

My old high school got a massive financial injection

The amount of money I'm going to tell you about today is the kind one would generally link to a college or university. Hardly a high school. But that's exactly what this is all about.

I graduated from what is now Thomas More Prep-Marian at Hays. Back in my day it was a military school — St. Joseph's College and Military Academy, a high school/junior college ROTC (Reserve Officers Training Corps) institution. Although operated then by the Capuchin priests, the military's presence was strong.

Well, on Tuesday of this week, it was announced that Thomas More Prep-Marian received its largest one-time bequest in the 100-year history of the school — \$855,000! It was left by a 1945 graduate, Fred James (Jim) Neu, who died in 2007 in Des Moines, Iowa.

The money will be placed in an endowment fund to relieve past debt and provide opportunity for growth in the future. "This gift, in addition to bequests from other estates, memorials received, and help from the school's benefactors, alumni and others, such as the Dreiling Trust, will continue to secure TMP-Marian's financial stability," according to Bob Wolf, president of the school's endowment foundation.

Mark Pahls, Ed.D, Vice President of Institutional Advancement at TMP, made the announcement. And being relatively new to the job, I'm sure this will go down as one of Mark's most important pronouncements.

This may not seem like a whole lot of money to some folks, but when a private high school receives something like this, that's big! And it just might spur others to take note and act accordingly. TMP, as a co-ed prep school, receives no state funds. It educates day students and students from other areas of the state, nation and globe (these are housed in two impressive off-campus facilities).

Allow me a moment to reflect: Good school, academically sound! No, not all students are of the Catholic faith; its student body contains a mix of beliefs. Its educators are not from convents or from seminaries, but from respected colleges and universities. Its two leaders, Denis Coakley, principal/president and Mark Pahls, vice-president, bring impressive portfolios to the institution.

When word of the financial boost was received here, I stopped, smiled, looked upward and mused, "Who said HE doesn't answer prayers?"

I would ask all members of my Class of 1953 to stand proud!

The question might arise why I would talk about TMP in Norton. Simply because that's my alma mater of which I am exceptionally proud, much as the alumni of Norton Community High School are exceptionally proud of their institution. We should never, when we move to other communities, forget where we came from. And you can bet Norton grads who live elsewhere, dearly love the school that sent them on their way. Go Blue Jays!

Adam, "Hey there, honey, how old are we?"
Eve, "Beats me."

I would be remiss if I didn't take time to wish our wrestlers the best of everything as they take to the 3-2-1A state mats at Gross Memorial Coliseum in Hays today and Saturday. They are coming off a really impressive gold medal performance at the regional held at Ellis last week. For those of you unable to be in Hays for the matches, you can watch them live on Nex-Tech channel 9 Norton, or listen to KQNK Radio.

Well, President Obama mapped out the course he'll take to begin putting the pieces of a truly dismantled puzzle together in his talk to Congress and the people Tuesday night. I'll say one thing — glad it's him and not me. It just overwhelms me to think of every base he has to cover, not just once, but many times to put it all together. For the most part, his address was upbeat and to the point. Will he succeed? I certainly hope so because that means I and me will succeed. I would hate to even think what it would be like if he doesn't!

