

Opinion

My chance to have the last word

This is the third of six columns written by retiring staff members of the Norton School District. We thought what they had to say at their retirement reception would also be enjoyed by the readership of The Telegram. We thank Superintendent Mann for his assistance in helping us expand their comments to include all residents in the Norton district.

In Their Own Words

Today: Bruce Poage
 To end any prevailing suspicions about how long I have been in education, let me tell you I started in the 4-6 grade classroom of a two-room school. I grew up driving a tractor, moving irrigation pipe, and reading car magazines. I remember telling my mom one time that I didn't want to go to college. I'd just stay home, work for dad and learn how to work on cars. She erased that notion quickly by telling me that I would be going to college. Thanks for the direction, mom.

valued people and relationships more than money. I returned to education as a junior high teacher at Longford School, a small, rural Clay County school. It was a great place for us at that time in our lives. Longford High School closed the next year and I got to try my hand at school administration as Head Teacher of Longford Elementary School. In that position, I learned enough about school administration to enroll in an elementary guidance masters program at K-State. Since receiving my Master's Degree in 1973, I have worked in three good school districts: Marshall County (Marysville), Clay County (Clay Center) and Norton. But for me and my family, the move we made to the Norton School District in 1980 was the best move we had made. This is a great community and an outstanding school system.

always been proud to work at Eisenhower and Norton Junior High School.

I will miss daily contact with elementary kids who have a way of putting a smile on your face. I will miss my crossword puzzle friends. I didn't work crossword puzzle until I met Kevin Jilka 26 years ago. I will miss hearing Mr. Will's high school band, or Miss Lee's vocal students practicing. I will miss comments and notes from kids like the one I received several years ago from a sixth grade girl that read, "Mr. Poage You are my knight in shining armour." I will miss the daily antics of junior high kids who can't decide if they are kids or adults and may change their opinion five times in one day. I will miss wearing blue and yellow on game days and sharing conversation and Blue Jay sports action with fellow table and press box workers. I will miss conversations and working with Greg Mann who has great insights and unwavering decisions that you can rely on. Where else could you fill your building principal's pickup cab with wadded up newspapers on his 40th birthday and still retain your job? That would be the same place where the building principal tapes the counselor's door shut from the inside and crawls out the window as a part of a 50th birthday celebration!

Our oldest son, Steve, is a CPA and currently working as Vice President/CFO for the Kansas Hospital Association and CEO of Kansas Health Services. Kyle, after receiving a master's degree in meteorology from St. Louis University, is a journeyman forecaster with the National Weather Service. Some of you here had Steve and Kyle as students. I thank you and those who have gone before you for the education you provided our children. I also thank their mother, my wife Mary, for their good study habits and their achievement in math and science.

Our sons might have gotten some of their work ethic from me, but their academic strength came from their mom. My wife of 42 years has been the best partner I could have. In our early life we made lots of moves. I appreciated hers so very much. She has been the best friend and help mate I could have.

It has been my privilege to have worked for 26 years as a counselor in this school district. I have worked with a number of excellent and outstanding educators. We may be a smaller district in a rural area, but we are on the cutting edge and among the leaders in Kansas education. I have seen so many changes and improvements in the way we educate children. This is a community and school district where high expectations are the norm. We all have those moments when we may be down, disappointed or discouraged about our students' behavior, or achievement. We may be upset by parents' comments, or by decisions made by administration or board of education. But as I have heard my fellow junior high staff member George Rossi often repeat, "You don't have to look very far to appreciate all that we have here." In this district outstanding educators are the rule, not the exception. We are looked up to and envied by our educational peers. Anything done in the Norton School District is done in a first class manner. I have

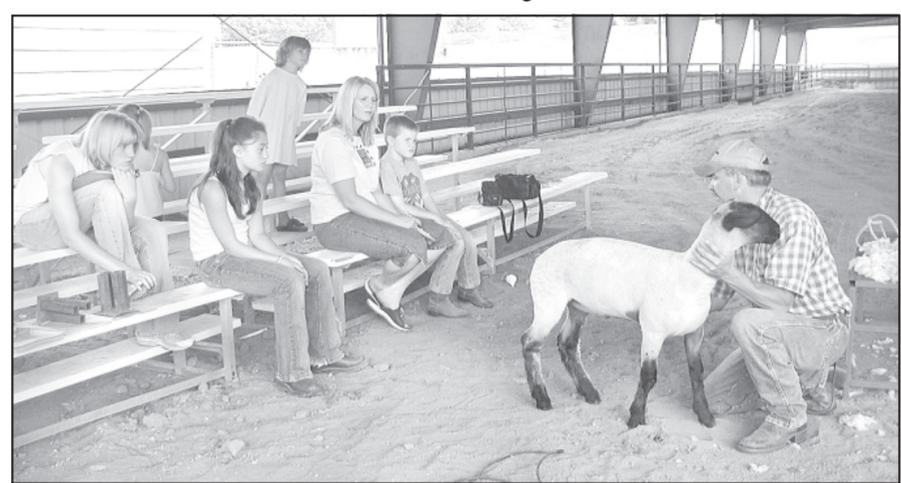
I won't miss state assessments. I don't like the way they drive everything we do in school. I won't miss the responsibility of being Crisis Team Leader. To this day I worry when I hear sirens on a weekend evening when I know high school kids are having a good time and not making good decisions. I think schools have taken or been given social responsibilities that should be left to parents, churches and community agencies. I won't miss parents who think counselors can work miracles while they take a vacation. I won't miss scheduling classes when I know I must put more kids in a class than I think is optimal for a good learning environment. I won't miss that time of the year when negotiations are underway and those who need to work together for kids seem to become adversaries.

