



Free Press Viewpoint

Repairs are needed even in hard times

On Monday, the Colby School Board is going to hear some recommendations for the capital outlay fund, one of which may be to raise the property tax levied by the district. Capital outlay exists to pay the schools' maintenance needs, like roof repairs, restroom renovations and bus purchases. It's not for unforeseen catastrophic repairs from, say, a tornado. It's for the routine maintenance that is always needed over the lifetime of a building, equipment and the like. The problem is, the Colby district's fund is running out of money. There's about \$450,000 in it, which won't be nearly enough, district officials say, and the district now has no way to put money into it. In good times, the district put leftover money from the general fund into capital reserve at the end of the year. But times aren't so good. The fund is dwindling and there's some pretty hefty repairs coming up.

The only other way to get some money is a tax levy specifically for this fund. Currently the district doesn't have one. It got rid of it back in the '90s, when times were good. It seems everyone was a little shortsighted, and so there's no money coming into this fund.

The district contracted with an expert from K-State to do a capital outlay plan. He took a look at all the buildings and what they are going to need, and laid out the next five year's worth of maintenance. The administration has been taking a look at the plan, trying to even out the expenses and dropping a few things they really might not need. The staff is going to present some recommendations to the board.

The superintendent outlined a few of these at the last meeting. There's more than a \$1 million worth of repairs needed over the next five years, not the least of which is a complete replacement of the high school roof, estimated at around \$680,000.

The report also recommended a tax levy be put back in for this fund.

This is an issue that could go before the public. There is enough of an anti-tax climate right now that someone would have no trouble finding the signatures. They just need the signatures of 10 percent of the people who voted in the last election to turn a board resolution into a districtwide vote.

There's nothing wrong with that. Things like this should be voted on by the people. But in this case, the numbers seem plain. There's not nearly enough money in the fund to cover everything. The surpluses are gone. There's no other way to put money into it.

In this case, to continue to keep up our school buildings, we must raise taxes. It won't be a large increase, but yes, property owners will have to pay more. But it might be a small price to pay to avoid having buildings falling down around our students, to have them heated in the winter and cooled in the summer and to have enough buses to get students there and back. It's looking less and less likely that the state Legislature is going to help our schools, so in the end it may be up to us.

- Kevin Bottrell

Write us

The Colby Free Press encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of general interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise. Nor do we run form letters.

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Steve Haynes - Publisher s.haynes @ nwkansas.com

NEWS

Kevin Bottrell - News Editor kbottrell @ nwkansas.com

Andy Heintz - Sports Reporter aheintz @ nwkansas.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor mballard @ nwkansas.com

Vera Sloan and Aubrey Spencer - Society Editors colby.society @ nwkansas.com

ADVERTISING

Heather Woofter - Advertising Representative hwoofter @ nwkansas.com

Andrea Miller - Advertising Representative a.miller @ nwkansas.com

Kathryn Ballard - Graphic Design kballard @ nwkansas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Robin Tubbs - Office Manager rtubbs @ nwkansas.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator support @ nwkansas.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Richard Westfahl - General Manager

Lana Westfahl, Jim Jackson, Betty Morris, Jim Bowker, Judy McKnight, Barbara Ornelas, Kris McCool

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"YOU GOTTA FILL OUT YOUR CENSUS, 'CAUSE THAT DETERMINES HOW MANY REPRESENTATIVES YOUR STATE CAN HAVE IN CONGRESS TO COMPLETELY IGNORE YOUR WISHES!"

Time with a book is like dessert

I have been trying to get caught up on my reading this week. I always feel much better if I'm able to squeeze at least an hour of reading into my day.

Reading, along with music and fishing, are my therapy. After a day of work, doing one of these is like enjoying a dessert after I ate all my vegetables for dinner.

Like most folks, I wade through life looking for free time. When I say free time, I mean time away from work and other responsibilities that may or may not be mandatory.

While I try to stay in a decent mood no matter how much work I have on my plate, I have to admit that my demeanor is usually much better on the weeks where I have been able to sneak off to one of the Sheridan State Fishing Lake or Graham County Community Lake a couple times, or when I have had enough time to relax and listen to an entire Jimmy Buffett, Grateful Dead, Talib Kweli or Bob Dylan disk without any distractions.

I also enjoy the days when I can escape into a good mystery novel for a couple of hours, or when I can read a book by my favorite nonfiction fishing author John Gierach. The old wise hippie's Colorado fishing adventures have always had a calming effect on me.

I think everyone needs to have time to themselves once in a while. There are times when



Andy Heintz

- Wildcat Ramblings

even the most mentally tough people have to be relieved from the pressures of being on someone else's schedule.

Everyone deserves to have time to form their own beliefs and opinions about issues outside of the work and the family. When someone's entire life is spent worrying about work or home, it's easy for that person to feel like they have been cheated in some way.

Now it's true that some people will choose not to learn about the bigger issues affecting society or the world, but they should at least have the choice. While I don't think there will ever be a universally agreed-upon definition of freedom, having the chance to develop and pursue your own interests seems like a pretty good one to me.

