

STEVEN P. DINKIN A Path Forward

CHARACTER MATTERS — EVEN FOR LARGE CORPORATIONS

At the Iowa State Fair in 2011, Republican presidential contender Mitt Romney famously said, “Corporations are people, my friend.” Romney was being heckled for his views on corporate tax policy. Someone shouted back, “No, they’re not!”

Romney chuckled, explaining that everything corporations earn ultimately goes to people. He asked, “Where do you think it goes?”

The comment was considered a gift to Romney’s political foes. They painted him as a corporate hack — out of touch with average Americans whose livelihoods weren’t tied to corporate profits.

But for all the outrage, Romney had a point that’s playing out today — right in the midst of our culture wars. Corporations, like people, can be inelegant. They can say the wrong things. They can make bad decisions and cause harm.

Sometimes, people acknowledge the error in their ways and change course. And sometimes, they dig in.

Corporations do the same, but with bigger consequences. Con-

sider what is happening right now with Anheuser-Busch InBev (AB InBev) and Disney. Both companies are embroiled in controversy. Their responses couldn’t be more different.

If you somehow missed the AB InBev story, their Bud Light brand was pummeled following an April 1 Instagram post by transgender influencer Dylan Mulvaney. Her image appeared on a custom Bud Light can, as part of a special promotion. It hit a nerve among conservatives, who called for a boycott of the beer.

The boycott has worked: AdAge reported that sales of Bud Light were down 27.7 percent for the week ended May 6.

But, as it turns out, the Mulvaney promotion wasn’t off-brand at all. Bud Light has a deep connection to the gay community, dating back to 1977. That year, labor unions and LGBTQ+ groups organized a boycott against rival Coors to protest its practice of forcing employees to take polygraph tests including questions about their sexual orientation.

The company declared, in 2016, its intention to encourage “unity

among everyone — men, women, and people of all gender identities — for fun over ice-cold Bud Light.”

But bowing to conservative pressure, AB InBev is taking a decidedly different tack, eager to prove its patriotism and machismo.

A new Budweiser ad features its signature Clydesdale horse, galloping past sites like the Lincoln Memorial. Bud Light will debut a camouflage can, while a new Bud can will feature a Harley-Davidson-inspired motorcycle design.

Progressive groups are angry that AB InBev has made no moves to defend Mulvaney. As Jeff Beer, a writer for Fast Company, pointedly said, “Bud Light has poured decades of LGBTQ allyship down the drain — and now everyone is mad.”

The Disney saga is less nuanced, optically, but messy from a legal perspective. The company is in a feud with Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, a 2024 presidential candidate. Last year, he signed into law the Parental Rights in Education Act, referred to by critics as the “Don’t Say Gay” bill.

Initially, Disney was silent about the legislation, angering

employees. They staged a public protest. The CEO at the time, Bob Chapek, decided to speak up; his critical remarks caused DeSantis and conservative media to begin mocking the company as “Woke Disney.”

Then the duel began. As Jesus Jiménez and Brooks Barnes wrote in The New York Times, DeSantis struck first, announcing his intent to revoke Disney’s special tax status (which allows the company to operate the Disney World complex as its own county government).

Complications led lawmakers to keep it intact, while taking control of the tax district’s five-member oversight board.

According to Jiménez and Barnes, Disney then pushed through “little noticed” agreements that would limit the new board’s power and give the company widespread control over future construction and use of the Disney name.

A lawyer for the board asserted that the maneuvers were “improper and illegal.”

When the agreements were nullified, Disney sued DeSantis,

the board and others. Then, on May 18, the company pulled the plug on a \$1 billion office project in Orlando. It would have brought more than 2,000 Disney jobs to the region, with an average salary of \$120,000.

The American public trusts businesses above other institutions to do what’s right: According to the 2023 Edelman Trust Barometer, 55 percent of people trust businesses, compared with 42 percent who trust government. And by a broad margin, Edelman found we want more engagement from business in addressing a range of societal needs and issues, not less.

Disney has made clear its values. AB InBev has crumbled to pressure. How a company sees the world — and what it’s willing to stand for — matters.

The same is true, of course, for people.

Dinkin is president of the National Conflict Resolution Center, a San Diego-based group working to create solutions to challenging issues, including intolerance and incivility. To learn about NCCRC’s programming, visit nccrconline.com

HEPATITIS • Teams, out five days a week, also hand out Narcan for overdoses

FROM B1

team, and officers make the first contact with people on the street.

One officer on a recent outing said the vaccines can be a tough sell, and people’s first reaction often is to ask to be left alone. The officer said about 40 percent of people turn down the vaccine out of mistrust, which he suspects was borne from fears of the COVID-19 vaccine.

The team drives through downtown and pulls over when they spot homeless people on a sidewalk, but on this particular morning they administered most of their shots on Commercial Street, where a parked food truck giving out free meals had attracted a long line of people.

But like other days, the officers and nurses credited a \$20 gift card with convincing people to roll up their sleeves for a shot.

