of their constituents. They toe the party line or they do not receive the support (financial or otherwise) to get re-elected. Thus, we have all the grandstanding in Washington. We should strictly limit the

amount of money that individuals and/or corporations can donate to a campaign. Or, better yet, combine all donations into a pool to be split evenly amongst the candidates — not the parties.

Mike Rounds last year said he was hoping to raise \$9 million for his U.S. Senate campaign. Imagine what \$9 million could do for education in South Dakota, or what the millions spent in Washington could do to help feed the nation's hungry. Any way you look at it, the amount of money spent on these political campaigns — which do nothing but make the constituents frustrated — is ludicrous. These campaigns certainly do not facilitate the informed and reasoned selection of the best person for the job. They merely use partial truths and sensationalism to play on people's fears.

- Eliminate midterm elections. In an op-ed article in

The New York Times, authors David Schanzer and Jay Sullivan advocate for this very thing saying, "less than 40 percent of the electorate will bother to vote, even though candidates, advocacy groups and shadowy 'super PACs' will have spent more than \$1 billion to air more than two million ads to influence the election." That appalling waste of money will not lead to meaningful discourse between warring parties. And anyone with ears has learned to distrust every word uttered in every political commercial ever to invade our homes, so what is gained?

If we have the courage to weed out the riffraff, maybe we can restore our government of the people, by the people and for the people.

Alan L. Neville is a professor of education at Northern State University. The views are his and do not represent NSU.

COLUMN

Shoshana Roberts and the catcalls heard around the world

They say they are going to rape Shoshana Roberts.

She's the star of a hidden camera video that has gone viral. Posted by Hollaback!, a group that campaigns against the street harassment of women — "catcalling" — it shows Roberts taking a silent stroll through New York City. Over the course of 10 hours, she records over a hundred instances of unwanted attention from unknown men.

It ranges from "What's up, girl?" to "God bless you, mami" to "D—n!" to a couple of guys who, in separate incidents, follow her for blocks.

The video is not without flaws. Although Rob Bliss Creative, the agency that produced it, has said Roberts was approached by men of every racial hue, the clip is edited to make it appear as if only African- and Hispanic-American men harassed her. Hollaback! has apologized for what it calls "unintended bias." For what it's worth, another term for "unintended bias" is, bias.

Even so, I think the clip manages to make its point: namely, that it's a gut-punch, if you are an attractive woman, trying to walk down the street without being messed with. Many men seem to feel their absolute entitlement and peremptory prerogative to intercept you, to demand notice, to compel conversation, to offer evaluations of your physical assets.

The argument over catcalling has simmered since August when the New York Post ran an op-ed under the headline, "Hey, Ladies — Catcalls Are Flattering! Deal With It," by a woman who said such attention boosts her ego. A panel on Fox "News" responded predictably. "Let men be men" said co-host Kimberly Guilfoyle.



Leonard Pitts Jr.
Miami Herald

Last week, as the Roberts video made the rounds, the network was again predictable. "She got 100 catcalls," said Fox "personality" Bob Beckel. "Let me add 101: 'D—n, baby, you're a piece of woman.'"

A piece. Of woman. D—n, indeed.

Certainly, there is room to debate the difference between flirtation and harassment. But it is disingenuous to pretend — as Fox and others on the right do — that there is no there there, that nothing troubling is revealed in that video.

Meantime, Roberts has people saying they are going to rape her.

The threats, made online, have come from men angered by the video. This is not unique. Women journalists have gotten rape threats. Women crusading against misogynistic video games have gotten rape threats. Model Chrissy Teigen has gotten rape threats. Various other women who have dared espouse opinions have gotten rape threats.

It is noteworthy that we are not talking about a threat equally applicable to women and men — i.e., death threats — but, rather, one specific to women and, as such, designed to make a statement: You are smaller, weaker, more vulnerable. Stay in your place — or be put there.

It is a threat with which women were all too familiar long before the Internet was born. It lurks behind the easy smile of men you don't know — and, too often, of men you do. For one woman in every six, it isn't even a threat. It's a reality, a lacerating memory.

The realization of which should kill any temptation to laugh off what Roberts' video depicts. Even in our enlightened era, even with Oprah running her

The threats, made online, have come from men angered by the video. This is not unique. Women journalists have gotten rape threats. Women crusading against misogynistic video games have gotten rape threats. Model Chrissy Teigen has gotten rape threats. Various other women who have dared espouse opinions have gotten rape threats.

empire and Hillary contemplating the presidency, we still live in a society where it is too often the case that women equals prey.

And that gives the lie to the notion that the behavior of the men in that video is harmless. It might be a good idea, at least for those of us who lack firsthand experience, to imagine enduring that a hundred times a day. Imagine it if you were smaller, weaker, more vulnerable. Imagine it and remember: One's perception of a threat is in direct proportion to one's susceptibility to said threat. Better yet, imagine if it were some young woman you loved.

I asked my daughter — 24, like Roberts, pretty like Roberts — to look at the video and tell me what she thought. Her response made me ache a little.

"That's every day," she said.

Leonard Pitts Jr., winner of the 2004 Pulitzer Prize for commentary, is a columnist for the Miami Herald, 3511 N.W. 91 Avenue, Doral, Fla. 33172. Readers may write to him via email at lpitts@miamiherald.com.