

The Style Invitational

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



A burned-out fluorescent tube makes a great Star Wars light saber — for a while, anyway.

■ George Bush could reuse Will Rogers's saying "If stupidity got us into this mess, then why can't it get us out?"

■ Don't toss that heroin syringe — share it with a friend.

Week 654: It Plays to Recycle

In honor of Earth Day, which comes during the week when the results of this contest run, won't-go-away Loser Kevin Dopart of Washington suggests a wide-ranging recycling contest: **Come up with funny ways to recycle things, people, writing (except for your old Invitational entries; not this week) or ideas**, as in the examples at left. Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. First runner-up receives a really stupid card game called Are You Phrazy?, in which the players read passe-slang phrases ("Cowabunga," "Can you dig it?") from the cards and try to string them into a conversation.

Other runners-up win a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-Shirt, possibly in the previous style, since we just discovered a huge pile of old red and blue ones when we moved our office. Honorable mentions get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational magnets. One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries by e-mail to losers@washpost.com or by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, March 27. Include "Week 654" in the subject line of your e-mail, or it risks being ignored as spam. Include your name, postal address and phone number with your entry. Contests are judged on humor and originality. All entries become the property of The Washington Post. Entries may be edited for taste or content. Results will be published April 16. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes. Pseudonymous entries will be disqualified. The revised title for next week's contest is by Fil Feit of Annandale.

REPORT FROM WEEK 650

In which we asked for horror-story scenarios involving everyday items, a la Stephen King's "Cell." The horror-story title of the week goes to *Martyna Fox of Darnestown for "Bram Stoker's Spatula," though we didn't quite flip over the story itself hahahaha. The Empress enjoyed the scary tales submitted by a class of Florida kids; however, demonic possession of their fingers forced most of them to overshoot the 75-word limit by up to 400 words.*

4 Blade of the Beast: The year is 2999. Omens of the impending apocalypse are seen in the land. Meanwhile, frustrated by sluggish sales of their 665-bladed razor, executives at SchickGillette make a fateful decision . . . (Michael Fransella, Arlington)

3 The Blue Screen of Death: It really is. (Andrew Hoenig, Rockville)

2 The winner of the Boudreaux's Butt Paste and the Butt Paste bobblehead: An elderly uncle brings the family a music box that plays a sweet little tune when the lid is opened. But the family soon discovers that the song never stops playing, even when the lid is shut. They try smothering the music box, smashing it and shooting it with a gun, but to no avail. The sound drives the entire family mad. Also, the uncle kills and eats everyone. (Jay Shuck, Minneapolis)

AND THE WINNER OF THE INKER

1 You can't blame the toilets. People flush baby alligators when they get too big to be pets. And people flush drugs when the cops are at the door. So it's not the toilets' fault that drug-crazed alligators are popping out of them. We did it to ourselves. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

HONORABLE MENTIONS

We're just his prop: "How many liberals does it take to change a light bulb?" "How many Texans?" "How many lawyers?" He's got a million of 'em, all lame. So let's just — POP! — blow this 100-watt baby and see: How many pathetic ninmrods does it take to change a light bulb? Answer: FZZZZ! At least one more than you, Sheeky. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

Nature Abhors a Vacuum: A Park Avenue couple is increasingly annoyed as, one after another, each new maid they hire disappears on her first day, shortly after starting the housework. (Marjorie Streeter, Reston)

Horra! Horra! Horra! A beam of radiation hits the only Japanese restaurant in Wyoming, somehow giving chopsticks the power to turn those who eat with them into homicidal maniacs. Fortunately, no one in Wyoming knows how to use chopsticks, so the crisis passes unnoticed. (Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)

The Botox Syndrome: Its victims are unable to show their pain. (Russell Beland)

Hurly-Burly: They're tired of standing in as note paper. Fed up with being stuffed with dirty tissues. Angry at being demeaned as the place to stash the remnants of that greasy cheeseburger. The Barf Bags plot a flight where their proper use will be not just obvious to all on board, but mandatory, again and again and again . . . (Deb Parrish, Fairfax Station)

A monstrous fiend creates a glasslike device that reflects the actual images of those who look at it, causing universal self-hatred. (Peter Metrinko, Chantilly)

Possessed printer's ink develops

powers to rearrange letters in a line of type. The vice president is now known as "Needy Chick" — as reported in the Saw Things on POP! (Douglas Frank, Crosby, Tex.)

