

## Legal notices belong in local newspapers

"I'm from the government, and I'm here to help you." Ever heard that one? Of course you have. We hear it often as elected and appointed officials alike tell us they have a better idea about how to deliver governmental services to the citizens of our state and nation.

You're about to receive a huge dose of this snake oil from some of them about their idea to move public notice from the trusted, independent and printed pages of the state's newspapers to a governmental website controlled by them.

They'll boast this new idea will save taxpayers money, that it will make more of what government does accessible to the masses and that it will do a better job of keeping you informed about what your government officials are doing.

Don't believe it for a minute.

For one thing, this idea about switching publication to a government-controlled website is not new; it's been around since the advent of the Internet. And the arguments against it are valid today, which indicates why not a single state in the union has seen fit to do it.

Why, you might ask, should public notice continue to appear in newspapers?

First and foremost because government officials can never be allowed to be in control of their own information. They are not independent and, therefore, they cannot be entrusted with such power.

In many communities, government officials already make it difficult for the public to participate in the political process by denying access to public records and public meetings. It would get worse if they exerted even more control of the information process.

Newspapers work because they are independently owned and operated, are printed on permanent newsprint that cannot be hacked and manipulated or become temporarily unavailable because of computer problems, power surges or crashed servers.

Second, newspapers are a far more effective medium for reaching the public, and survey after survey indicates that's exactly where the public wants to find public notices.

Newspapers are required to demonstrate readership by providing records of paid subscribers, maintaining postal permits or submitting to outside subscription audits.

Newspapers are more accessible to the public than the Internet, so those without access to computers or the Internet would be left out of the loop; others simply cannot afford the cost of monthly Internet access, which is only available to two out of every three Americans — and the figure is much lower in a number of states, including Kansas.

Third, keeping public notices in newspapers and not placing them on the Internet is important because the Internet is highly unreliable as a stable source of information and government agencies cannot ensure that information located on a server is secure.

Government Computer News says hackers find government websites particularly irresistible because states and local governments generally neglect to focus on network security.

Finally, how do you prove "notice" took place on an Internet site? It's virtually impossible. On the other hand, newspapers serve as a verifiable and authentic record of publication, and publishers provide sworn affidavits and page copies to prove the public notice was printed as submitted. Even years later, if claims are filed, a newspaper's files still contain the printed public notice as it originally appeared.

The taxpayer-funded lobbyists will be busy in Topeka beginning in January. There will be hundreds of them walking the halls of the Kansas Legislature, using your hard-earned taxes to convince legislators to cut back or eliminate your right to public notice.

If they can't eliminate them altogether, or move them to a government-controlled website, they'll try to abbreviate the notice in your newspaper to a simple reference to where you can find the entire public notice at some website.

In other words, they're going to make you work hard to find information or keep tabs on your elected officials rather than printing it right there in the newspaper where you have become accustomed to seeing it.

Local newspapers present public notices to citizens right there with other information about their communities — from coverage of city council, county commission and school board meetings to coverage of the high school debate team or the local football or basketball game.

Simply put, public notices belong in your local newspaper, where everybody can see them. They should never be allowed to be hidden away, among millions upon millions of websites, on the Internet.

This is your government. Make sure your legislator knows how you feel about this plan to make it more difficult to keep tabs on what your elected and appointed officials are doing.

By Doug Anstaett, executive director of the Kansas Press Association, which has 235 member newspapers across the state. He is a former publisher of The Newton Kansan.



## We know we have a purpose in life

Years ago when my family would return "home" for Christmas, my mother would take my girls out to visit an old woman who lived in Mom's little town. My mother had befriended the woman who was very poor and mentally challenged. She often times didn't smell very good and her house was little more than a shack. Mom said, "It does your girls good to see there are people in this world who don't have things as nice as they do. It will make them appreciate what they have."

Of course, she was right. And, I think my girls remembered that early lesson. They both try to help others less fortunate than themselves. Halley, the oldest, wants to save the world. She's the one who donated (in honor of my birthday) a flock of chickens to a poor woman in Africa. Kara always keeps a sack of give-away clothes ready to take to the local thrift store or shelter. And, that's a habit she's passing on to her daughter. Taylor willingly puts some of her toys in the sack for "some other little kid".

This year, I got another first-hand peek at human kindness and looking beyond ourselves. A friend of mine, her children and her parents make it a practice to do something for someone else during the Christmas holidays. This year, she asked if they could prepare a Christmas Eve dinner for the guests at the house Jim and I, and other volunteers, help run for visiting families of inmates at the local prison.

You can't describe the joy and appreciation every guest expressed knowing a stranger had done something, unselfishly, for them. That, to me, personified the true Christmas spirit.

### Out Back Carolyn Plotts



The recent ice storm that hit this part of the country left our little village looking more like a war zone than a town. Broken limbs and branches litter every yard and are piled in the street. A lot of nice trees were seriously damaged. We won't really know how much damage was done until spring. Then, we'll know what trees survived and which ones didn't.