“I don’t think we’d have this number of clients wanting shots if it weren’t for the gift cards,” said Andrea Huerta, one of two registered nurses riding in the van.

As he waited for his turn, Tyler said he had come to San Diego from Pueblo, Colo., in hope of turning his life around after a divorce.

“It’s working out fine,” he said. “If I could just keep the addicts around here from stealing from me, I would have already been up and running. First it was my wallet, and now it’s my phone.”

Kathy Shely, 56, had been living on the street for 19 months, but received housing about a week ago. She was back on Commercial



Nurse Alejandra Sanchez Lopez, part of the mobile outreach team, talks with Shane Tyler, who is homeless, about the vaccine. He decided to get the shot.

Street for an appointment to receive General Relief when she heard about the hepatitis A shots.

“I want to live,” she said. “I’m 56. I’m active. I feel young. I don’t feel 56. I have dreams. I put so much on hold when I came out here.”

Shely said she had worked for 22 years for the county as a social worker, most recently in adult protective services.

She and her brother were living

with their mother, who died unexpectedly. Without elaborating, Shely said the state took the home they expected to live in, and she has spent the past 19 months in shelters or on the street.

While trying to stay healthy, she has seen life on the street become more and more dangerous. She carries naloxone inhalers, commonly known by the brand name Narcan, which are used to

help people overdosing from a drug.

Shely estimates she has used the inhalers on people 100 times during her time on the street.

“You’ll be walking with them, and they’ll just drop,” she said.

As she spoke, a van from the Medical Examiner’s Office was parked across the street in front of a tent with yellow police tape around it. A body had been found

inside that morning, and officers suspected a man named Taye had overdosed.

When she heard the name, Shely froze. Her lower lip began to tremble as tears filled her eyes.

“I only know one Taye,” she said. “He had just gotten out of jail. I talked to him. He had dreams. He had a daughter. He wanted to go to work. I’m just thinking of his daughter right now. She looked just like her daddy.”

The death was a reminder that hepatitis A is just one of the dangers of life on the street.

Derek Wien, 42, has been homeless nine years and is among the people living near Commercial Street. He approached the outreach team van not for a hepatitis A shot, but because he heard they were giving out Narcan.

“I like saving lives,” he said.

Wien said he sometimes administers Narcan to stop an overdose once a day. He had done it again just that morning when he heard a dog barking and found its owner was overdosing.

He said he ran barefoot down the street to get an inhaler from someone he knew in a tent, which just happened to be next to Taye’s.

Huerta said they had 13 boxes of Narcan in the van that day, with each box containing two inhalers. By the end of the shift, they had given all away.

Besides the hepatitis A vaccines, the team also administered two COVID-19 boosters, one flu shot and one mpox vaccine.

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HUSKY

FROM B1

him out,” she said.

So she brought him into her office to get to know his personality better, then highlighted it in her posts. Harvey, she wrote, was “quiet and mellow,” and she included photos of him “at work” at her desk and videos of him playing with puzzle toys — his favorites.

Every year, county animal services cares for nearly 10,000 cats, dogs, livestock and exotic animals that are lost, abandoned or neglected.

That’s why they often post adoptable animals on social media and their website — in the hopes someone will take a chance and come in to see them.

But that’s just one of the tools they use to get animals out of the shelter.

“Adoption doesn’t have borders,” added animal services Assistant Director Carl Smith. “So it’s just really about rethinking how people adopt the animals.”

Many of the shelter’s long-stay dogs, he explained, are huskies or other breed types that are not very unique in Southern California.

So the shelter has been strategizing different ways to advertise its animals outside of the county, including by working with shelters in other states to swap breeds.

Large breeds like huskies, for example, are more likely to be adopted in northern states where the temperature is cooler and in areas where people have more property, while chihuahuas and other smaller breeds are more popular down south, he added.

Smith said animal services is also working to launch a program modeled after shelters in Hawaii, where travelers can spend their vacation with adoptable shelter dogs.

The humane societies of Kauai, Maui and Hawaii Island offer “field trip” opportunities so visitors and resi-



SHERRY LANKSTON

Harvey prepares to make the road trip from Carlsbad to Seattle with his new sister, River.

dents can “rent” a shelter dog to take out on the island for the day.

They’ve given a backpack full of all the supplies they need along with a list of dog-friendly destinations, from beaches to hiking trails.

The dogs get the essential socialization they need, and the collars and harnesses they wear that say “ADOPT ME” serve as advertisements to onlookers. And about four times a month, the tourists themselves go home with their rented pups, according to the shelters.

Getting Harvey home

Harvey had been found in the Anza-Borrego desert and brought into the shelter with two other dogs in late September.

The pups were checked out by a veterinarian, who said Harvey may have been bitten as a very young puppy, causing his jaw to go sideways. But other than needing a tooth extracted because it was poking him due to the odd angle, Harvey was given a clean bill of health.

In her social media posts, Ollinger took the opportunity to explain that Harvey’s facial deformity “doesn’t bother him,” before adding, “I

think it makes him even more endearing.”

