

# Opinion



## Free Press Viewpoint

### Filling that empty seat

No matter what happens April 3, the job still won't be done. Of all the categories on the ballot, three Thomas County entities will be one person short filling all their seats.

The Colby school board has four seats open and only three registered candidates. Brewster's school board has five seats open but only four candidates. Rexford's city council has five seats available and only four candidates.

Looking at the list of candidates in each of those groups, some of the candidates are incumbents. Like them or not, those people should be appreciated for continuing to serve the public.

It's tough these days finding anyone to run for a public office in small towns. People are too involved with their work or family or, which may be the bigger reason, people are afraid to put their neck on the line for the good of the cause. Someone may not like their opinion or decision and they fear revenge.

Rather than have that attitude, people need to be reminded they may have the best answer for whatever problem comes up. Either serving as an elected official or writing newspaper editorials, it's impossible to please everybody at the same time.

But what an exciting time to get involved in Thomas County.

The Colby Community College Board of Trustees will either plan construction for the wellness center or see how the college will continue if voters veto that proposal.

Rexford council must continue the work of the disbanded Rexford community pride organization. That fifth candidate may know how to bring the group back to help council with its duties.

What is possible is someone may receive many write-in votes to fill that remaining seat for those groups. Each of those groups will have to follow the rule on how to legally fill the void.

But someone is going to have step up and say the will do it.

— John Van Nostrand is publisher of the Colby Free Press

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail [jvannostrand@nwkansas.com](mailto:jvannostrand@nwkansas.com) or [pdecker@nwkansas.com](mailto:pdecker@nwkansas.com). Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.

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### A weekly dose of health?

While researching for an article, I ran across a study in California that claims people who go to church tend to live longer.

Actually, the study did raise some good points on the benefit of attending services.

In the article, which appeared in the Contra Costa Times, the author of the study said even after adjusting for differences in whether people smoke, drink or have strong social connections, he wondered if something else was going on — like an inner peace.

According to the study, people who attend church might be somewhat less stressed, which could translate into better health.

The study involved researchers from the Public Health Institute, the California Department of Health Services and the University of California at Berkeley analyzing 6,545 adults in the northern part of the state. The data used in the study was compiled over a 30-year time span.

Because the county chosen was ethnically diverse and included both suburban and urban neighborhoods, researchers said they believed their findings could be applied throughout the country.

The results of the study found people who typically attended religious services at least once a week had a lower risk of dying earlier than those who never went or did so infrequently.

The test group comprised mainly Christians and members of Western religions with nearly 52 percent of those participating Protestant, 27 percent Roman Catholic, 2.5 percent Jewish, other Western faiths, 7.2 percent and less than 1 per-



#### Patty Decker

##### • Deep Thoughts

cent from non-Western faiths. Nearly 11 percent of those studied had no religious affiliation.

The study also noted there were no differences in the likelihood that someone would develop cancer. But, those who rarely or never went to church had a 21 percent greater chance of dying from circulatory diseases. This same group was also more likely to die from respiratory and digestive diseases.

One minister interviewed for the article noted that church attendees experience the same tragedies and stress as non attenders. But, he said, that having something grander, they are a part of what may be giving them more meaning and purpose in life — something larger than their job or the community they live in.

It was his belief, that this sense, because of a person's connection to God, was a resource beyond what can be seen in the world.

"It's the conviction that God is there even in the midst of very difficult circumstances," the minister was quoted as saying.

Previous studies have linked religious involvement to better health, especially since

churchgoers are often less likely to smoke, more likely to exercise and may have a strong network of family and friends. Those are all factors that provide positive health benefits.

But the latest study goes a step further by adjusting for those variables — and still concluding that church members live longer. That led researchers to suspect that psychological factors may be playing a role as well.

It could be that church members have better coping mechanisms, as summed up in the phrase: "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away."

I doubt the study, nor anyone would contend that based on this information our doctors will start urging us to attend religious services. This would not be appropriate, but what was noteworthy was that there have been discussions in medical journals about doctors taking a spiritual history of their patients along with the medical history.

The study concluded there seems to be something with the psychological benefits of inner peace and, for some, it appears that these effects of faith deserve more study.

On a personal note, I sincerely believe that whenever people gather on a regular basis in spiritual settings, whether that be in a church or not, they are making that necessary connection in promoting all-around healthier lives.

No man is an island. God bless!

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*Patty Decker is the editor of the Free Press. Her column appears on Fridays.*

### Health care industry not any different

**By Kan Attorney General Paul Morrison**

As Kansas Attorney General, I am focused on looking out for Kansas consumers.

My goal is to make the Consumer Protection Division in my office one of the best in the nation. To do that, we must aggressively investigate consumer complaints, mediate conflicts and sometimes prosecute those who commit fraudulent and deceptive acts.

The Kansas Legislature should support protections for consumers.

However, legislation is currently being considered that will remove an entire industry from my office's oversight.

House Bill 2530 will exempt the entire health care industry from the Kansas Consumer Protection Act (KCPA).

This will significantly weaken the law and

reduce safeguards for health care consumers.

On behalf of Kansas consumers, I urge the legislature to vote against House Bill 2530. Modifying the KCPA goes against the spirit of the law and increases the likelihood of future legislation that would weaken protection for consumers.

No single industry can justify a special exemption.

This bill would prevent my office from investigating deceptive acts committed by anyone in the health care industry and would eliminate an important legal remedy currently available to Kansas consumers.

That means nursing homes, home health agencies, hospitals and other health care companies that assist our most vulnerable citizens will no longer be subject to the Kansas Con-

sumer Protection Act. I think that is the wrong way to do business.

While most health care professionals operate in a manner beyond reproach, as with every industry, there are those who would take advantage of Kansas consumers.

I urge legislators to side with consumers because they depend on us to strengthen consumer protection laws, not weaken them.

I also encourage Kansans to contact their elected representatives and make their voice heard.

As the top law enforcement officer of the state, I will continue to fight to protect Kansas consumers from fraudulent and deceptive business practices.

I welcome the Kansas legislature to join me in this fight by voting against HB 2530.

#### About those letters . . .

The *Free Press* encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, if at all possible, and should include a telephone number and an address. These are used for verification of the writer only. If, however, you want your address and telephone number to appear with your letter, please ask us to do so when you submit your letter, or include a note with your letter. Most importantly, all letters must include a signature. Unsigned letters cannot be published. We reserve the right to edit for clarity and length, and, likewise, reserve the right to reject letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive or libelous. You can expect your letter to appear in print within 24-48 hours of receipt. Letters to the Free Press allow readers to become engaged in public debate on topics they deem important. Please consider sharing your thoughts with the family of Colby Free Press readers. Thank you.

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