

OPINION

GUEST COLUMN

Raising awareness about gender disparities and heart disease

Hearts are the theme for February. Aside from Valentine's Day celebrating romance, February is also National Heart Month. Heart disease remains the No. 1 killer of Americans. We talk a lot about how to lower our risk for heart disease by eating better, avoiding tobacco, exercising more and managing our stress. But we also need to be prepared and able to identify the symptoms of heart disease.



Becky CARTER

Over the decades that heart disease has been studied, most study participants have been men, and it was previously considered to be a "man's disease." This is problematic because women too are impacted by heart disease and they often experience very different heart attack symptoms than men.

According to a 2012 American Heart Association report, nearly two-thirds of women who die suddenly of heart disease experience no warning signs or symptoms of an impending heart attack.

This alarming fact alone illustrates the urgency we should all feel about women's heart health, and emphasize how important it is to establish a direct relationship with a primary care provider.

Women are often unaware they frequently experience different, more subtle heart attack symptoms compared to men. For example, men's typical symptoms include sudden, sharp chest pain with trouble breathing; although women can experience these symptoms too, they more often complain of back, shoulder and jaw pain, nausea, belching, cold sweats and flu-like symptoms. A woman's heart attack risk is heightened by almost 50 percent if they also have diabetes. Depression disproportionately affects women and increases heart attack risk as well.

Fortunately, women can focus on factors they can control, like exercising, eating a healthy diet and lowering their stress levels to reduce cardiovascular disease risk, even if they are predisposed to heart disease due to family history. I am personally vigilant about my heart health, as my mother experienced – and thankfully survived – a heart attack at the young age of 41. She was lucky, because as with most women she continued through her workday, incorrectly thinking that her back and shoulder pain was nothing to worry about. I am so thankful she survived and it has left an indelible memory and created a passion for me to educate others.

National Wear Red Day for women's heart health awareness happens on the first Friday in February of each year. This year, I wore red in honor of my mother.

Rebecca W. Carter, MSN, RN, FACHE, is president and chief nursing officer of Blue Ridge Regional Hospital in Spruce Pine.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Writer happy to provide 'comic relief'

To the editor:

As I sat down to pen a reply to Mr. Jones' exception to my editorial, I asked myself, "Why?"

Why do I waste time and ink "Arguing with a socialist is like wrestling with a pig, you both get dirty, and then you realize that the pig enjoys it," to paraphrase George Bernard Shaw? This is not meant as a personal reflection on Mr. Jones, but on any group that can deny the progress that has been made by the current administration, which, by the way, was promised by the past three administrations and never carried out.

This group of people has no agenda or platform other than hatred of the one man that has fulfilled the promises on which he was elected. The talking heads feed them a constant stream of Kool-Aid on the nightly "fake news."

I am happy I provided some comic relief to a group of people so consumed by hatred they have no sense of humor.

If they weren't so hellbent on doing away with our First, Second and Fourth Amendment rights, if not the whole Constitution, as well as our borders and law enforcement, I would be hard-pressed to find a group of clowns more humorous than Cortez, Waters, Pelosi, Harris, Warren, Sanders, Mueller, Strzok, and the list goes on. They all seem to be competing for the wheel on "The ship of fools."

Yes, I am enamored by the one man who has the "grip" to clean the cesspool, both Republican and Democrat.

As to our President's narcissism and megalomania, he is a rank amateur in that respect compared to his predecessor.

I stand by our President and everything I have written, as I genuinely believe God sent him as our last chance to salvage our republic and our Christian heritage.

In closing, I would suggest to Mr. Jones the future of his Democrat socialist party may be found on the sidewalks of San Francisco.

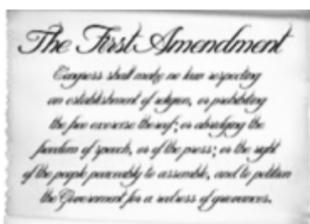
Charles Boone
Spruce Pine

Improving health care linked to education

To the editor:

I have spent the bulk of my career as a family physician in our tight-knit, rural community, where the people I care for are not "just patients" but also my neighbors and friends. This makes it even more painful to witness so many of our neighbors struggle to stay healthy. In our small community, one person's poor health can affect all of us. When someone's health prevents them from growing their small business, working full-time, or continuing their education, our whole community and economy suffer.