Power was out at some homes for hours. In the country, some were without power for a few days. Those poor guys that work for the electric company sure earned their pay this week. They worked non-stop, around-the-clock to restore service. Electricity is something we all take for granted. Then, when service is disrupted, we are almost helpless.

Jim woke up in the middle of the night. I suppose the silence from the humidifier and blower fans not working woke him.

He nudged me and said, "Hey, we don't have any power."

We rustled around, found candles and matches and called the power company's "help" line. I'm not sure where the operator who answered our call was located. He wanted our address and phone number, which was fine, but, as we tried to tell him, "The whole town is out. There's not a light anywhere." I know it's a little town, but it has to be on somebody's map somewhere.

That was the night I really appreciated Jim's foresight when he double-insulated the walls of our remodeled house, installed thermal windows and put a gas stove (not dependent on electricity) in the basement. We never did get cold that night.

It's hard to believe another year is about to roll around. This year has flown by. It really is true that the older you get, the faster time passes. It's been a good year. We have a beautiful new granddaughter, our ministry at prison is making a difference in men's lives, our children are all healthy, our work with The Haven is helping others, we have always had work to provide for our needs, we were able to build another house in Mexico for a poor family, we are both healthy and don't take a single prescription, we've been blessed with good friends, we're able to live in a comfortable (if not quite completed) home, and we know we have a purpose in life. What more could a person want? I pray 2007 is as good.

## There's nothing like Christmas music

To me, the Christmas Season is many things, but one of the main enjoyments is the wonderful music.

I and three students were privileged to handle the accompaniment for the Norton High School and Junior High Christmas concert. It is a joy to see these young ladies playing the piano so well.

This concert, in my opinion, is the most enjoyable concert to play and probably very enjoyable to those who attend. The concert is always enjoyed by family and friends of those participating. I feel there could be a little more publicity so other people from the area would know in advance when these concerts occur so they could also enjoy them.

Thanks goes to director Miss Lee and all the students who participated, as well as Mr. Will who "willingly" let the Jay Singers dress him as Santa Claus.

Then later in the week, I attended the Northern Valley School concert which included the grade school vocal department as well as the bands. All very well done and enjoyable.

Then we moved to the gymnasium where the Community Choir sang, then the junior high and high school vocal department and bands. All done very well, including the accompaniment by Stanton and Sara Nelson.

Congratulations to the directors, Pat David, Jeremy Wetter and all the teachers who were helping as well as the students.

These programs were well attended, and I'm not sure there was anyone at home in Alma during that time.

Earlier in the month, I attended the Living Nativity at the Methodist Church in Norton. I always enjoy that and appreciate all the work they do to bring that event to the community.

Their production is certainly the true meaning of the Season, and the food and

### Memories Sonya Montgomery



fellowship inside is also appreciated.

All the lights in the communities are beautiful and appreciated. If you have not yet driven on the road just west of Alma where the Marbles always decorate

enough to "light our way," it's worth a long drive to see. It is so beautiful — thanks Susie and Blaine.

Then in Alma there are several, but the Shearer yard is worth a long drive to see all these lights. Thanks to you, too, for making the season brighter.

I heard someone say once, and I believe this statement, that "Happiness depends on happenings and Joy depends on Jesus."

I hope you had a MERRY CHRISTMAS and that a JOYOUS NEW YEAR awaits you all.

## Residents come before apartments

To the Telegram Editor, I would like to address the community as a concerned citizen and as the former administrator of the Andbe Home.

I feel the well being of our elderly is more important than the building of new apartments. The good staff we have are going to be wondering if they have a job or not, due to the uncertainty of the administration. The board of directors cannot run the home from the board table; they are there to help the administrator and director of nursing.

I have no idea what the problem is there, but I know our residents are suffering from it. The first concern should be the residents and then the good staff. I have spent half of my life there to give those people a good home, and it hurts me to see what is happening. I think it needs to be brought to the attention of the public.

I realize there is a lot of gossip going around that might not be true, but people are going to believe this and they are not going to want their loved one at the Andbe Home.

I would like the opinion of other people in the community. I feel the board should put a hold on the building of the new apartments and concentrate on getting the

## LETTERS

Andbe Home up and running like it should be.

Wilma Winder  
Norton

## Not appropriate to rename post office

To the Telegram Editor, I am in agreement with Jay Ryan and Tom Dreiling. I retired from the Norton Post Office in 1985 after 41 1/2 years of service.

I knew Keith Sebelius well and liked him very much, but I don't think it would be appropriate to rename the post office the Sebelius Post Office, after being the Norton Post Office for as long as Norton City has been in existence which is well over 100 years.

If Keith was living today, I doubt that he would like the Norton Post Office changed to his name.

Vernon L. Heitman  
Norton

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