The town is invaded by flesh-eating zombies invisible to the naked eye. Fortunately, they can be seen and avoided by anyone wearing his own eyeglasses saved from the 1970s. Most residents prefer death, of course. (Jay Shuck)

Sweet Revenge: A disgruntled Splenda employee substitutes another white powder during a production run. When the sabotage is discovered, panic reigns and hospitals are overwhelmed as people discover the yellow packets contain 100 percent sugar. (Dave Prevar, Annapolis)

« The Pairings: Nursing a grudge at abuse suffered in "Sideways," flights of Napa Valley merlot start pairing inappropriately, soon accompanying dishes ranging from effeuillée de raie aux herbes en papillote de choux to croustillant de foie gras parfumé au Floc de Gascogne. Outraged diners kill all the sommeliers, and civilization as we know it comes to an end. (Jonathan Paul, Garrett Park)

Every time a person presses a button on the TV remote, he loses a second of his life. Men all over the world are dying younger and younger, some not even making it to their thirties. Women are left alone to watch entire programs from start to finish. (Donna LaBranche, Reston)

Seconds before Fanny dashed to the loo, the malevolent seat sprang into the vertical again. Cold ceramic on the gluteus, a hip-wrenching fall into the bowl, tore a shriek from Fanny's pharynx:



PHOTO: OCS

"Peter! You inconsiderate . . ."

"Yet another marriage destroyed!" gurgled a voice from the depths. (Art Litoff, York Springs, Pa.)

The Closet: A series of New York socialites literally die when, as successive owners of a high-end condominium, they discover that every article of clothing in the bedroom closet has transformed into last year's fashion!!! (Andrew Hoenig, Rockville)

Luffa's Not Enough: Beware, thin-skinned ones! Facial care products want their pound of flesh: They start exfoliating and they won't stop until those cheekbones are really defined. (Russell Beland; Cecil J. Clark, Asheville, N.C.)

Anti-evolutionist plotters develop computer furniture whose secret aim is to compress and deform the human spinal column. After the human race mutates into hunched-over drones, the anti-evolutionists claim that Darwin was wrong. (Peter Metrinko)

PMs: Platelet Monsters: A mutant blood virus has given tampons the power to overpower the emotions of any human who comes into contact with them. Symptoms of the "host" include emotional instability, intolerance of perceived slights that were hallucinations, and overreactions to simple inconveniences — like getting on a spouse's case for not calling to say he would be late from work, when he actually did call, but the line was busy, so what could he do? (Joel Ross, Herndon)

Fed up with being the target of men's derision for so many years, urinal cakes learn how to charge themselves to 6,000 volts. (Dave Kelsey, Fairfax)

And Last: Wastebaskets of Doom: Paper-recycling bins keep snatching up my best entries and tossing back third-rate junk like this. (Russell Beland)

Next Week: Show Us Some Character, or Toyed Story

'Live Right': A Show Gone Wild

TV REVIEW, From D1

Last year, Ehrlich, who was paid \$55,000 for her role as executive producer and star of "Live Right," attempted to get the show into Maryland public schools. The series was deemed unsuitable for children. But happily for us, it is still in circulation as part of our Comcast digital cable package.

We set out to review the show, which we confess was a little difficult to find, tucked into an obscure corner of the on-demand lineup, next to "Dating on Demand" and "Taxes." The first few episodes, we found, are plodding and poorly edited, endless conversations with those affected by substance abuse, brightened by rare flashes of insight. But then local cable television has never been noted for its high drama.

