

**DOWN
 the
 SIDE**

Isn't it ironic?

While I can't say I'd want to live anywhere but America — with all the freedoms we enjoy — when a friend e-mailed me the following observations, I had to laugh at some of our ironic customs.

Only in America...do drugstores make the sick walk all the way to the back of the store to get their prescriptions while healthy people can buy cigarettes at the front.

Only in America...do people order double cheeseburgers, large fries, and a diet Coke.

Only in America...do banks leave both doors open and then chain the pens to the counters.

Only in America...do we leave cars worth thousands of dollars in the driveway and put our useless junk in the garage.

Only in America...do we buy hot dogs in packages of 10 and buns in packages of eight.

Only in America...do they have drive-up ATM machines with Braille lettering.

Ever wonder...

Why the sun lightens our hair, but darkens our skin?

Why women can't put on mascara with their mouth closed?

Why don't you ever see the headline "Psychic Wins Lottery"?

Why is "abbreviated" such a long word?

Why is it that doctors call what they do "practice"?

Why is lemon juice made with artificial flavor, and dishwashing liquid made with real lemons?

Why is the man who invests all your money called a broker?

Why is the time of day with the slowest traffic called rush hour?

Why isn't there mouse-flavored cat food?

Why didn't Noah swat those two mosquitoes?

Why do they sterilize the needle for lethal injections?

You know that indestructible black box that is used on airplanes? Why don't they make the whole plane out of that stuff?

Why are they called apartments when they are all stuck together?

If flying is so safe, why do they call the airport the terminal?

Why don't sheep shrink when it rains?

— J.C.T.



Mignon Miller, a speech and language pathologist and an audiologist, works with 2-year-old Annika Wanha at Northern Voices, a school in Roseville, Minn., geared toward young recipients of cochlear implants. Visible on Annika's head is a receiver.

Mary Loftness

Extension Educator



Communities make a difference in kids' lives

We hear the saying, "It takes a village to raise a child," but do we take the time to really think about what that means?

Children don't grow up in a vacuum. They grow up in families that are surrounded by friends and neighbors, who are all part of a village or greater community. Children of all ages have wide-ranging, fluid, and complex developmental needs.

Parents and families can't address all these needs, and neither can schools. Some critical outcomes are best achieved when youth are "out" in the community.

This is especially true for middle and high school youth who are moving beyond the immediate family and must learn how to navigate among their peer groups, neighborhoods or new social worlds. Learning how to deal with peer pressure, make choices between healthy or unhealthy behaviors, and learning how to handle disappointment is critical for young people if they are to grow into successful adults. The community is key in providing the supports that help young people move from childhood through adolescence.

Communities can help young people make connections with different groups. Adults can get to know the youth in their neighborhoods, greeting them by name, engaging them in conversation and showing interest in their activities.

Communities can also help young people gain skills in non-academic arenas — or apply math, science and language skills to real life situations. Employers of young people can help them gain an increasing sense of competence and accomplishment by challenging them to grow in their job.

Communities help youth connect to something larger than themselves, explore spirituality, or learn about citizenship and leadership by getting involved in community concerns and public issues.

We're all part of the community, and we all have a stake in ensuring that our youth develop into adults who are economically self-sufficient and contributing members of society. We hold the key to creating the community where young people grow up feeling engaged and connected. The community is a critical partner in raising young people to thrive and become "assets in the making" for the future.

Source: Janet Beyer, University of Minnesota Extension Service.

A sound decision

After experiencing difficulty teaching sign language to their daughter, Annika, the Wanhas pursued cochlear implants to expose her to the world of sound.

By Brent Schacherer
 EDITOR

When others ask questions about their daughter — and it happens frequently — Allen and Rebecca Wanha have the option of taking the conversation in many different directions.

But Allen Wanha recently used the simplest explanation he could think of to describe his daughter.

"She's just a miracle," he said.

Such an emotional appraisal of Annika is understandable. As an infant, she sur-



STAFF PHOTOS BY BRENT SCHACHERER

Two-year-old Annika Wanha received cochlear implants in March.

vived a frightening battle with potentially life-threatening bacterial meningitis. Now 2 years old, she copes with spastic cerebral palsy, a disorder which has affected mus-

cular coordination in her legs and requires regular visits to a physical therapist.

But it is Annika's progression from the deaf world to the hearing world that brought her father's emotional description of her.

And though it may not be a miracle in the truest sense of the word, that progression — accomplished with cochlear implants, tiny electronic devices that can provide a sense of sound to deaf or severely hard of hearing — has certainly been a technological marvel.

Annika Wanha was born a healthy little girl in February 2002, but developed bacterial meningitis at 2 1/2 months.

The disease, which likely developed as a result of unresolved ear infections, left her with what at the time was termed "moderate to severe" hearing loss, her mother said.

She received her first set of hearing aids in August 2002, even as chronic ear infections continued. The hearing loss never stabilized, however, and by the time she was 18 months old, doctors determined Annika was hearing nothing in her left ear and only sounds at 90 decibels or higher in her right ear.

Please see **ANNIKA** on Page 5B



COFFEESHOP CONVERSATION

Youth orchestra accepts new registrations through Feb. 4

The registration deadline for the Crow River Area Youth (CRAYO) String and Chamber Ensembles is Feb. 4.

The Chamber Orchestra is a string program open to musicians who are at Suzuki Book 3 and above. More advanced musicians are welcome to participate.

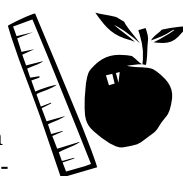
The String Ensemble is geared for musicians who have reached and can read at the level of the "Minuets" in Suzuki Book 1 through the end of Suzuki Book 2.

Both groups meet on Saturdays from 9:30 to 11 a.m. at Hutchinson Middle School on South Grade Road in Hutchinson. Both cost \$50 for the semester. The first rehearsal is scheduled for Feb. 19. Auditions are not required for either group. For more information or to register, go to www.crayouthorchestra.org, call Marie Nelson at (320) 693-7243 or e-mail her at jmnelson@hutchtel.net.

Schools start two hours late Wednesday

Litchfield Public Schools and the School of St. Philip will start two hours late on Wednesday.

The late start will provide staff an opportunity to work on curriculum and instruction projects.



Fredrickson will share his Civil War artillery knowledge

The Meeker County Historical Society will present Keith Fredrickson at their Feb. 6 meeting from 2 to 4 p.m.

Keith will talk on Civil War artillery. He holds the national championship for accuracy with Civil War artillery. He was featured on the History Channel.

Keith is from Litchfield and produces authentic mortars. The meeting is open to the public at no charge.

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Need a racino?

Do you favor an expansion of gambling in Minnesota? The Legislature debated the merits of a racino, or race track casino, last year, and the topic seems likely to come up again as a partial solution to the state's budget woes. Do you think a state-run casino, from which profits would be used to fund state projects, is a good idea?

Last week's question:

What is the best way for the state of Minnesota to climb out of the current budget shortfall it faces?

Make more budget cuts	35%
Raise taxes	14%
A combination of the two	43%
Not sure	8%
Total Voters: 37	