Lankston saw Ollinger’s posts in February after a mutual friend shared them on social media; the Lankstons had lived in San Diego before moving to Seattle eight years ago.

This wasn’t the family’s first time adopting a dog from afar. Their first dog, River, a lab-border collie mix who is now 4, was adopted from Texas, sight unseen.

Once again with Harvey, Lankston found herself drawn to a dog online — especially because of the videos Ollinger had posted. “He just seemed like such a good-natured pup.”

Once in San Diego, Lankston didn’t expect much from their first visit, but she still wanted to put Harvey to the test.

“My kids are wild and feral,” she said. “I really wanted to get his immediate reaction to that, and so instead of having them sit down and be nice and quiet, I was like, ‘OK, you guys can play.’”

Harvey passed the first test: “He just chilled and watched them.”

His second test was meeting River. He passed that one, too. “It was just

very calm, which is not usual in my life, so that was great,” Lankston added.

Last came meeting Lankston’s husband Robert, who’d flown in to meet them, which only solidified the decision. “The very first thing Harvey did was just walk over to him and lean into his leg and accept love, so that was it.”

Ollinger said it was obvious it was the perfect fit.

Although winter storms unexpectedly forced them to take the long way home, Lankston likened it to a “trial by fire.”

“We all got really close on our trip back,” she said, chuckling.

“We were just madly in love with him by the time we got back home,” she added. “And I think he accepted us as his pack real quick.”

Three months later, Harvey has acclimated well into the Lankstons’ home — and River seems especially happy.

“River is so dang happy,” Lankston said. “I joke that she is his support dog.”

With a newly installed fence, the dogs are able to play in the family’s yard, where Harvey has discovered a fascination with moles. He can be seen shoving his face deep into the dirt and mud in search of them on his TikTok.

The family is working with a trainer to help Harvey overcome his fear of strangers, but Lankston says he’s doing well.

She credits the shelter’s staff and volunteers for helping to make Harvey’s happy ending possible.

“They’re the heroes taking care of these animals,” she said.

Animal services currently has nearly 60 dogs available for adoption in its shelters across the county and is always in need of volunteers to work in various positions at the shelters or to foster animals. For more information, visit sddac.com.

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TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Sunday, May 28, the 148th day of 2023. There are 217 days left in the year.

Today’s highlight in history

On May 28, 1863, the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment, made up of freed Black men, left Boston to fight for the Union in the Civil War.

On this date

- In 1892,** the Sierra Club was organized in San Francisco.
- In 1918,** American troops fought their first major battle during World War I as they launched an offensive against the German-held French village of Cantigny; the Americans succeeded in capturing the village.
- In 1934,** the Dionne quintuplets — Annette, Cecile, Emilie, Marie and Yvonne — were born to Elzire Dionne at the family farm in Ontario, Canada.
- In 1937,** Neville Chamberlain became prime minister of Britain.
- In 1940,** the Belgian army surrendered to invading German forces.
- In 1959,** the U.S. Army launched Able, a rhesus monkey, and Baker, a squirrel monkey, aboard a Jupiter missile for a suborbital flight which both primates survived.
- In 1964,** the charter of the Palestine Liberation Organization was issued at the start of a meeting of the Palestine National Congress in Jerusalem.
- In 1972,** Edward, the Duke of Windsor, who had abdicated the English throne to marry Wallis Warfield Simpson, died in Paris at age 77.
- In 1977,** 165 people were killed

- when fire raced through the Beverly Hills Supper Club in Southgate, Ky.
- In 1987,** to the embarrassment of Soviet officials, Mathias Rust, a young West German pilot, landed a private plane in Moscow’s Red Square without authorization. (Rust was freed by the Soviets the following year.)
- In 1998,** Phil Hartman of “Saturday Night Live” and “NewsRadio” fame was shot to death at his home in Encino by his wife, Brynna, who then killed herself.
- In 2020,** people torched a Minneapolis police station that the department was forced to abandon amid spreading protests over the death of George Floyd. Protesters in New York defied a coronavirus prohibition on public gatherings, clashing with police; demonstrators blocked traffic and smashed vehicles in downtown Denver before police used tear gas to disperse the crowd. At least seven people were shot as gunfire erupted during a protest in Louisville, Kentucky, to demand justice for Breonna Taylor, a Black woman who was fatally shot by police in her home in March.

Today’s birthdays

Actor Carroll Baker is 92. Producer-director Irwin Winkler is 92. Basketball Hall of Famer Jerry West is 85. Former New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani is 79. Singer Gladys Knight is 79. Singer Billy Vera is 79. Singer John Fogerty is 78. Actor Brandon Cruz (“The Courtship of Eddie’s Father”) is 61. Actor Christa Miller is 59. Singer Kylie Minogue is 55. Actor Justin Kirk is 54. Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., is 52. Television personality Elisabeth Hasselbeck is 46. Singer Colbie Caillat is 38. Actor Carey Mulligan is 38.

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