

Herman Roe Editorial Writing Award

OUR VIEW
DOWNTOWN BEHAVIOR UNACCEPTABLE

Some people make a point of staying away. Others who have to be there lock their car doors as they travel through the area. Many across town are fast asleep and don't realize the ugly scene that unfolds some nights. Late-night downtown Mankato too often is a danger zone.

Why it matters: Dangerous for those who don't drink to excess but may meet face to face with drunks looking for a fight. Dangerous for downtown employees who are just trying to drive home without pedestrian mobs ignoring traffic signals or banging on vehicles or demanding rides. The late-night rowdy atmosphere is not a new thing. The homecoming riots near Minnesota State University in 2003 brought city, state and federal attention to not a spotlight on community concern. In the last 10 years, much has been done to educate young people about high-risk behavior. Police work hard to curb under-age drinking parties and do checks on bars to see who they are serving. The city passed an ordinance that holds party hosts accountable when guests are illegally drinking. City buses carry students safely from downtown to the campus area during late-night and early-morning hours. Patrols of police officers and firefighters are often called to the area to keep revelers safe and try to prevent problems.



Time to remake shareholder capita

Sometimes a necessary solution is a measure not intended to make a major point, such as telling a great deal more than the author intended. One such measure passed up in a recent Wall Street Journal story that documented U.S. corporations effectively use the value of outstanding shares but do nothing to enhance a company's long-term value. The long-term value is a significant factor in many companies' decisions to buy back overvalued shares or change dividends. They do so just to raise their share prices, says New York Times columnist Thomas H. Davenport. He writes that — as that

All Individuals

First Place: The Free Press, Mankato, Kathy Vos

Downtown behavior unacceptable

After reading through the dozens of entries in this category, I kept coming back to the editorial by Kathy Vos. In this editorial, Vos brings up an issue of utmost importance to the community, that perhaps has become an elephant in the room that needs addressing. Vos pushes for continued work to stem the huge problem of high-risk drinking in Mankato. We hope that, in the spirit of the editorial, the Free Press continues to keep this issue top of mind and press the community for change.

Second Place: Winona Post, Frances Edstrom

Suicide rates up

Great topic and presented well and informational from own experience. Well done.

Third Place: The Free Press, Mankato, Joe Spear

Waseca needs calm amid controversy

Very nice editorial on the area and intending to relax before going nuts. Very good message and substance here.

Our View: Downtown Behavior Unacceptable

Some people make a point of staying away. Others who have to be there lock their car doors as they travel through the area. Many across town are fast asleep and don't realize the ugly scene that unfolds some nights. Late-night downtown Mankato too often is a danger zone.

Dangerous for those who drink in excess. Dangerous for those who don't drink to excess but may meet face to face with drunks looking for a fight. Dangerous for downtown employees who are just trying to drive home without pedestrian mobs ignoring traffic signals or banging on vehicles or demanding rides.

The late-night rowdy atmosphere is not a new thing. The homecoming riots near Minnesota State University in 2003 put a spotlight on Mankato, and alcohol-related deaths in 2007 kicked in community concern.

In the last 10 years, much has been done to educate young people about high-risk behavior. Police work hard to curb under-age drinking parties and do checks on bars to see who they are serving. The city passed an ordinance that holds party hosts accountable when guests are illegally drinking. City buses carry students safely from downtown to the campus area during late-night and early-morning hours. Patrols of police officers and firefighters are often called to the area to keep revelers safe and try to prevent problems.

Still, it's still not enough.

In just the last few weeks, an MSU student fell off the bumper of a city late-night bus that was transporting students back to the campus area. He suffered serious head injuries. And a 24-year-old Mankato man is fighting for his life after being assaulted outside a downtown bar.

Those are the high-profile cases. No doubt in that same period, there were numerous cases of drunk kids who didn't remember how they got home, how many drinks they'd had, or who they spent the night with and whether the sex was safe and with consent.

The ongoing revitalization of the Front Street area will be an economic boon to the city, but added entertainment opportunities and downtown housing also could add gas to the flame of the late-night firestorm. If partying students fill those apartments, the numbers in the downtown scene will likely escalate. And if you are a non-student renter who doesn't appreciate late-night rowdiness, you probably won't be staying long.

Stepped-up patrolling and security, enforcement, preventive planning and intense alcohol education need to be in the continuous mix that keeps the situation under control. Riot prevention is on the far end of the problem spectrum. On the other end is a downtown late at night that is inhospitable to many and downright dangerous for others.

Public safety, health officials, MSU leaders, and the community as a whole need to keep working on the issues that were so prominently discussed in the 2008 High-Risk Drinking Summit. The summit came on the heels of two tragic deaths of young people, including one who drank herself to death and one who was lying in the road after drinking at a party and was hit by a car.

The summer may simmer down as student numbers drop for a few months, but the downtown problem definitely has not dried up and desperately needs attention before others are needlessly hurt.