



Expected Adversity

by James M. Decker

I've written in this space before about Stamford's restoration and reopening of the downtown Grand Theatre. Since the first movie premiered in November, we've been humbled by the support from the Stamford community and throughout neighboring communities as well. Instead of being relegated to showing also-ran movies and blockbusters that are well past their expiration date, we've been proud of our ability to show first-run, blockbuster movies, in a

first-rate environment, at the same time these movies open in larger cities.

If you follow me on social media, you know that adversity struck this past weekend. We opened "Toy Story 4" on the national opening weekend and had a fantastic turnout on Friday night...then our projector quit. Despite testing the movie earlier in the week, our brand-new, state-of-the-art equipment failed us. We renovated our theatre the right way, purchasing new equipment to avoid just these situations, and yet, here we are. Saturday's attempts to fix the projector on failed. After issuing rain checks to Friday's moviegoers, we were forced to cancel the weekend's slate of showings.

And yet, the community's response was tremendous. As our disappointed moviegoers left on Friday night, they were the ones to console and encourage our disappointed executive director, Suzanne Haterius

Fusaro. As Suzanne posted an update on Facebook late Friday night, our Facebook fans encouraged us, told us they were glad the theatre was here, said they knew we'd worked hard to get it open, and that they knew we'd get this fixed. We received a steady stream of similar feedback throughout our weekend updates on Facebook. It was a reminder of the kind of community in which we live. The hopeful nature of the comments also reminded me why the theatre is so important and how, in only seven months, people have come to greatly appreciate their local option for affordable entertainment.

This whole saga was also a reminder that in life, adversity is the rule, not the exception. No matter what community revitalization project we undertake, adversity WILL happen. High-dollar electronic equipment fails.

People get busy and don't give maximum effort to a group.

Cleanup days have a lackluster turnout. New businesses struggled to find a footing. We get exhausted and struggle with our own motivation. It's human nature. It's the nature of the world. Things go wrong. We don't always make the perfect decision. Others don't hold up their end of the bargain. We've all heard countless cliché stories about the failures of Abraham Lincoln, Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, and more. Clichés exist for a reason, because there's truth behind them. There's an old saying that if it was easy, everyone would do it. Rural revitalization is the same way. If turning around a rural community was easy, none of our communities would need our energy and our ideas. If improving the overall quality of life in rural America was easy, even the Washington politicians could have figured it out.

There's another old saying that nothing worth accomplishing was ever easy. When we get

discouraged, when things go south, we need to remember that. That projector failing was a reminder of that very thing. I'm a man who likes to look for silver linings. We lost an opening weekend of revenue for "Toy Story 4," and we disappointed some guests. That wasn't fun. But in a silver lining, we received that wonderful, positive feedback from our community and it reminded us just how appreciated and how important our theatre project really is.

We'll get that projector fixed and we'll overcome our next adversity too. And in our rural communities, we'll get hit with more adversity. But we'll remember why we're putting in the effort and we'll get them fixed too.

James Decker is a lawyer, farmer, and mayor in Stamford, and the creator of the forthcoming "West of 98" podcast and website. He may be contacted through Facebook at facebook.com/james.decker.

Notes from...

AgriLIFE EXTENSION

Keep your baby rear-facing as long as possible - Best practice vs. the law

Although it is not yet the law in Texas to keep children rear-facing until at least age two, it is best practice to follow the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) to keep children rear-facing as long as possible to the maximum weight and height of the rear-facing convertible seat in order to provide the best crash protection. Rear-facing convertible seats go up to at least 40 pounds rear-facing, with some going up to 45 or 50-pounds rear-facing. This could easily accommodate a child well beyond age two as the AAP is recommending.

Parents often ask child safety seat experts what is the safest seat for their baby. Truth be told, for an infant or young child, it is not the brand of seat they purchase, but the direction they face the seat in their vehicle that will save their child's life. The main reason is that the neck and spine of an infant or young child is not fully developed yet and needs extra protection. A small child's head is at a larger proportion of their body weight than it is for an adult - 25 percent for a child compared to about six percent for an adult. That extra weight needs a strong neck and spine to help support it during a crash when the head can be violently snapped forward causing a spinal injury, which can lead to paralysis or death.

The rear-facing car seat supports the head, neck and spine of infants and toddlers, and distributes crash forces over the entire body, rather than just at the harnesses. The rear-facing

child is the safest passenger in the vehicle, and this new law will keep parents from turning their child forward-facing too soon.

Unfortunately, for many parents, age one is often considered as a milestone, which means time to turn your baby forward-facing. This is not best practice and will not keep a baby from suffering a broken neck or spinal injury in a crash. One of the main reasons parents turn their child forward-facing is that they are concerned that their child is unhappy and uncomfortable staying in a rear-facing position because their legs touch the back of the seat. It is important to know that children's joints are not fully formed until they are older and remain very flexible. Sitting cross-legged is not uncomfortable for a small child.

It is also important to note that as a child progresses to the next step of a child safety seat, they are actually being demoted in terms of the safety provided by that seat. Children should stay in the rear-facing infant seat until they outgrow the weight and height limit of that seat, and then move to a rear-facing convertible seat until they reach the rear-facing size limit of that seat. For most convertibles, the weight limit is 40 pounds, but now there are some seats that go as high as 50 pounds for rear-facing, which could keep an average 4-year-old rear-facing. The rear-facing child is the safest passenger in the vehicle.

The AAP recommends that parents not be too quick to transition children to the next step, but instead to keep children in seats with harnesses as long as possible for the limit of the seat. Often, parents move a child to a booster seat too soon. Children should be at least 4-years-old, 40 pounds, and mature enough to sit still for the entire trip before being put in a booster seat.

For a car seat to do its job correctly, it must be appropriate for a child's age, size and developmental stage - it also must be adjusted accordingly to

fit the child securely and be installed properly in each vehicle. Unfortunately, most car seats are not used correctly. The best way to make sure a child is protected is to have a free inspection by a certified child passenger safety technician in your area.

That's why the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Passenger Safety Project and Milissa Wright, Concho Valley Health Agent in Coke, Concho, Menard and Sterling Counties is urging all parents and caregivers to be sure that their child is riding in the right seat, going in the right direction, harnessed properly and installed correctly by getting a free car seat inspection. Car seat inspections are performed by nationally certified child passenger safety technicians. Visit <http://buckleup.tamu.edu>, to find a technician in your area by searching city, county or zip code. Technicians can provide hands-on advice and instruction to make sure your children are safe and riding in the proper seat for their age, weight, height, and developmental stage.

Best practice

recommendations include:

1. All infants and toddlers should ride in a rear-facing car seat until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by the manufacturer of their child safety seat.
2. Children who have outgrown the rear-facing weight or height limit for their car seat should use a forward-facing seat with a harness for as long as possible - up to the highest weight or height allowed by the manufacturer.
3. All children whose weight or height is above the forward-facing limit for their car seat should use a belt-positioning booster seat until the vehicle lap-and-shoulder seat belt fits properly. Typically, this happens sometime between 8 and 12 years of age.
4. When children are old enough and large enough to use the vehicle seat belt alone, they should always use lap-and-shoulder seat belts for optimal protection.
5. Remember: All child passengers under age 13 should ride securely restrained in the back seat, where they are safest - every trip, every time.

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