

Corrections & Amplifications

In the Dec. 13 issue, the Chesterfield Observer reported that Will Shewmake, a candidate for the Republican nomination for delegate representing the 68th District, held a fundraiser on Dec. 6 in Bon Air. The breakfast event was a kickoff for his candidacy. The newspaper regrets the error.

from HANSEN, page 8

resolve to lose weight. That's like digging a 10-foot hole, shipping off the excavated dirt, then jumping in and resolving to build a 20-foot hill.

Our culture challenges us: During the holidays, you can't swing a pair of ratty underwear without slapping up against a Victoria's Secret advertisement. Talk about unrealistic expectations. We have as much chance of looking like today's models—male or female—as we do of winning the Nextel Cup driving our minivan.

Like NASCAR stock cars, Victoria's Secret models have very few factory-original parts left on them. So while they may be fun to watch, let's not expect the same performance from our own, unmodified chassis.

Technology challenges us: In 1845, in "Walden," Henry David Thoreau wrote about the new technology of the railroad and the effort required to build it, maintain it and then to keep up with the faster pace of life it created.

Thoreau said, "We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us," perfectly describing our relationship with "labor-saving" technologies.

With BlackBerries, cell phones and e-mail, we can work from anywhere – the family room, the soccer field, the beach, even the sickbed. About the only place we can't work from is the grave, but I've heard they are working on it. When making a living completely overtakes making a life, what chance do our best intentions have?

So what is the answer? It is this: Simplify.

Start by anchoring long-term goals in what you can control. Don't resolve "to get my teenager to love me." *That* is out of your control! Instead, resolve "to love my teenager no matter what." *That's* one you can control, and as a bonus, both goals become more possible with this approach.

Next, simplify your daily to-do list. Thoreau said, "Our lives are frittered away by detail... I say let your affairs be as two or three, not a hundred or a thousand." When you are feeling overwhelmed, make a list, identify the top two or three items, and then, as Dr. Jim Flammang at First Baptist Church used to say, "do the next thing."

And don't get down on yourself. Oliver Wendell Holmes, Thoreau's fellow transcendentalist, said, "The greatest thing in the world is not so much where we stand as in which direction we are moving."

Finally, let yourself be inspired. God, the laws of the universe and your family and friends all want you to succeed, and if you follow your dreams they will help you along.

As Thoreau said, "...if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours... In proportion as he simplifies his life, the laws of the universe will appear less complex... If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them."

Maybe this year, consider this resolution: Simplify.

Chuck Hansen is a Midlothian-based writer, motivational speaker and humorist, and author of "Build Your Castles in the Air: Thoreau's Inspiring Advice for Success in Business (& Life) in the 21st Century." He can be reached at www.chuckhansen.com.

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