OPINION

OUR VIEW

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

The Good: Over the past nine years, a group of Galvestonians operating the African Childrens Haven has, with the help of a network of island business owners and residents, raised $750,000 to support many initiatives serving more than 700 children and their families in Africa. By the end of the year, the organization will have raised more than $800,000.

African Childrens Haven supports orphanages and works to keep young girls and women from abuse and offers a means for the poor to pursue education. It's a fine example of how much a few dedicated people can accomplish.

The Bad: Greyhound owners and kennel operators are asking the state's racing commission to step in and maintain a higher level of safety at Gulf Greyhound Park in La Marque.

In a recent letter to the racing commission, which regulates the industry, the Texas Greyhound Association raised concerns about major injuries to dogs and criticized the park for ignoring suggestions to improve the track's surface.

What's especially bad is that everybody, the track, the commission and the association had for years publicly denied there was any problem with the track, despite strong evidence to the contrary. None of the three has much credibility left on this issue.

The Ugly: Hardly a week ever passes during which someone doesn't call the newspaper wanting us to report about some scam targeting the elderly. We seldom do because there's no news to report. The scams are as constant as the wind and tides. They differ only in minor details. They are all the same in ways that matter. Someone calls or sends an email attempting to convince the target to disclose financial information such as credit card or bank account numbers. Here is the bottom-line fact: It matters not whether the other end of this conversation claims to be an African prince or an IRS agent, he's a crook who'll steal your money if you play along. This is true in all cases.

• Michael A. Smith