And then we got to Episode 10. It is called "Live Right: Ocean City," and bears a warning: "For mature audiences only."

Standing on the beach in a blue polo shirt, the first lady introduces the episode: "We're going to send our camera crew to the beach to hang out with teenagers the week before they go to school. This program is going to show the physiological aspects of alcohol. We'll let the story unfold in the time sequence it occurs. Come on, let's go!"

We join a group of unidentified young people in bikinis and swim trunks who smoke, curse, joke about herpes and lesbianism, ogle their beach mates and act increasingly inebriated. A guy talks about how much pot he smokes. A girl jiggles her hips and the camera pans

gratuitously to her bikini'd lower torso. The language is unprintable.

The first lady does not appear during these scenes and, frankly, we find ourselves missing her. We want a chaperone.

A clock tracks the teens' drunken progress and, occasionally, a bubble pops up on the screen explaining what the teenagers might be experiencing now. For example: "Increased Sociability" or "Incontinence."

At 2:30 p.m., one guy says, "I think I found the hottest chick in the world! You gotta see."

"My mom's hotter than her," says another guy.

"That's kind of gross," says the first guy.

At 2:40 p.m., a young woman pinches a young man's nipple.

Save us, first lady of Maryland!

Eventually, the little group troops across the sand toward a hotel room, presumably to drink some more, and that's the last we see of them. We are never told who they are, or whether they're old enough to give consent to be on camera, or whether, as a former prosecutor and crusader against underage drinking, the first lady had any qualms about having her crew film underage drinking. (Maybe she called the cops on them once she got what she needed?)

But the episode continues, and it just gets better. We go to a nightclub called Seacrets with a bunch of people who are well over 21. What they have to do with the

■ State schools reject Kendel Ehrlich's series as unsuitable for the classroom. | Metro



Kendel Ehrlich hosted 16 episodes of "Live Right: Straight Talk on Substance Abuse." Right, a scene from one of them.



SCREEN GRAB FROM "LIVE RIGHT"

problem of teen substance abuse is not explained; instead, the show is given over to unwarranted shots of drunk people. Women dance lasciviously and a bride-to-be at a bachelorette party displays an extremely large rubber object better left unidentified. Then comes the fellow who feels it necessary to pull something out of his zipper, in front of a small crowd of onlookers.

How exactly does this fit into the public school curriculum?

Ehrlich closes the show with this advice: "Really, it's simple. Don't drink until you're legal, and once you drink, drink responsibly."

The other episodes of the first lady's show are nowhere near as exciting. But she does tell a few good sto-

ries. She interviews a young man named Kelly, for example, whose tale of addictive descent from pot to cocaine to painkillers to heroin, of dealing and stealing from his mother's house, is wrenching.

The show appears to have been edited by a college student in his first semester of film class; sometimes the film abruptly turns black and white for artsy effect, or the camera makes a meditative close-up on a studio light. Portions of dialogue are nearly unintelligible because of bad sound quality. Ehrlich interviews a psychiatrist but we're never told his name. There's lengthy footage of a gruesome car crash, but whose? And why?

During one particularly boring interview, we see the first lady actually twiddling her thumbs. And we wonder: Is she bored, too?

Staff writer Matthew Mosk contributed to this report.

BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

East dealer
Both sides vulnerable

NORTH

♠ J10 9 6
♥ K Q J 5
♦ 7 3
♣ 9 5 3

EAST

♠ K Q
♥ A 10 9 8 7 2
♦ K J 5
♣ 6 2

WEST

♠ A 7 4 2
♥ 3
♦ Q 9 6 4
♣ Q J 10 8

SOUTH

♠ 8 5 3
♥ 6 4
♦ A 10 8 2
♣ A K 7 4

The bidding:

East	South	West	North
1♥	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♥	2NT(0)	Dbl	Pass
Pass	3♣	Dbl	All Pass

Opening lead: ♣ Q

The best excuse for using certain conventions is that if you don't, you'll miss some of the most remarkable disasters.

