

Don't wait until it's too late to say you care

Memorial Day is meant to be a time for remembrance.

A time to honor all veterans, regardless of rank or branch, for the many sacrifices they've made in the name of freedom.

This year, however, four local families probably didn't spend the holiday weekend commemorating fallen members of the military.

Instead, they were most likely focused on another loss, equally tragic but wholly without cause.

On the eve of the nationwide celebration, four people lost their lives in Walworth County, all victims claimed by two separate single-car collisions.

The first occurred in the town of Lyons on roughly 7 p.m., when a 2003 Volkswagon Jetta veered off the road and into a tree, extinguishing the lives of three young men from Burlington.

Then, several hours later, a 2012 Dodge truck suffered nearly the same exact fate while driv-



ing in Sharon on Highway B. It careened off the road during the early hours of the morning, crashing into a utility pole and bursting into flames.

Its sole occupant was badly burned and declared dead on the scene, as were the three victims of the earlier crash, with both accidents appearing to be a result of nothing but excessive speed.

That's all it takes. Four families are now bereft, left in ruin; shattered, grieving and reeling.

And while there are no words capable of alleviating their sorrow or diminishing their pain, their tragedy contains a lesson that may easily be missed by the unaffected.

To be blunt, don't squander the opportunity to tell your loved ones what they mean to you.

No one knows how much time they have left.

The world is a chaotic and tumultuous and unforgiving place, with neither rhyme nor reason, and whether lives are claimed by illness or carelessness, thoughtless violence or random chance, it only takes a moment.

And, too often, those of us who remain behind are left wanting, wishing we could have at least said goodbye.

I discovered that firsthand last month when my father, Thomas Michels, passed away on May 2.

At least, that's when I received the call from the police chaplain in Rockford, Illinois, telling me that he was gone.

It was a Tuesday.

I was sitting at my desk when the phone rang.

It's important to mention that my dad always had a knack for calling at the most inopportune times, like a telemarketer who only calls during dinner.

So at first, when I saw the Rockford area code, I just assumed it was his terrible timing again, calling while I was on deadline to put out the paper.

But of course, it wasn't.

It was the chaplain, the harbinger of a loss I wasn't even aware I'd suffered.

Even now, I'm not sure that I can describe the different feelings that filled me that day.

Shock, mostly, I guess, followed by grief, and anger.

But ever since, of all my memories of my dad, the most prominent have been those inconvenient phone calls and how, now, I'd give anything to answer one.

To hear him ask "How you

doing, Davey?" and listen to him reminisce about Buddy, our old family dog, or about the latest Tom Clancy book he'd found, ghostwritten by my apparent doppelganger, David Michaels.

I remember all of the stupid, inconsequential things that, at the time, I thought were more important, and I feel guilty.

That guilt sits in the forefront of my mind now, with unyielding persistence.

And when I fail to dispel it, I feel worse, knowing he wouldn't want me to remember him that way, wouldn't want to be a burden.

That's why it's so essential to make the most of what little time we have, and to tell our loved ones just that, that we love them.

Every day should be spent appreciating those who make life worth living, because Memorial Day may be a time of remembrance, but so is every other day once they're gone.



The Time is Now

Fourteen years of helping

Last week marked 14 years of sharing what we do at The Time Is Now to Help in our weekly column. An idea to inform our communities about the need for poverty relief turned into an opportunity to help not just the 729 people written about over the past years, but thousands of people we have helped thanks to your compassion, generosity, caring and sharing.

More than 30 years ago we were looking for a charity that would actually use the funds donated for their actual cause, not their overhead or salaries. We were frustrated when we saw great need but too much red tape for our funds to get to the peo-



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ple we wanted to help. We found many people living in shacks, on park benches and in overcrowded shelters. We found children and the elderly living with the constant pain of hunger. We found the handicapped living without basic needs and resources. I went to each and every place we gave and assessed their needs. When I talked to women with children living in shelters I found

they needed diapers and personal hygiene products. When I visited the handicapped I found they did not have supportive wheelchairs, ramps or even clothing. When I found hunger I provided food. The Time Is Now to Help was established so we would be assured that every penny of our own and our donors' funds would be put to work immediately to remove the pains of poverty.

While much has changed in our communities during the past 14 years, the need for poverty relief remains the same. People are still becoming homeless, children are still hungry, senior citizens are still struggling to make ends meet, the handi-

capped are unable to afford basic needs and working poor families cannot afford rent and other necessities of life. We knew we could never solve the many complex reasons for poverty, but we could ease the pains of living in poverty. And we have done just that thanks to all of you. You have been an integral part of all we do at The Time Is Now to Help. Every one we have comforted and assisted over the past 14 years was thanks to all of you.

I founded The Time Is Now to Help more than 30 years ago with the following mission: "The Time Is Now exists solely for the purpose of alleviating the

PLEASE SEE TIME ON 4D

Community columnist

What are cheese curds anyway?

Simply put, cheese curds are the first stage in the making of all pressed cheeses. Milk is pasteurized, then brought down to a temperature between 86 and 95 degrees, depending on the particular cheese recipe. This is the optimum temperature range at which mesophilic (medium temperature) cultures grow.

The culture is added to the milk and after the desired level of acidification is achieved, rennet is added to coagulate the milk. Then the cheesemaker inserts a small knife and raises it through the top few inches of thickened milk to check for the degree of coagulation (this is referred to as "checking for a clean break").

The curdled milk is then cut into curds — the curd size is determined by the type of cheese. The smaller the curd, the more whey is expelled, and the harder the final cheese. To make parmesan, a very dry cheese, the curds are cut to the size of grains of rice.

Some cheese companies scoop up and package their curds at this point, after heating them so the pieces of cheese form a light rind

Poutine

The ultimate poutine dish would consist of homemade gravy, fresh hand-cut fries and local cheese curds from grass-fed cows. But a quick and still tasty version can be assembled from quality pre-made gravy and a good brand of frozen fries baked until crispy. Do seek out the best cheese curds you can find, again, local and grass-fed. For each serving, put the fries, fresh from the oven, into a bowl. Top with 2-3 ounces of curds, and immediately cover with hot gravy, which will begin to melt the cheese. Some restaurants and pubs add cooked beef under the gravy — a great way to stretch a bit of leftover roast into a meal.

on the outside — this will prevent the curds from knitting together as they are bagged and stacked.

PLEASE SEE CHEESE ON 4D



A quick and tasty version of a poutine dish. (Photo submitted/Regional News)

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