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■ In my opinion

The pyramid's NEW BRICKS

This week, our old friend the Food Guide Pyramid was re-released, with a sleeker, updated look that the USDA hopes Americans will be eating up for years to come.

Gone is the old food pyramid introduced in 1992, printed on food boxes and distributed as a nutrition teaching aid for schools. The new "Food Guidance System" is posted on MyPyramid.gov.

The new pyramid includes 12 caloric intake levels, from 1,000 calories per day to 3,200 per day. The former system used a blanket 2,000 calorie intake, far too high for many sedentary Americans, and too low for the few Americans whose daily lifestyle requires them to burn more calories, such as athletes. The new system includes physical activity as an important factor of daily health.

Also, the vague "servings" of each group of foods that made up the old pyramid have been replaced with the more recognizable American serving measurements listed in cups, teaspoons and ounces. A major criticism of the new system is that it doesn't clearly communicate exactly what foods Americans need to eat less of. As a nation we have embraced eating-on-the-go, and little thought goes into meal planning. The old pyramid stated YES and NO food groups in gentler "eat several servings" or "avoid or consume very little" language. Just glancing at the new pyramid gives you less information on how to eat than the former — an interesting re-design choice given that instant



ANNEMARIE KNEPPER
WORKS ON PAPER

understanding is key to our American infatuation learning style.

With the popularity of interactive online diet Web sites, the USDA attempt at making the pyramid more useful is admirable. My Pyramid Tracker gives the user an "in-depth assessment of your diet quality and physical activity status." The site also offers a Tip of the Week; this week's reads more like an infomercial line, "MyPyramid: Do it for you. Make one small change each day for a healthier you." Let's hope it gets more specific and less Oprah-like in its teachings.

Federal officials said they will ensure printed versions of the new guide are widely available at schools, government offices, and doctors' offices. However, the truly Internet-based guide may leave low-income and elderly people without full access to the new system. According to the Boston Globe, government surveys showed more than 80 percent of Americans recognized the original pyramid, making it among the federal government's most "successful" (emphasis added) public health efforts.

Apparently, recognition does not equal adherence as Americans have

become markedly fatter since the 1992 pyramid was unveiled. Currently, about two-thirds of American adults are overweight or obese and more than 15 percent of kids age 6 to 19 are obese according to federal government standards.

"Many Americans can dramatically improve their overall health by making modest improvements to their diets and by incorporating regular physical activity into their daily lives," said Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns in a USDA press release. Yes, modest changes will garner modest improvement for many Americans, but eating way less and exercising much more is the only way to make many Americans truly healthy. More than simply "not obese," but also not overweight.

Americans have the tools to be successful. Gyms, exercise equipment and good quality grains, fruits and vegetables are widely available. Most people acknowledge that McDonald's and other fast food purveyors aren't healthy. But if we had a drive-through salad and whole grain bread provider, would people use it? Similarly, will Americans embrace this new pyramid, with all its interactive bells and whistles and good intentions?

As I write this, I occasionally pause to nab another pinch of Special K with Red Berries out of a baggie next to my computer. Quick, easy and twice the recommended single serving. It's 10 a.m. and I've already fallen off the wagon.

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■ Guest commentary

Abortion panel demonstrates student insight and awareness

A few weeks ago, I had the pleasure of being a panelist at an event hosted by the Hamilton Think Tank that focused on abortion. To all of the students who attended, thank you for your interest in this important, sometimes volatile and emotional topic. Thank you also for your insightful questions that helped expose the vast complexities of this issue.

In reflecting on the evening, I also want to tell you how great it is that you get it. The event was set up to be about abortion, but you drove the conversation to focus just as heavily on the essential role that sexual education and access to contraception plays in reducing the incidence of abortion in the first place. You understood the connection, and you asked the right questions to demonstrate both the connection and the untenable

solutions put forth by those who would deny not only abortion, but comprehensive sex education and contraceptive services as well.

I am pleased that this generation of college students is aware of the value of respecting individuals, the importance of giving people information and resources, the effectiveness of providing young people with appropriate and medically accurate information, and how all these steps result in increased personal responsibility and therefore, fewer abortions.

