And I guess we could add, good riddance!

As 2011 ebbs into its final days, we would like to write a few lines about what the past year has brought to many of us both in this nation and in this county, but more talk about the past will only conjure up more painful memories of a year that could have been and ended up another "wasn't even close."

So, let's write a few lines about the hope for 2012 and the bright future we can all look forward to.

"Merry Christmas," we all were saying just a few days back, and "Peace to People on Earth."

Well, our troops are almost all back from Iraq and we can only hope that all our troops will all be back from wherever war still rages on.

It would probably take a miracle for there to be a genuine "peace on earth," but that doesn't mean we shouldn't be hoping – and praying – for that to happen.

Peace is a good thing. It generally means everyone is too busy with their own affairs and getting them all in order to stick their nose into someone else's business. Doesn't happen too often, but it's worth consideration.

As bad as some people suffered through in 2011, it was still a far better year than the few preceding it. And, with any luck, 2012 could be a beacon year for better times to come.

Here in Iron County, like elsewhere in this country, we need to get serious about making life within our area a great place for everyone to be… resident or visitor…

Our slogan should be "Make it Iron County in 2012," whether it's for a brief vacation, a permanent change of address, a new business start or getting involved in the community by volunteering our talents and our time.

As 2011 witnessed, we all had a lot of say about the sad state of affairs and we were all eager to point our finger at "those" culprits. Truth is, we all shared, and still share, a bit of the blame. We need to point that finger in the right direction – right back at ourselves.

As the new year approaches, most of us will be enjoying the time-honored tradition of making New Year's resolutions, keeping our fingers crossed behind our backs that those resolutions – to quit smoking, to lose weight, to improve our minds and bodies – will make it past the 30-day mark.

We all look at the new year as a new opportunity to find ways to make life better than the year before. Even if we don't succeed, it's a lofty goal for starting a new year off on the right path.

--Allyce Westphal