

Census count 2010: It's showdown time

PLEASE fill out your 2010 Census Form. It only takes minutes. There's nothing telling. Nothing to fear as some people want us to believe. If you haven't put your pen to the form, do so now so you won't be put in the category of law breaker. It's the law of the land.

What is so disturbing is what we have to lose when we don't answer the questions on the census form. The forms are counted and tabulated and the popularization of our town and county comes directly from the forms. If we turn out a pale 65 percent and maybe 10 years earlier when the last count was taken it was higher, then this census will show us with another population loss.

And when the government doles out money for projects and you read where a community you know is smaller than are we, and they get a bigger piece of the pie it's because their percent of returned census forms was larger than their forms turned in 10 years ago. It's all that simple, folks.

Just think what we could reap if our percentage was 75 percent or even 80. The sky would be the limit. But if we end up with fewer forms making their way to the Census Bureau, then we lose ground. Terribly.

Too, the population of the congressional districts plays big. If we lose a substantial number of people we could end up being a three congressional district state vs. four currently. At one time, Kansas had six congressional districts.

There is just so much that hinges on what information is provided on census forms. We wouldn't have enough space to detail it all.

Now that the mail-in deadline has passed, census workers will be calling on those homes that opted out of taking part. And when they call on you, please be courteous. After all, these census workers will probably be people from our own community. Don't give them a hard time, rather thank them for helping you to comply with the law.

We have overheard the name "Obama" — President Obama, we believe the title is — used unfavorably with the questions appearing on the census form. Don't get caught up in all this garbage. In the same conversation, it was mentioned that President Bush wasn't that intrusive in his last year in office with his census form distribution. Sadly, President Bush's final year wasn't a year in which the federal census was taken.

Pull out your census form, read it over carefully, and then fill it out. It's as easy as eating ice cream. If you have trashed your census form, fear not the census workers will have extras for those occasions.

This newspaper has done all it could to be a constant reminder to its readers of the census deadlines. But again, sadly, we are still hanging in the 62-63 percent and we need to badly get that number up to where it really counts — 70, 75 or 80 percent. If we would do that, perhaps our population figure will be a pleasant surprise, maybe we really are larger than the figures of 10 years ago placed us. And wouldn't that be a proud feather in our cap.

We have control, a lot of control, over our future. We are the script writers.

To those who still have a blank census form at home, please fill it in and be gracious as you hand it over to the census worker.

We thank those who beat the mailing deadlines, and we thank those in advance who still have them but will have them ready for census workers.

—TD



Preserve early childhood funds

Early childhood education programs reach children when their brains are growing the most. Scientists know that 90 percent of a child's brain architecture is established before age five. Everything they learn is built upon the strength of that architecture.

Evidence shows early childhood programs equip at-risk children to succeed in school. The Kansas Legislature recognized the importance of these efforts when they created the Children's Initiative Fund (CIF) and designated early childhood education as the chief beneficiary of these dollars.

CIF has responsibly funneled these dollars to evidence-based programs, like Early Head Start, Healthy Families and



Pre-K services. However, because of the state's funding shortfall, legislators are proposing cutting as much as 45 percent from CIF programs to help solve the budget crisis.

Everyone understands the need to share in solving our budget problems; however, it is unfair for children to take

a disproportionate amount.

Parents, grandparents and advocates for children need to contact their state legislators this week to remind them of the commitment Kansas has made to early childhood programs. Children need grown-ups who will speak up on behalf of their future.

We cannot lose a generation of productive Kansans because of poor budget decisions. Time is running out; please take action now.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Griffiths, Chair
Board of Directors
Kansas Children's Service League

Congratulations in order

Dear Editor:

Last week in Norton two events took place that need to have a huge congratulations and pat on the back for offering folks the opportunity to learn something new and fun.

The first is to First State Bank and the Community Awareness week celebration by offering five recipes and then on Friday letting you sample each of the recipes and vote for which one was the best. My personal opinion - they were all excellent and very healthy. What a unique and wonderful idea and thank you to First State Bank employees for doing something unique and fun for people of all ages.

Second is the Norton County Conservation District and WRAPS presented several speakers on topics like what kind of lawn is best for your land, how to put together different sizes of flower containers, what flowers grow best in sun or shade, the new flowers and vegetables that made that K-State annual and perennial listing. I learned valuable information about lawns and flowers and what is available here in Norton. The speakers and their presentations were outstanding,



the snacks were great and what a service that the NCCD and WRAPS folks put together for anyone to attend and free of charge to boot. The door prizes were really wonderful and each person that attended received at least one prize.