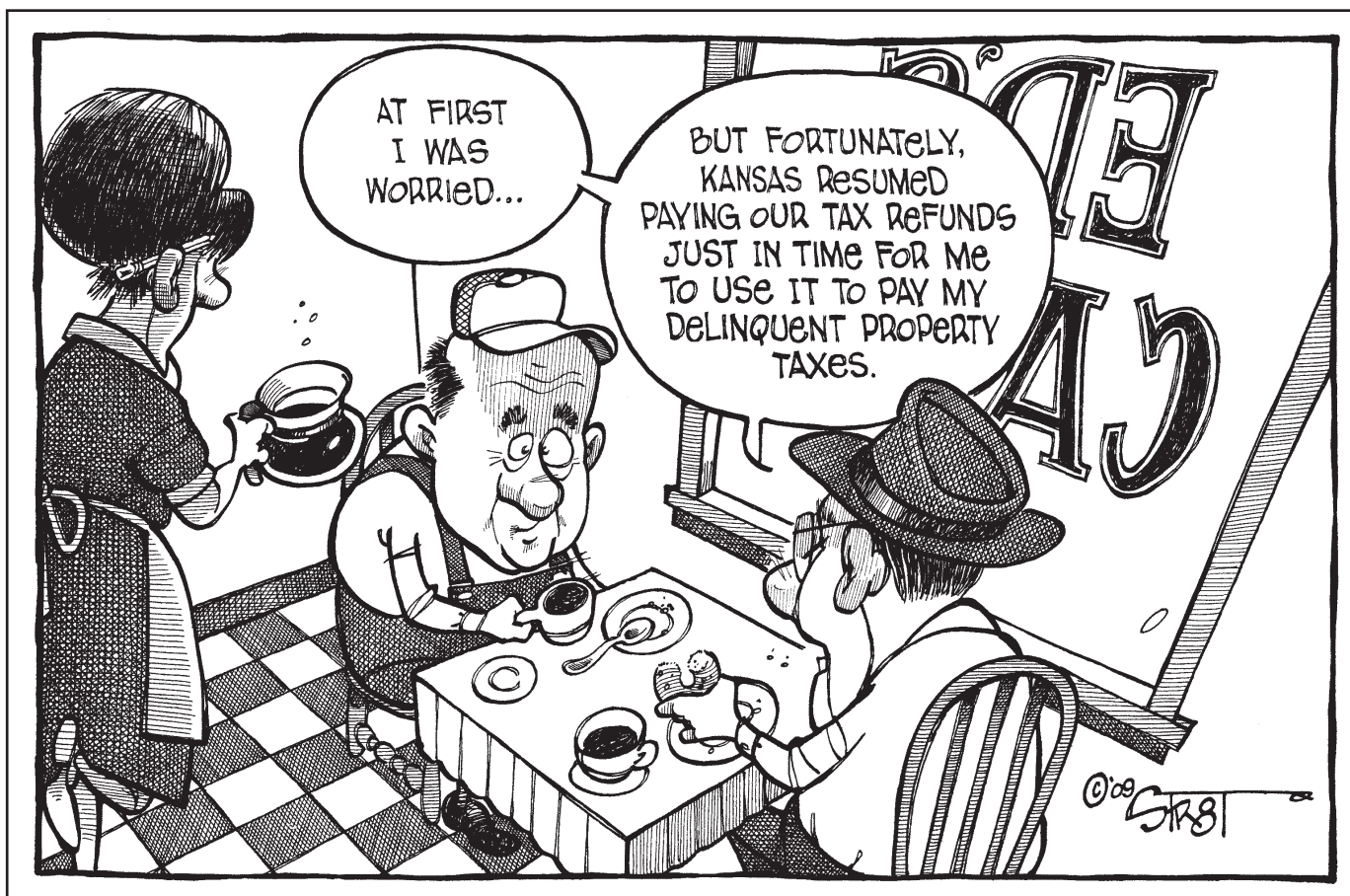
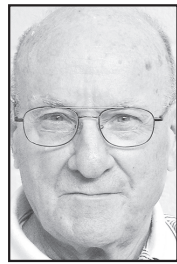
One of my snippets in Tuesday's column, *Stop Look Listen*, about the Nebraska economist who said we're not in as bad a shape as everyone thinks, brought this response from a banker friend: "The Nebraska economist is correct. Instead of talking of doom and gloom, our leaders need to start speaking in positive terms about the economy so people feel more at ease about our economy and about spending."

Overheard at the restaurant: "My young grandson called the other day to wish me happy birthday. He asked me how old I was, and I told him I was 64. "He was quiet for a moment, and then he asked, 'Grandma, did you start at 1?'" You never know what they're going to say.

Just a suggestion from a longtime friend: Maybe members of Congress need to wear uniforms like NASCAR drivers, so we can tell who their corporate sponsors are.

Have a good evening! And while we don't wear uniforms to identify our religious preferences, many of us did carry a mark this week that did just that — ashes on the forehead, ushering in the Lenten season.

Good Evening Norton
Tom Dreiling



Sound Off!

Public notices must remain in newspapers

I agree with Steve Haynes in the Feb. 20 Telegram about putting public notices in the newspapers. How else are we supposed to know what's going on? If we don't protest this type of thing, we'll end up like the character in the book, "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy."

Arthur Dent, the main character wakes up one morning to a large yellow bulldozer advancing up his garden path. He lies in front of the bulldozer to stop the destruction of his house.

This brings in Mr. Prosser, whose job it is to see that Arthur Dent's house is cleared out of the way before the day is out. Mr. Prosser tells Dent that the bypass has got to be built.

"First I've heard of it," said Arthur, "why's it got to be built?"

Mr. Prosser said, "You were quite en-

titled to make any suggestions or protests at the appropriate time, you know."

"Appropriate time?" hooted Arthur. "Appropriate time? The first I knew about it was when a workman arrived at my home yesterday. I asked him if he had come to clean the windows and he said no, he'd come to demolish the house."

"But Mr. Dent, the plans have been available in the local planning office for the last nine months."

"Oh yes, well, as soon as I heard I went straight around to see them, yesterday afternoon. You hadn't exactly gone out of your way to call attention to them, had you? I mean like actually telling anybody or anything."

"But the plans were on display..."

"On display? I eventually had to go down to the cellar to find them."

"That's the display department."

"With a flashlight."

"Ah, well, the lights had probably gone."

"So had the stairs."

"But look, you found the notice didn't you?"

