

POLARIZED

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sors Nobody's Fool, is an abortion provider. Abortion "probably is the most divisive issue you can come up with," Kultzgen says, "as far as people being fervent on both sides."

He added that business people must be on guard about their lifestyle, even monitoring the reading material left in the workplace.

"I have a friend who happens to be in the same business I am, and he's a member of the National Rifle Association," Kultzgen says. "He had an NRA magazine in his waiting room and some anti-NRA person raised bloody hell with him."

Kultzgen says the friend does sell cars locally but he refuses to name him.

"I think I am going to think a little harder before automatically saying yes" to requests for donations, Kultzgen said.

John Pisciotta, co-director of Pro-Life Waco, says Shipley and Bird-Kultzgen Ford were targeted because they are "multi-year" supporters of Nobody's Fool. Also, "by giving out pens, Bird-Kultzgen is giving its stamp of approval to this program."

Poppa Rollo's was spared protesters, Pisciotta said, explaining: "Mary Duty is a strong, out-front supporter of Planned Parenthood, but she has never put that 'Poppa Rollo's' with that support."

Pisciotta says "it remains to be seen" if the protests have an impact.

Gary Heavin, founder of Waco-based Curves International, knows the consequences of taking stands. His Curves fitness clubs for women have become the most popular in the world, growing to 8,000 locations in 20 countries.

More important than business to Heavin, though, is his faith.

"I pray at our conventions," he said in a telephone interview from his Waco headquarters. "And at our training meetings for new franchisees, I let them know I'm an outspoken Christian. If the name of Jesus is offensive to them, they may want to get a refund."

Heavin says owners of his clubs include Muslims, Hindus and Hasidic Jews.

"All I expect is freedom of expression," Heavin said. "You don't have to agree with me, but you better tolerate my religious beliefs, and I will tolerate yours. They know in advance I'm a born-again Christian, and I'm probably going to have some beliefs different than the mainstream."

Also an opponent of abortion, Heavin came under fire from the *San Francisco Chronicle*, which printed columns in April that discussed Heavin's contributions to organizations promoting abstinence and alternatives to abortion. The *Chronicle* re-

ported that groups affiliated with Operation Save America, a radical anti-abortion group, were among those receiving his donations.

Heavin and his wife, Diane, in September 2003 pledged \$5 million to benefit women's health programs in McLennan County. But Heavin says he's never given a "penny" to Operation Save America or any other radical group.

He appeared on Fox News in May to state his case, and the *Chronicle* later ran a correction.

But the story didn't end there. Several fitness clubs in Northern California faced angry club members who expressed concern over Heavin's anti-abortion stand. Curves clubs cater to women, and most are owned by women.

Janna Malizia, who owns Curves franchises in Santa Cruz, Calif., 90 miles south of San Francisco, says she began receiving calls "almost immediately," and that several customers cancelled their memberships.

Though her business suffered, Malizia says, she doesn't blame Heavin for the stands he takes on abortion.

"He made a choice to state clearly what he feels," Malizia said. "I'm OK with that, and I'm OK with Gary. The only thing he's done that maybe somebody would not do is that he's not hiding where he puts his money."

Heavin and his wife last year announced they were giving \$750,000 a year for five years to Waco's Family Practice Center, which will help the agency deal with crushing state budget cuts. The center provides the bulk of medical care for low-income patients in McLennan County.

The Heavins also pledged \$200,000 per year to help expand their faith-based ministry called Care Net, which offers pregnancy testing, counseling, financial assistance and adoption referrals. Another \$50,000 a year goes to the McLennan County Abstinence Project, which provides abstinence education training to staffers and volunteers at the Family Practice Center and Care Net.

Fam Smallwood, executive director of Planned Parenthood of Central Texas, would appear an unlikely defender of Heavin. But she says the Family Practice Center "certainly is not a militant organization." She added: "I understand he also contributes to Care Net and MCAP, and although our philosophies are different than theirs, I would not characterize them as militant."

