

Opinion



Free Press Viewpoint

We all have to work together

By John Van Nostrand

Emery Hart has brought attention to an issue that continually casts a dark shadow in rural America — school consolidation.

In early March, Hart, from Grinnell, brought a letter to the Colby Free Press about the situation between the Grainfield and Grinnell school districts and their cooperation with each other.

Although Grainfield and Grinnell are both out of the Colby Free Press' core coverage area, we felt compelled to run the letter knowing the urgency of the issue and how it impacts rural America. Besides, Grinnell school's western edge is only a stone's throw from Colby's east border.

That is too close for any of us to look the other way.

School consolidation is the most emotional and symbolic moment stating how rural America is losing population. Drive through some tiny towns and you'll see the school building still standing. But there's no kids inside — they are at the school in the town down the road.

Some of those abandoned buildings are not pretty to look at, not because of the broken windows and growth of weeds — but because a building is not serving its intended purpose.

Since in the *Free Press*, Hart's letter has reverberated across western Kansas, or so we've been told.

Last week, the Phillipsburg County Review called us and asked how they could get a hold of Hart to see if he wanted to run the same letter in their newspaper.

The County Review said they, too, have a neighboring school district also talking about consolidation. The County Review staff member said other towns and school districts are talking about Hart's letter and what his words mean to such a critical issue.

Grinnell, Grainfield, no matter where, it's encouraging to see the local people talk about it.

That's the most important part of the situations. Discussion leads to solutions. School consolidation must be resolved by the local school boards and voters, not the state legislatures and departments of education.

Good superintendents know the dollars and cents it takes to run school districts. Good school boards know the kind of people it takes to run the districts. If constituents are willing to elect people to school boards and pay the taxes to keep the district running, so be it, and more power to them.

We applaud places like Brewster, Golden Plains and Triplains.

At the same time, those involved with school operations must keep looking to the future.

No matter how much rural Kansas offers to entice the people to stay, there may be a day when one small district needs the help from the neighboring district.

Those longtime rivalries between nearby towns, that probably started with a football game during the Eisenhower administration, if not before, must end.

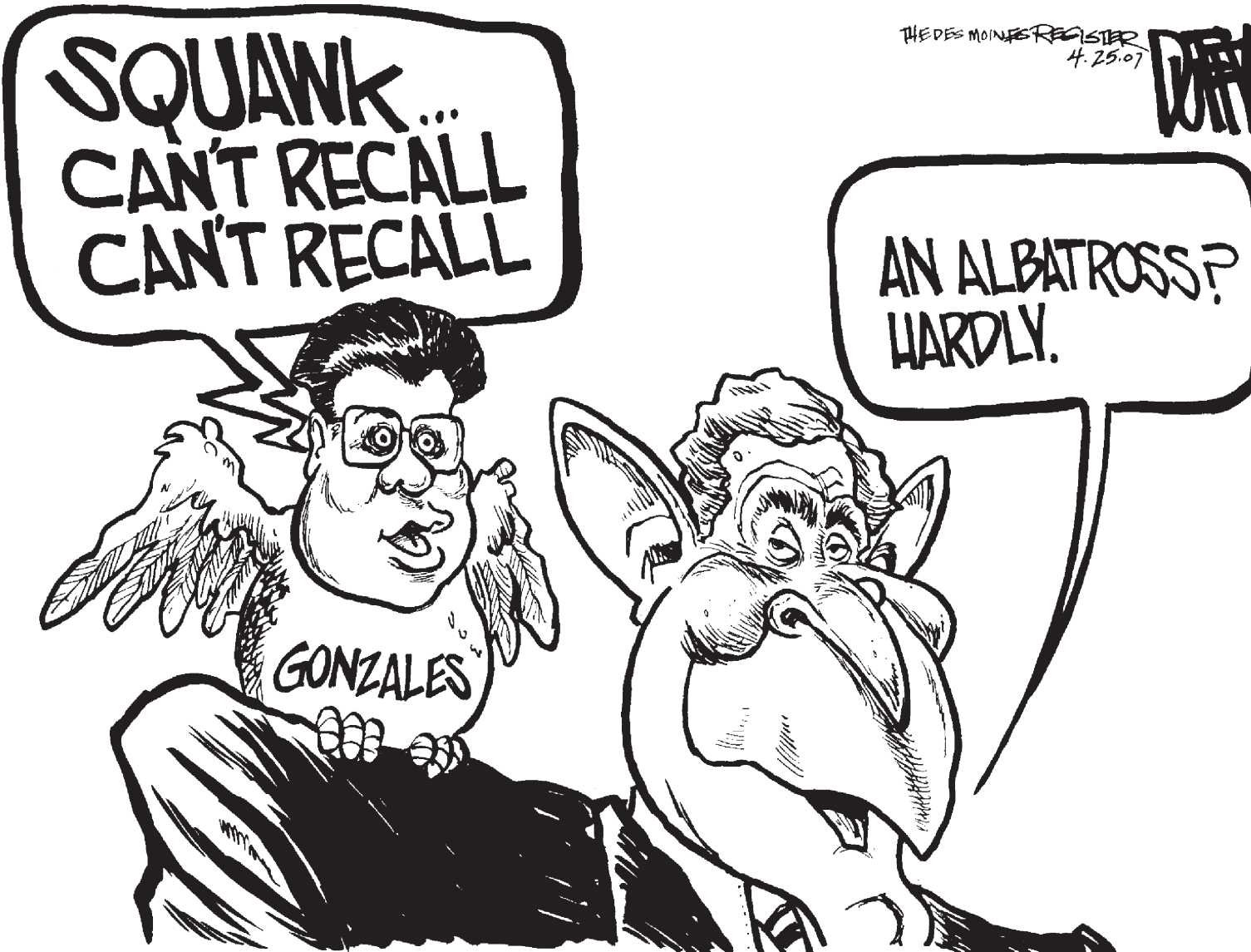
Our children's and grandchildren's educational future must not be tainted by selfishness or loyalty to what school was like for board members and parents decades ago.