Compared to urban areas, rural residents in North Carolina have higher rates of preventable hospitalizations, alcohol and drug use, injury, teen births, and overall mortality. Often, that is because so many rural families can't afford health insurance and can't get the medical care they need. I know firsthand how lack of access to insurance affects people's health overall. I have seen too many of our neighbors put off going to the doctor because they can't afford it, with catastrophic results. Some let high blood pressure go untreated until they suffer a stroke. Treatable cancers aren't caught until they have metastasized. Pregnant mothers don't see a doctor until the day they go into labor.



The First Amendment guarantees freedoms concerning religion, expression, assembly and the right to petition. It forbids Congress from both promoting one religion over others and also restricting an individual's religious

practices. It guarantees freedom of expression by prohibiting Congress from restricting the press or the rights of individuals to speak freely. It also guarantees the right of citizens to assemble peaceably and to petition their government.

GUEST COLUMN

Headlines show crucial connection

Some headlines in a recent edition of the Mitchell News-Journal caught my attention: "Businesses thriving in downtown Spruce Pine" and "In love with words" (Wednesday, Feb. 13, 2019). There's a connection.

On a recent mild winter day, I took a purposeful stroll up Lower Street and down Upper Street making a mental



Charles BIERBAUER

inventory of changes. We're relatively new to Spruce Pine and still part-time residents. Change, for me, seems more abrupt than incremental. Where's the store/restaurant/office I was in seemingly just the other day? From where did that new place come?

What's the story behind the change?

I'm a journalist by training, practice and inclination. The backstory intrigues me. I've noticed a migration of some businesses from upper to lower – Oak to Locust. More hospitable to commerce? Larger storefronts? Easier parking? Some of the "businesses thriving" stories fit that mold.

Spruce Pine can be pleased with businesses moving up by moving lower. But not by businesses moving out. Still, an occupancy on Locust Street creates not just a vacancy on Oak Street, but also an opportunity. This is where the town's marketing forces come into play. There's space available to promote the comfort and neighborliness of small-town America.

Spruce Pine, Bakersville, Burnsville, Marion, Rutherfordton and other Western North Carolina small towns have much in common. Alas, that's often vacant storefronts. But each also has its brand. "The Mineral City of the World" may sound a bit pretentious, but it speaks to an economic strength of the community. More might be done to make the town worth a stop and worth a stay. To be sure, businesses thriving in downtown Spruce Pine will help tremendously.

It was the mountain views and the small-town quiet that attracted us. We've done big cities in our journalistic careers.

So, here's that connection: Brandon Roberts' love of words. The empty storefront that would most shock and worry me would be if the Mitchell News-Journal shuttered its doors on Lower Street. I'd hope you'd be shocked, too.

Whoa! Whoa! I'm not suggesting anything. Brandon and I get together periodically for coffee in one of our thriving places. We talk a lot about journalism on micro and macro scales.

Much is being written these days about the death of journalism – premature – and the false premise of "fake news." It's an oxymoron. If it's fake, it's not news. If it's news, it had best not be fake.

There are troublesome aspects to our journalism profession, especially on the business side. The Internet, cable networks and corporate consolidation all have played a role. But vigorous journalism is a tenet of democracy, though only one part of all the rights the First Amendment provides us.

Be assured national journalism is still prospering. The New York Times. The Wall Street Journal. The networks. They give us the big picture. Metropolitan newspapers struggle in places like Boston, Philadelphia, Denver and Detroit that are too big to be really local and too small to be profitable. But really local news, like the News-Journal, is doing proportionately well. Even the newspaper in Charlotte and the television station in Asheville cannot adequately tell you what is happening in Mitchell County.

And as long as Brandon and others who practice local journalism are "in love with words," you and I will have a better understanding of what is happening here.

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