In today's deal, South heard West respond with a limited bid of 1NT and East also limit his strength by rebidding two hearts. Since South knew North must have some values, South couldn't resist wheeling out a gadget:

He tried a bid of 2NT.

Experts use "unusual" notrump bids in many situations. Here, South's bid conventionally asked North to bid a minor suit. It also asked for trouble.

West doubled for penalty, and North refused to choose a minor, no doubt on the theory that when you're about to go for a telephone-number penalty, it's better to let your partner play the hand. South rescued himself — if I can call it a rescue — to three clubs, and West lowered the boom.

Since North clearly liked clubs better than diamonds, West led the queen of trumps to stop South from ruffing diamonds in dummy. South took the king and led the ace and a low diamond, and East won and led his last trump.

South took the ace, ruffed a diamond and led dummy's king of hearts. East won, cashed the K-Q of spades and led a heart. West ruffed, took the ace of spades and cashed the queen of diamonds and his high trump. South won the 13th trick with a trump but was down four, minus 1,100 points.

South's 2NT was ill-judged. The bidding suggested a misfit deal. South should have saved his gadget for some other deal.

© 2006, Tribune Media Services

Dear Amy:

My 19-year-old son, a U.S. Marine, is serving in Iraq.

At times I will share some stories from my son with friends or close co-workers. I'm careful about what I share.

I hate it when someone says, "Well, remember he chose to join, no one forced him. He's there because he wants to be."

My son joined the Marines because he wanted to support his country. Did he know the risks of going to war? Of course he did, but it didn't stop him from joining. Because he defends our country, you can enjoy the freedoms we have.

One of my co-workers has a husband who is an alcoholic. I would never listen to her tell me about his latest ailment and say to her, "Well, you know he chooses to drink; no one forced him to." Did this husband know the risks of alcohol? Probably.

It makes me cringe when I hear folks talk this way. It feels like a slap in the face.

Please help me with a quick and not too smirky comeback to

these know-it-alls.

Sleep well, America, because my son has your back. He is a Marine.

Proud Marine Mom

First of all, you need to drop the comparison of your son to an alcoholic. I understand your basic point, but choosing to serve in the military is not an affliction.

People have very conflicting viewpoints on this war and our country's role in it. Some may not feel that your son is defending America's freedom by serving in Iraq, because many Americans wonder what the Iraqis did to us to warrant our military presence there. But what I think everyone can agree on is that members of the armed forces are serving America. Men and women who volunteer for the armed forces do not choose where they get sent. They serve how and where they are told to serve.

I hope that you get the support that you need from people who understand where you are

coming from. I did an Internet search and found a terrific Web site, www.militarymoms.net.

Moms of service members can share stories, fears and — yes — comebacks.

If I were in your situation, when people said, "Well, your son chose to join the Marines," I would pause, meet their gaze, and say, "You're welcome." Semper Par!

Dear Amy: My friend and her husband will be in town for one week this summer to attend a conference at a nearby hotel, which is where they will be staying. We live in a Southern city.

We are close friends and have known each other since college. We share personal stories with each other, but there is one thing about her that worries me. She does not use deodorant. She smells quite bad but doesn't seem to know it.

I fear that the summer heat will make it worse for me to be around her. Unfortunately, I just don't know how to let her know that she

needs to use something. Any advice?

Concerned Friend

Whenever I have covered this sticky topic, people write in to say that there is no substitute for the truth, delivered nicely and accompanied by the right product.

You might say, "Sandy, you're not going to believe how hot and yucky it can get here this time of year. I bought some deodorant for you. It's the kind I use and I swear by it. We all use industrial strength down here."

She might say, "Oh, I don't use deodorant," and you can say, "Well, you should. Everybody should use it, if you ask me, because even if we can't smell ourselves, others can always smell us."

Write to Amy Dickinson at askamy@tribune.com or Ask Amy, Chicago Tribune, TT500, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60611.

© 2006 by the Chicago Tribune Distributed by Tribune Media Services Inc.