We have worked hard together as we meet the changing educational and social needs of our children. We have cried together when we have lost a staff member or student. We have laughed together as we have shared stories about students and enjoyed a few practical jokes. I have been privileged to work with a first class staff — "Thanks."

Mary and I want to be closer to our four, and soon to be five grandkids and enjoy being more involved in their lives and activities. I'm not done working. Since I was 18 years old I have never been away from work for more than two weeks.

Who knows what business may need my talents and abilities. As we close this chapter in our book of life, we will always say without hesitation, "We are proud to be a Blue Jay!"

A lamb show in the making...



FFA advisor, Garrett Beydler, demonstrated how to prepare a lamb for showing and the proper ring techniques. Mr. Beydler is one of the Norton County Fair's sheep superintendents. —Telegram photo by Carolyn Plotts

School to leave fees, meal prices as they are

(Continued from Page 1)
 compensation and liability insurance for the 2006-07 school year.

- Accepted a bid of \$10,500 from the Naught-Naught Agency of Columbia, Mo., for the district's student accident insurance for the 2006-07 school year.
- Disallowed the only bid received for a school sedan, since it

did not meet specifications and then approved the revised bid specifications for re-submission.

- Continued participation in the Head Start program for the 2006-07 school year.
- Reviewed a very preliminary copy of the budget for 2006-07. Mr. Mann said the budget was based on what the state legislation passed. But, he said, it has yet to

be approved by the state supreme court.

- Directed the clerk to republish the 2005-06 general fund and special education budgets and set a budget hearing for 7 a.m. on June 30. Mr. Mann said additional money was available for special education in the 2005-06 year and so the budgets needed to be republished.

It's a dinner, not a dance, that's preferred

(Continued from Page 1)
 Urban and Wendy Haresnape as the Eisenhower volleyball coaches; Mark Kelley as the Eisenhower At-Risk tutor; Vickie Bainter as the Eisenhower assistant cook; Keith Hauser as the district's technology coordinator; Kristen Maddy as the junior high assistant track coach; and Norma Archibald as the high school/junior high assistant cook.

- Approved the new job description for the position of director of educational technology.
- Approved a contract with

Keith Hauser as the district's director of educational technology.

- Approved the transfer of Lucas Melvin from junior high technology to high school At-Risk coordinator.
- Approved a letter of intent with Erin Manning as the junior high computer teacher.
- Approved work agreements with Kathy Richard and Tamela Wessel as additional summer maintenance help.
- Approved a work agreement with Lynette Archer as the junior high assistant volleyball coach.

- Approved a supplemental work agreement with Joan Bolt as the Eisenhower volleyball coach.
- Approved Lucas Melvin as the summer weight program coordinator and gave him the authority to hire a part-time assistant.
- Approved the 2006-07 Site Council memberships as presented.
- Approved the professional development council points as presented.
- Approved the addition of a part-time clerical position in the district office.

Bulletin Board

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From the Mailbag:

Need some money for the fireworks display

To the Editor,
 The Fourth of July is fast approaching and our annual fireworks display is in need of your help. Donations are desperately needed!

I'm sure many of you will say, "I can't afford to give enough to make a difference." Any donation — large or small — is needed and is greatly appreciated. Please look through your spare change or open your wallet for this great family fun night.

Donation cans are located at

Jamboree, Norton Shop & Save, Dairy Queen and the Norton Archery fireworks stand, or they can be mailed or dropped off at the Chamber office, 104 South State, Norton.

If you have never been to our fireworks display, please consider doing so this year. It's really quite spectacular and the fun events before make it an evening to enjoy.

Come out to Prairie Dog State Park, enjoy free watermelon, music, karaoke and visit with neighbors and friends.

Don't let this family fun activity become a thing of the past.
 Karla Reed, Director
 Norton Area Chamber of Commerce

Share your thoughts with a Letter to the Editor

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