"Yes," said Arthur, "yes I did. It was on display in the bottom of a locked filing cabinet stuck in a disused lavatory with a sign on the door saying 'Beware of the Leopard.'"

I don't know about the rest of the folks in Norton, but I'd just as soon have the notices published in the paper where I can read them. Methinks I'll give a call to Sen. Ostmeyer and let him know what I think.

June Prout Norton

Dad showed his love, support by always being there

It is easy to measure how much money someone makes in their lifetime, how many books they have read, or have written, how far they have traveled, or how many products they have sold. Less easy is to measure their impact on the people they have met as they went through life.

Perhaps then by some measures my dad, Ray Koel, did not accomplish so much, and many might say that he did not lead an extraordinary life. But this evaluation would miss my dad's great contributions: he had tremendous humanity, he was a great lover of his fellow man, and he tried to offer a joke, a little good-natured ribbing, and a little joy into the life of everyone he met. Those that called him a friend, and those that came to the great parties held at our house when I was growing up, knew this about him. But even complete strangers were offered this gift. I still see clearly my mom in the car railing that my dad was outside the car joking and kidding around with the gas station attendant, "someone we didn't even know," in some out-of-state town we were passing through on our family

vacation.

As I look back, I can now appreciate the absolutely heroic measures that my dad went to in order to attend all of my sporting activities in high school, even those out of town. As far as I can recall, he was there for all of them — cross country, wrestling and track. That is just remarkable, and I derived a deep feeling from this that I was important. This was crucial to me growing up, because like many teenagers, there were times that I felt I needed to prove to myself and to others that I was good enough to be respected and loved. I took his presence at these events for granted at the time, but over the years have grown to truly appreciate his sacrifice and the support that this provided.

There was a long time in my life growing up when I thought that my dad had been insufficient; I longed for some conversation telling me what to do with my life, for some guidance or advice that I thought he should have provided. It has taken a long time for me to realize his greatest gift to me, something only he

could give and something rare and valuable: his unconditional love and support, no matter what I was doing.

It did not matter what I said I was planning to do, he said okay. If I wanted to go to college, he said okay. If I wanted to go to graduate school, he said okay. If I wanted to try to compete at the highest levels of research and be a professor, he said okay (although he did try to convince me to become a doctor, he didn't press this too hard). The underlying message to me was that he thought that I could accomplish whatever goal I had set, that he wanted me to be successful, and that he trusted my choices and judgment.

Dad, for these things, and the many other gifts that you gave me, I thank you. I will miss your love and support. And the world will miss your playful attitude and the smiles that you put on the faces of everyone that you met.

We all could do well to follow your example.

It was a life well-lived.

Professor Bruce E. Koel
Belle Mead, N.J.

People with disabilities need qualified providers

The state of Kansas is in the midst of a major crisis. For more than 12 years, inadequate funding for organizations that serve people with disabilities has created waiting lists that are out of control.

What was once a system with no waiting lists at all, has been allowed to grow to over 3800 children and adults with disabilities who are in need of services. The 2008 Kansas Legislature appropriated only enough funding to serve a total of 34 of the 3800 people statewide.

Unfortunately, simply providing adequate funding for these individuals does not solve the problem. I wish that were the case. Serving those who are waiting is important. Attracting and retaining qualified care providers also requires keeping up with cost of living and salary requirements.

Service providers like Developmental Services of Northwest Kansas face a constant battle with high turnover and staff shortages due to their inability to pay reasonable wages. Currently, these

workers are paid on average more than \$5 less per hour than those doing comparable work in a state institution.

This challenge is not the result of the recent economic downturn, rather, it is the result of decades of being terribly underfunded. Adequate funding to keep pace with needs would mean those who provide the care that keeps Kansans with disabilities out of costly institutions, would finally be paid a competitive wage. Because these providers are dependent upon state and federal funding (85 percent), an increase in funding is their only hope for offering more competitive wages for their staff. Our legislators know of these needs and their budget people have made recommendations to address it.

I am writing this letter with the hope that you will join me in urging our legislators to take necessary action. Small steps have been taken along the way, but the legislature has not made appropriate funding the priority it should be. For Kansas children and adults with

developmental disabilities on the state's waiting lists, a day without services is a day lost forever.

I urge you to go to the website *invisiblekansans.com* to show your support for people with disabilities. The website explains how Kansans with disabilities are being made to feel invisible by being forced to wait years for services. Anyone visiting this website can send an e-mail to his/her legislators (in the Norton area they are Sen. Ostmeyer and Rep. Faber). It's simple to do, just type in your zipcode and the site will walk you through the process.

As Kansans, we take care of our own. It is a matter of justice. Persons with disabilities are counted 'among the least of these'.

Taking care of our most vulnerable, through full funding for community services, must be our priority and responsibility.

Yeyette Houfek
Hays

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