Schools are not run that way anymore.

Thanks, Emery, for not making any of us look the other way.

— 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 or pdecker@nwkansas.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.



How much is your mother worth?

Each year, around Mother's Day, a financial group calculates how much the typical mom is worth if she were in today's job market.

Edelman Financial Services in Virginia prepares the Mother's Day Index and, this year determined that are worth \$12,050 more than last year.

The study included salaries of the many occupations the average mom might hold during the course of a year.

In its ninth year of conducting this study, using the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics to figure median annual salaries, here are the many occupations a mom does.

First and foremost, she raises children. Building from that, moms also cook meals, keep house, care of pets, dispense medication and nursing care, attend meetings and functions, listen to a resolve family problems, maintain family order and harmony, assist with homework, provide transportation, manage family finances, and keep the family on schedule.

Using those occupations, the financial group then estimated the worth of a mom.

So how much is a multi-tasking mom worth? Based on the many job required to be a mother, the annual salary was estimated at \$773,700 or \$64,500 per month.

The financial company didn't just stop with a total, though.

They actually found a corresponding occupation and annual salary to fit all the jobs a



Patty Decker

• Deep Thoughts

mother does.

The following are similar occupations and median salaries:

- Animal caretaker — \$28,090
- Chef — \$35,840
- Computer Systems Analyst — \$70,430
- Financial Manager — \$96,620
- Food/Beverage Service Worker — \$18,680
- General Office Clerk — \$24,580
- Registered Nurse — \$56,880
- Management Analyst — \$75,000
- Child Care Worker — \$18,180
- Housekeeper — \$18,180
- Psychologist — \$63,960
- Bus Driver — \$32,650
- Elementary School Principal — \$76,890
- Dietitians, Nutritionists — \$45,950
- Property Manager — \$50,570
- Social Worker — \$38,780
- Recreation Worker — \$22,420

One of the reasons for doing this study, according to the financial group, is to quantify and track the true market value of a mother's annual

worth in today's economy.

"Of course," said Ric Edelman, owner of the company, "no one can place a value on the love and affection that mothers give to their families."

It's a tough job being a mother and, those of us who are, know what it's like to wear many hats and be on call 24 hours a day and seven days a week.

Personally, I look forward each year to getting this particular study to see what the typical mother deserves if she were working full-time and in 17 different occupations.

One thing missing from the annual salaries; however, is retirement, health and insurance benefits that someone in that field would normally receive.

Which brings up an interesting idea for Mother's Day on Sunday, May 13.

Why not put a check into mom's card for the entire amount of \$773,700?

For those who don't have that much cash laying around the house, maybe a simple acknowledgment of how priceless your mother really is will suffice.

It's so important to remember our moms during this special time of the year.

Even though my mom died more than 20 years ago, there's not a day that goes by I don't think about her.

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

Your turn

Building Safety Week builds a safe Colby

By Richard Dickman

City of Colby Building Official

The city of Colby is joining with building departments across America to celebrate Building Safety Week from May 6 through May 12.

First observed in 1980, Building Safety Week seeks to raise public awareness of building safety by promoting the use, enforcement, and understanding of building safety and fire prevention codes to protect lives and property.

"Building Smarter ... for Disasters and Everyday Life" is the theme of Building Safety Week 2007.

We often say that people don't pay attention to building safety issues until a disaster occurs. But building and fire codes affect you and your loved ones every day.

Inspectors, plan reviewers, and others in the city of Colby work to ensure that the structures you and your families live, work, attend school, worship, and play in are safe.

By doing our jobs each day, we provide the first line of defense from building disasters.

We are silent defenders who are seldom seen but work daily to ensure safety in the built environment.

In addition to raising the awareness of the citizens of Colby, Kansas, Building Safety Week will run in conjunction with the City's annual Clean-Up Week.

The Governing Body of the City of Colby would ask that everyone use this time to begin maintaining all yards and properties by disposing of discarded items, cutting and mowing of overgrown weeds and grasses, trimming trees,

removing and disposing of inoperative vehicles, and general cleanup that we can all be proud of.

If you have small items cluttering your yard that you would like the city to haul to the Thomas County Landfill during the week of May 7-11, please call City Hall at 460-4410 and schedule a day and time for removal.

The city of Colby is a member of the International Code Council, an association that develops the most widely adopted building safety and fire prevention codes in the nation.

Building Safety Week is sponsored by the International Code Council Foundation, an organization dedicated to changing the devastating effects of natural disasters and other building tragedies at home and around the world.

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. 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.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley



THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the day observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Haynes Publishing Co., 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE is paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to The Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news credited to it or not otherwise herein. Member Kansas Press Association, Inland Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby by carrier: 4 months \$40, 8 months \$56, 12 months \$74. By mail with in Colby and the nine-county region of Thomas, Sheridan, Decatur, Rawlins, Cheyenne, Sherman, Wallace, Logan and Gove counties: 4 months \$53, 8 months \$65, 12 months \$82. Other Kansas counties: 4 months \$60, 8 months \$70, 12 months \$85. All other states, \$85, 12 months.