I know there will be some, who due to their own mistakes or because of unlucky circumstances beyond their control, will not have a chance to discover their own interests or pur-

sue their own goals, and that's sad. I have always admired the people who never complain or feel sorry for themselves despite being stuck in a life where the majority of their day is spent making sure their loved ones are provided for.

Whether it's a single mom or dad working two jobs to pay for their kids' education, or the adults who devote enormous amounts of time and energy to taking care of their parents, these everyday people all too often go unnoticed and unappreciated.

A lot of the former sacrifice their own hopes and dreams to make sure their children have a chance to pursue their goals. There are not many acts more selfless than this. And maybe these folks' lives end up being more fulfilling than those of us who spend significant portions of our time pursuing our own goals. But I still wish there was a way to compensate them for their sacrifices.

We all deserve the freedom of being our own boss every now and again. Human beings are not machines. We should all have a chance to develop our own personalities, form our own beliefs and discover what and who we love.

Andy Heintz, a K-State journalism graduate, is sports reporter for the Colby Free Press. He says he loves K-State athletics and fishing, sports and opinion writing.

Groups celebrate volunteers in action

To the Editor:

What do we call people who, with willing hearts, give to their community week after week, year after year, expecting nothing in return?

We call them volunteers. This week is time to celebrate the role volunteers play at organizations across the nation. With their skills, energy and care, America's volunteers renew our spirit and lend strength to the institutions that respond to our most pressing challenges.

At the Northwest Kansas American Red Cross, we have many volunteers who know the satisfaction of helping others. They know Magic Johnson was right when he said, "You're the only one who can make the difference."

Red Cross volunteers save the day. They provide a place to stay and emotional support when their neighbors are faced with a house fire or other disaster, such as a tornado. They teach life-saving safety courses such as first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, babysitting and care giving.

Some share their talents in our office, at public-speaking engagements, on our board or among the public by coordinating fund-raising efforts. Volunteers connect military families, work at blood drives and, in general, do what's needed to provide relief to victims of disasters and help people prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies.

This is National Volunteer Week, a time to recognize the selfless gifts of time, money and blood the Red Cross receives from the citizens of the eight counties we serve from the Colby office: Thomas, Cheyenne, Rawlins, Sherman, Sheridan, Wallace, Logan and Gove. Thank you! Without your gifts, we could not fulfill the Red Cross mission. This week, especially, we like to thank all our volunteers.

National Volunteer Week is also a time to invite you to join us. If you are not already a volunteer, give the Red Cross a try. There are



Free Press Letter Drop

- Our readers sound off

many ways to get involved.

Red Crossers are trained to perform extraordinary acts in the face of emergencies. Right now we especially need people who would like to help coordinate fund raising. All money raised from these efforts will stay in our budget here, allowing us to continue to respond to local emergencies right here in northwest Kansas.

To explore all the volunteer opportunities and see how you can make a difference, contact the office at (785) 462-7161. We can help you find the opportunity that's right for you.

Sherry White, branch manager Northwest Kansas American Red Cross

Hospice volunteers work hard at caring

To the Editor:

This is National Volunteer Week, a time to recognize and celebrate the thousands of people who give selflessly of their time and talents in service to others. Nowhere is this more important than in our nation's hospice and palliative care programs.

Here at Hospice Services, we have trained volunteers dedicated to making sure people here have the support and care they need at life's end. This journey can often be lonely, frightening and unfamiliar. Knowing that there

is a caring neighbor to give a hand, lend an ear, and share his or her heart can make all the difference to patients and families. Nationwide, more than 550,000 volunteers give 25 million hours of service every year.

Volunteers are vital to Hospice Services, fulfilling many different roles. Some help with special projects while others serve on the board. Many help with fund raising projects or office tasks. Some choose to work with the patients and families we serve. Direct-care volunteers give more than 1,000 hours per year to help patients and families in our territory.

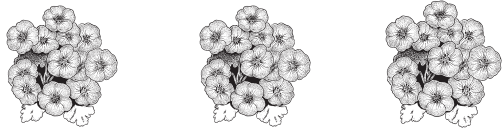
Hospice volunteers understand that every person they care for is a unique individual with a lifetime of experiences, relationships and gifts to share. Hospice and palliative care bring comfort, dignity and peace to help people live every moment to the fullest, leaving loved ones with memories they can treasure.

Many misconceptions about hospice exist — that it means "giving up," or there's "nothing more than can be done." Nothing could be further from the truth. Hospice is about living and making sure those with a life-limiting illness are surrounded by love and support.

I encourage everyone to learn more about hospice and volunteer opportunities by calling Hospice Services at (800) 315-5122 or going to www.hospicenwks.net.

Hospice arose out of the volunteer spirit ... a few people who cared enough to reach out to other human beings. We founded our program on caring for people at the most vulnerable time in their lives. We extend our appreciation to the many volunteers who are an integral part of the hospice team.

Sandy Kuhlman, Phillipsburg Hospice Services executive director



Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley



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