Just a thank you to the First State Bank and Norton County Conservation District/WRAPS folks for thinking outside of the box and I hope that next year you have it again. What a neat idea for the community- for all ages and for men and women to enjoy and ask questions and learn. PS: thanks for having the recipes to add to my collection and make for the summer.

Sincerely,
Denise A Schmitz
Norton

Attitude the one thing we can control

There are many things in life over which we have no control—other people, our age and gender, our genetics. But there is one thing we can control every single day, and that is our attitude. I used to believe that my attitude "happened" to me; it was the result of how other persons treated me or what was going on in my life. Now I know that I am in charge of my attitude, all of the time.

When I was first diagnosed with breast cancer, I made a conscious decision not to ask, "Why me?" because I knew that was fruitless. It would only lead to feeling depressed and/or anxious. I chose instead to have as positive an outlook as I could. There were days when that was difficult: the day I was told I had Type II diabetes, the day my family practice physician called and said the C-T scan showed a mass on my ovary, the day my oncologist said I needed to go to Omaha for my surgeries instead of having them in Kearney, where I had a great support system.

Life is
Good
Rita
Speer



The days in the hospital were difficult, too, but there were bright spots: our son's weekend visit and the photos he took when I was in a chair for the first time, flowers from a friend of our younger daughter, daily visits from Eucharistic ministers and our younger daughter's trip from Georgia to visit me and take me home.

Soon after arriving home, I made an interesting discovery. I needed to get out of bed and get dressed every day, even if I could only make it to the couch for the rest of the day. By getting up and getting dressed—very simple acts by themselves—my perspective, my point of view improved. I could answer the

telephone with a smile in my voice. I was able to be gracious when people brought meals for us to eat. I was able to say, and mean, "I am doing well, thank you," when people asked how I was doing.

I realized that I was making a choice each morning, in fact, each time I responded to a query about my well-being. I liked that because at that point in my life, there were few other things about which I had choices. It felt good to decide to put a genuine smile on my face and say, "I am doing well. How are you?"

I would like to say that I have been able to continue this positive attitude 100 percent since that time, but it would not be true. But each time I become aware that I can choose my attitude for the next day, the next hour, the next five minutes, I decide to have a positive approach to my life. I truly feel blessed by my recovery. As a result, I feel called to reach out to others in similar situations and I can only do that with an encouraging approach.

I wish peace and joy for you today.

Life beyond our planet

Many people won't admit it openly, but when questioned, with vows of secrecy, some will reveal an experience they believe borders on UFOs and aliens, in other words, life beyond our own planet. Scripps News reports most Americans believe life exists on other planets and about a third believe we have had visitors from afar. To my mind it would be extremely arrogant to believe God only created earth and its inhabitants.

The prominent astrophysicist, Stephen Hawking, reveals, in a soon to run Discovery series, his belief in the existence of aliens. We always hear the phrase, life as we know it. That's key to the puzzle. Just because they aren't like us, doesn't mean they aren't alive. Some believe the existence of extraterrestrial life forms somehow invalidates the existence of God.

Hawking says if aliens come to earth it may be their desire for our resources. He believes for that reason we may need to fear them. One astrophysicist on CNN

Phase II
Mary Kay
Woodyard



said our fear of aliens may stem from our treatment of our fellow man. Historically our relationships with those who are different doesn't bode well for the long distance traveler. The very fact aliens could get here indicates sophistication beyond our own and a need for open-mindedness. According to a Reuter's poll, 20 percent globally believe extraterrestrials already are living among us.

There are UFO/alien believers who are upset with Hawking's pronouncements. Among those are the supporters of a ballot initiative to be voted on in Denver in August of 2010. If passed the ordinance would create an Extraterrestrial Affair Commission which would be responsible for establishing "a publicly sanctioned

environment for serious and objective exploration of credible evidence of extraterrestrial life in plain view of the public." It is meant to be an outlet for scientific study and practical applications. Many feel Hawking's warnings create fear rather than promote discovery.

One thing Hawking's remarks will do is open the subject for debate. We cannot base our reactions on movies, books or our own imaginations, but rather on what we learn with scientific discovery. Creating and cultivating a natural curiosity in science will promote a better understanding of our spiritual beliefs. Contemplating life outside of our own sphere is both exciting and frightening, but absolutely necessary as we continue on this path called life.

As a postscript to this and one I couldn't resist, is the following fact: Arizona ranks about fifth in the number of UFO sightings, maybe their new immigration act has 'far reaching' implications of which the rest of us are unaware! mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net

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