

### School officials on the right track

Northwest Kansas school officials are on the right track, in our opinion, when they question the wisdom of joining in a new round of lawsuits by some Kansas school districts against the Legislature.

While the last court battle did result in forcing the Legislature to give schools more money, it did so only at a cost of millions in taxpayers' money. It brought about a corruption of the government process where the courts wound up telling the Legislature how much to spend.

And as we all learned in high-school civics classes, that's not the way it's supposed to work. Several area school board members and superintendents have said as much.

In any event, the victory by a group of "medium-sized" districts was short lived. Faced with a rapid decline in state tax revenue in the national recession, the governor and Legislature have been cutting programs in all parts of state government. Schools were protected from most cuts, but wound up losing almost \$90 million.

There is another problem.

A new lawsuit might result in an order to give schools more money, but the state is broke. Where would the cash come from?

The Legislature would have little alternative but to raise taxes. And with thousands of Kansans out of work, and most of us hurting after two years of economic distress, who can afford more taxes?

The attitude among some school administrators seems to be, "Why should we care? We want the money."

No one doubts that Kansas schools could use more. But anyone with any sense could see that right now, the state doesn't have it.

The spectacle of school districts, basically units of state government, using state tax money to sue the state is unseemly. It's wrong.

It's our money they're using to sue us and force a tax increase on all Kansas citizens.

This year, apparently, the group behind the lawsuits, which calls itself "Schools for Fair Funding," wants every Kansas school district to join in a new lawsuit. If anyone really benefits from this, it won't be taxpayers or, in the long run, students and teachers.

It'll be the sharp lawyers who are promoting the idea of another suit. They stand to make millions, and with that kind of fee in sight, they'll be able to pay the new, higher tax rates.

The rest of us won't be so lucky.

It's nice to see, though, that school officials out here not only see the problems with this, but care about the impact of a lawsuit on taxpayers and our system of state government. We urge them all to stay clear of this mess.

— Steve Haynes



### What you should know about the H1N1 vaccine

#### H1N1 News

Dr. Jason

Eberhart-Phillips

This month marks the start of the largest vaccine deployment in history. As the first shipments of the H1N1 flu vaccine are arriving in Kansas, it's worth noting that a new chapter in humanity's long struggle with influenza viruses has begun.

For the first time ever, people have come together to stop a flu pandemic dead in its tracks by taking away the one thing the virus needs to survive: susceptible human hosts.

As the vaccine induces ever-wider immunity in the population, it promises to bend down the curve of the current epidemic, leaving the H1N1 virus with no place to go.

With all the attention the vaccine is getting, many Kansans are asking good questions about it. Is the vaccine really necessary? Will it work to protect me or my children against illness? How do I know it is safe?

A majority of Kansans have indicated that they will likely obtain the vaccine. For now they need to be patient as we await larger supplies of the vaccine in coming weeks, and as we distribute available doses initially to target groups who are at especially high risk of complications from H1N1 flu infections.

Meanwhile, a vocal minority has already begun an active campaign against the vaccine. Many others remain undecided about it. It's easy to get confused, so now is a good time to review what we know about the vaccine and what we can expect about its safety and effectiveness:

1. The vaccine is needed. While the H1N1 virus has not been as lethal as the virus that caused the dreaded 1918 pandemic, for a fraction of cases it causes a very serious disease, even death. As of the end of last week we know of at least 146 reported hospitalizations related to the H1N1 flu, and believe that the actual

number is really much higher. We also know of six H1N1-related deaths in Kansas. It is extraordinary to see so much influenza as early as mid-October, and the impact of this flu virus on children and young adults is unprecedented in modern times. Without the protection of the vaccine, the potential for significant absenteeism in coming weeks is high, causing disruption to schools, businesses and normal community activities throughout the state.

2. The vaccine is effective. Clinical trials conducted on volunteers during the summer months yielded a pleasant surprise about the H1N1 vaccine: It produces a robust immune response that should prevent disease in most people after a single dose. Children under 10 need two doses, given at least three weeks apart, but we can expect nearly everyone else to be protected against H1N1 flu within a couple weeks of receiving a single dose of the vaccine.

3. The vaccine is safe. The H1N1 vaccine really isn't a "new" vaccine at all. It has been manufactured using the same processes used for making seasonal flu vaccines for years. Hundreds of millions of people have received these vaccines with very few serious adverse effects. We expect the H1N1 vaccine to have a similar safety profile, with only mild, localized reactions such as soreness or swelling at the injection site, as was seen in the clinical trials.