I stated on the panel that I know a lot of people who are pro-choice but not one who is pro-abortion. I know you all understand that is a fallacy that people who are opposed to abortion rights sometimes, rather than addressing the

real issue of how to prevent abortion. So, I hope you all will continue to push the importance of prevention of unintended pregnancies when it comes to the abortion debate.

As you so clearly demonstrated through your questions and comments, it's about so much more than just abortion. It's about trusting and respecting that people will make their own ethical, personal and private decisions based on their own beliefs. And it's about carrying out our shared responsibility to ensure people have all the information, services and support they need to make those decisions.

Kellie Shoemaker is vice president of public affairs for Planned Parenthood Health Services of Southwestern Oregon

INBOX

As a student at the University, I am aware that there is a large community of marijuana users on campus. I am also aware of the history of marijuana and how it became illegal in this country. It has a past that was full of lurid journalism and protection of corporate financial gains for groups such as the pharmaceutical and timber industries. One of the arguments for criminalizing marijuana was the violent tendencies caused (anyone who has used marijuana knows this

is simply not true). Much of the debate was also based on racial discrimination against African Americans and Hispanics.

I feel that it is important and absolutely necessary for not only lawmakers but also the average person to take a look at the evidence for the legalization of marijuana. The U.S. government has continued to mislead people on the true nature of marijuana since it was made illegal. And today marijuana research is very

limited, even for the purpose of medical treatment, while cocaine and morphine are legal for medical use. Now may not be the time to legalize marijuana, and maybe there will never be a time for that, but one thing that is for sure: People need to get past the brainwashing of our government, take a step back and learn the truth, not just accept everything we have been told.

Brandyn Bakanoff
Undergraduate

■ Editorial

City-wide wireless is favorable innovation

San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom's comments are right on the mark, and this time they have nothing to do with marriage. Newsom recently proposed that a fast Internet connection, important to the development and livelihood of all citizens, should be available to every resident of his city. San Francisco is just one of many municipalities exploring the prospect of a city-wide wireless broadband network providing citizens with speedy broadband connections, accessible anywhere. Users would be charged less than half the monthly fee of current mainstream private providers.

Although private provider companies, like Comcast, Verizon or Qwest, could develop a similar city-wide wireless network, they will probably never take that chance. These companies made large investments to create their current wired networks, which they charge premium prices to access. Creating a wireless network would not only take further investment, it would devalue their older investments. Therefore, the task of creating such forward-thinking networks must fall to civic-minded citizens.

It may seem nearly impossible to wrench broadband access from the private grasp of large domineering corporations, but Eugene, always a progressive city, has made similar actions in the past and today we reap the benefits.

According to Eugene Water and Electric Board Web site, citizens of Eugene in the early 1900s became "increasingly dissatisfied with the private, for-profit water utility serving the community. When a 1906 typhoid fever epidemic was traced to the water supply, Eugene's citizens overwhelmingly supported municipal ownership of the water system." In 1908 voters approved the necessary bonds to purchase the private utility and create the municipal water system that provides us with relatively low-cost power and water options.

While it is unlikely that our current private broadband providers could infect anyone with a case of typhoid fever, their high rates make broadband prohibitively expensive to low-income families and residents and all but the wealthiest of students.

One major benefit of city wireless service is that enterprise zones could be created, within which Internet access would be free. Downtown, businesses could pay low monthly rates to offer access to patrons. Schools could ensure that students and their families would have adequate access to information, send e-mail updates to parents and place class assignments on the Internet. The University could use the system to extend its own wireless network, already free to students with a valid password, into off-campus areas like the West University neighborhood. Police and emergency services could use the city-wide network to access critical information en route to an incident.

The citizens of Eugene have a small window of time to act. A large scale effort to create a similar network in Philadelphia was met with resistance from leaders who seem a little too willing to sit on their hands while progress marches forward. Just as well-maintained paved roads are today's arteries of commerce and transportation, the wireless network will be tomorrow.

The bottom line: a municipal broadband wireless network will improve the quality of life for the residents and entrepreneurs of this city, and it will push Eugene to the forefront of technological advancement. Ask your city councilors for such a network now.