Heavin says he's not one to back off from taking stands, even if it costs him.

"Pro-life or pro-choice, if you have a CEO you can count on who has the courage of his convictions, that's an admirable thing," he says.

Judy Patterson, part-owner of two Curves locations in Waco, said, "I wouldn't begin to tell Gary where to spend his money, nor would I want him to tell me where to spend mine."

She says she had heard nothing about the controversy in California until Heavin informed her and other



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Gary Heavin, founder of Curves International

franchisees.

Larry Lyon, a professor of sociology at Baylor University, says the nature of a company dictates the extent to which it takes stands. Management of a publicly traded corporation must answer to stockholders, he says.

"No matter what you think, you may not have the fiduciary right to put their holdings at risk," Lyon said. "At the next stockholders' meeting, you will learn that quickly."

The most vulnerable, Lyon said, are those who own their own businesses and deal directly with the public.

"I feel for those people," he said, "because if they do take that stand, their business could suffer, and they could have to lay off people. My guess is, most times (criticism) does not affect the bottom line; it's more of a harassment issue. You have to respond to letters, telephone calls and people on the street. Organized boycotts are rare and their impact is spotty. It's more of a, 'Do I need this kind of

hassle in my life?' type of decision."

Daniel Howard, chairman of the marketing department at Southern Methodist University's Cox School of Business, says companies must take care in lending their names to causes because those stances stick in customers' minds.

"If you have personal reasons for doing something, personally act on it," said Howard. "Don't implicate your business."

Roland and Mary Duty say they don't regret the stands they take, though sometimes "it can be like playing golf in a thunderstorm with a 1-iron up in the sky," Roland says, speaking by phone from his 35-year-old pizza parlor.

Of their role in preparing sandwiches for Nobody's Fool, Mary Duty said: "If we constantly put out the idea that our goal is to make the community a better place for children, in the long run, how can people knock you? They may knock you for how you're doing it, but how can they knock you for what you do?"

"I'll stand by that in front of God and my church."

She added: "If you get a lot of hateful phone calls from people saying they'll never open your door again, so be it. Values can be sold so cheap that you give in to someone says he won't eat pizza, not worth knowing."

Adkins, at Shipley Duty says he's "caught between an involved citizen responsible business (who has to be concerned whom he might offend) that's a bad place to be."

He says he likes to let at least two weeks' notice contributing doughnuts cause. Still, "some want the next day."

"Most business owners have time to double-check detail and know every nuance every cause they get Adkins said. "But it's coming to that."

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Kultzgen

Local business owners ponder price of support

By Mike Copeland
Thru-out-the-day business editor

Nobody's Fool, a local sex education program for youngsters, illustrates the consequence business owners face when they take public stands.

Phil Adkins, local Shipley Duty franchisee, provided dough-

nuts for Nobody's Fool, and anti-abortion activists protested outside his shop on West Waco Drive. Mary and Roland Duty, owner of Poppa Rollo's Pizza, heard complaints after they provided sandwiches to Nobody's Fool. Waco auto dealer Peter Kultzgen sent a complimentary box of pens to the program, and pro-life activists in turn hit him and his brother-in-law with anti-abortion signs.

Adkins says it would be unfortunate if he found himself "paralyzed" by threats of boycotts and picketers.

"If I have to fear that some unknown group might come after

me, I might take the position that I just won't get involved," he said.

With both the nation and McLennan County increasingly polarized over everything from presidential candidates to sex education, such fears loom large before business owners. For his part, Kultzgen says he was surprised at the uproar his "still pens" caused — but now acknowledges he should not have been.

Planned Parenthood, which sponsors

Shipley Duty franchise owners, is under fire for supporting Nobody's Fool.

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"If I have to fear that some unknown group might come after me, I might take the position that I just won't get involved. That's a sad thing."