4. Vaccine safety will be monitored carefully. Just as we do with all vaccines, information on adverse events following H1N1 vaccination throughout the United

States will be analyzed thoroughly to ascertain if such events are coincidental or possibly related to the vaccine. With so many people being immunized, it is almost certain that a few vaccine recipients will suffer unfortunate outcomes that are probably not related to the vaccine. For example, every day in Kansas there are on average 27 heart attacks, 20 strokes, five first-time seizures, and 22 pregnancies that end in miscarriages. It is inevitable that some of these unwanted events will occur in someone recently immunized with the H1N1 vaccine. Judgments about whether a certain outcome is actually related to the vaccine will require a formal comparison between the observed rate in vaccinated people versus the expected rate in the general population.

I cannot say that the H1N1 vaccine will prevent the flu in everyone who gets it, nor can I say that getting the vaccine entails absolutely no risk. There are no risk-free options in life.

What I can say is that the odds of avoiding a potentially serious disease will be much better this flu season for those who are vaccinated against H1N1 influenza compared to those who are not. I can also say that the chances of serious adverse outcomes after getting infected with the flu itself are immensely greater than any theoretical risk of harm associated with the vaccine.

For me and my family, the choice is clear. I'll take my chances with the H1N1 vaccine over my chances with this year's flu anytime. I hope that you and your family do the same.

Through education, direct services and the assessment of data and trends, coupled with policy development and enforcement, KDHE will improve health and quality of life. We prevent illness and injuries and foster a safe and sustainable environment for the people of Kansas.

### President Obama needs my help

Phase II  
Mary Kay  
Woodyard



I'm sure President Obama has appreciated my silence during his first months. I wanted to give him a chance to do it his way before I told him how I thought it should be done, however I think he now needs my help.

Let's start with Afghanistan. I do believe the center of the terrorist activity is there, however timing is everything and when we diverted our focus to Saddam Hussein and Iraq we lost the advantage.

My concern with this is much the same as it was with Iraq. When we pull out will it have the same effect as withdrawing one's hand from a pool of water? The ripple effect slowly ebbs and any change is not lasting. To be sure we want to consider the General's recommendations, but asking military personnel about upping troop numbers is much like asking a surgeon if you need an operation.

Recently the White House chose to not take part in the Sunday morning talk show circuit at Fox News. The reason given was they "aren't really a news organization, but rather a perspective."

Well, I would agree with that however there are many who honestly believe they are legit. Not appearing is not going to educate those people in how real news organizations behave.

For instance are they going to ban

MSNBC? It certainly, particularly Keith Oberman's Countdown, offers more of a perspective, of course, he doesn't claim to be fair and balanced like FOX. Good democracy comes from good debate. The other side has to be heard even if it isn't founded on fact. I don't go so far as to agree with Senator Lamar Alexander that the Obama White House has traits reflective of the Nixon White House.

Both Nixon and George W. Bush felt their very presence as the Commander in Chief made them right. Obama realizes his responsibility as president, not his entitlement. He has surrounded himself with good people and although at times they may get it wrong overall they are pursuing a path which will ultimately benefit the nation as a whole.

The beauty of democracy is it is not only our right, but also our responsibility to point out when it strays.

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### Holidays a painful time for addicts

I'm sitting here, watching the leaves fall down and thinking about the upcoming holidays. This time of the year can be a painful time for addicts, alcoholics and the families.

One of the steps along the road to recovery is facing our past behavior, the people we have hurt and the consequences of those actions. This is as true for the family as it is for the addicted person. Nothing brings these things more to a head than the stress and high expectations of the holidays.

For many of us, the holidays are fraught with memories of people not showing up for get-togethers or worse, showing up intoxicated or getting intoxicated during the day and making a scene. These are difficult memories to put behind you initially and can put everyone on edge.

One of the first things to know is that these feelings are normal. As we share with our patients, the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior. So...if your family has only negative past behav-

### Where There's Hope

Carla Moore

iors to reflect on, it is normal for them to be preparing for more of the same. Each holiday, special event, regular day that you show up to visit sober and/or clean, begins to lay the groundwork for new expectations and new interactions.

Often, as addicts, we need to limit the amount of time we spend with our families at the initial holidays. If I have not been showing up for years or showing up under the influence, it would probably be unrealistic for me to expect to be able to attend for a full day.

This means I may come shortly before the meal then leave early in the afternoon. Over time, this can be extended. I will share that this has been my experience. For the first few years of recovery, I

would arrive at my mother's house about half an hour before lunch then leave around 2 - after helping with the dishes. As the years moved by, I found myself getting to her home earlier and then staying later as my comfort level allowed. Now I don't think twice about time spent at my mom's place.

Another thing to consider is having people you can contact through the day to help you keep things in perspective. I would usually go with my sponsor's phone number at ready in case I just needed someone to pull me back into reality.

There are so many tools available to both the addict and family member to help make the holidays more enjoyable and easier to walk through. Communication of how we are feeling and what we need is the first step.

Enjoy your day. If you have any questions or comments, you can contact me at cmoore@valleyhope.com.

Namaste - Carla