



Opinion

Rural Kansas could face county consolidation

Perhaps the greatest threat to rural Kansas life today is the misguided movement to consolidate both counties and school districts.

Plans have been proposed to combine all of the state into just 40 school districts and 36 similarly sized counties, though boundaries would not be the same.

These plans are touted as saving the state millions while promoting efficient planning and management, "like Wal-Mart and McDonalds."

Thus, says Richard Shrock, an Emporia professor and education columnist, if your town is big enough to have a McDonalds, it may be big enough to have a high school.

And if that comes to pass, the future is bleak indeed for western Kansans, where less than a dozen high schools might remain.

Of course, these plans beg the question of whether any of us wants our schools and counties run with the moral and ethical values of Wal-Mart or the nutritional content of a McDonalds' menu.

These proposals, however, have caught on with both good-government liberals and tight-fisted conservatives, at least to some extent. Inflated claims of savings upward of \$700 million look good to planners in a state facing a possible \$600 million budget gap.

Proponents tell us, of course, that we'd still get the same level of service that we get today from both counties and schools. Only "excess" job and surplus buildings would be dropped.

But those jobs and those schools are vital to the economy in many a Kansas county seat, where public employment is often the biggest factor in the job market. Take away the school, the courthouse and the hospital (and believe us, that will be next), and what's left in the average county seat?

It's likely that proponents like Dr. Shrock and Sen. Chris Steineger, who introduced a bill to study county consolidation, have no concept of rural life. They only know the state needs to save money.

It's theoretically possible to serve all of the northwest corner of Kansas with one courthouse and one high school, presumably in Colby, but do we want to live that kind of life? And what kind of government would rural people have when many have to drive 70 to 100 miles to get to the courthouse, or when high school students are on a bus two to three hours a day?

The consolidation might be good for Colby in the short run. But after a few years, how many people would be left in the outlying towns to come into the "big" city to shop, buy license plates or go to school?

This is a proposal for depopulating much of the High Plains to save the state a few bucks. Even those savings might not be what's projected. Government consolidations seldom reduce employment or spending. Mostly, the same employees and budget are shuffled into a bigger office.

In the end, the counties, school districts and state would have fewer people and fewer dollars as people flee to Denver, Kansas City and Lincoln.

Out here in the sticks, though, we had better get organized if we want to fight this kind of thinking. These people think they are doing the right thing, even though it means the end of rural life as we know it.

At least the high school kids would be able to sneak out for some good food at the nearby McDonalds in the few remaining school/county seat towns, huh? —Steve Haynes



News From the Past

5 years ago - 2004

The 11th annual Northwest Kansas All-Star Basketball Classic, which features many of the top players in the area, was held on Sunday in Colby. Among the players were Michael Raile of St. Francis and Sara Moore of Cheylin.

There have been more improvements made at the theater. The Theater Committee, Brent Rueb, Tim Burr, Deb Harper, Kelly Frewen and Bob Bixler, have purchased a Christie Model platter to move the film to and from the projector. There has been a recurring problem with film breaking and this will take care of this happening.

The committee is continuing to look for new "used" seats for the theater. Mildred Rogers is celebrating her 100th birthday on April 7. The St. Francis Senior Center is changing daily. Before the remodeling is done, there will be a new roof, some new windows and a coat of paint on the outside.

St. Francis students, Nathaniel Clark, Keaton Frewen and Sam Marin, took "Best of Show" awards at the Northwest Kansas League Art Show held in St. Francis.

Brandon Long recently returned to the United States after serving in Iraq as an Army Private 2nd class.

Mr. and Mrs. Gus Zweygardt are celebrating their 65th wedding anniversary on April 20. The Cheyenne County Commissioners were informed that in the last year the county's recycling centers have kept 82 tons of items out of the landfill.

15 years ago - 1994 An announcement has been this week of the completed merger of the Cheyenne County State Bank of St. Francis with the First National Bank of Goodland.

The St. Francis boys 440-yard relay team set a new school record at the Oberlin quad on April 4. Keith Zweygardt, Lenny Weber, Curtis Confer and Mike Kimmel set the record with the time of 47.4. The La Fiesta, St. Francis' newest restaurant, will hold its grand opening Thursday, Friday and Saturday. It is located on College Street near Washington Street and has been completely remodeled as a Mexican food restaurant.

a long sought after retirement. The Cheyenne County Commissioners have decided to go back to meeting twice a month, on the 15th and on the last working day of the month.

30 years ago - 1979 Milton Lampe was re-elected mayor of St. Francis in the general election in a close race. Dotty Lewis was re-elected to the city council and John Grace also was elected to the council.

The spring sale at Mills Ranch averaged \$1,546 on 60 bulls. The top 12 bulls sold for an average of \$3,580.

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Moments With Mila

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month.

By Mila Bandel



County Health Nurse

The statistics can feel overwhelming. In 2006, an estimated 905,000 children in the United States were found to be victims of child abuse and neglect. However, child abuse and neglect can be prevented. State and local governments, community organizations, and private citizens take action every day to protect children, you can help.

Increasingly, concerned citizens and organizations are realizing that the best way to prevent child abuse is to help parents develop the skills and identify the resources they need to understand and meet their children's emotional, physical, and developmental needs and protect their children from harm.

How can you help? Parenting is one of the toughest and most important jobs in America, and we all have a stake in ensuring that parents have access to the resources and support they need to be successful. Entire communities play a role in helping families find the strength they need to raise safe, healthy and productive children.

Here are some things you can do:

- Get to know your neighbors. Problems seem less overwhelming when support is nearby.
- Help a family under stress. Offer to baby sit, help with chores and errands, or suggest resources in the community that can help.
- Reach out to children in the community. A smile or a word

of encouragement can mean a lot whether it comes from a parent or a community member.

• Be an active community member. Lend a hand at the local school, community or faith-based organizations, or other places where families and children are supported.

• Learn how to recognize and report signs of child abuse and neglect.

Resources on the Child Welfare Information Gateway Website include:

- Child Abuse and Neglect...www.childwelfare.gov/can/
- Identifying Child Abuse and Neglect...www.childwelfare.gov/can/identifying/
- Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect...www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/
- Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect...www.childwelfare.gov/responding/reporting.cfm

Honor Roll

New and renewed Herald subscriptions: Ana Enfield, Windsor, Colo.; Merlyn Hilt, Lindsay; Linda Carmichael, Lakewood, Colo.; Lyle Lukas, Wray, Colo.; Bill Wilson Accounting, St. Francis; Cathy Brunswig, Fort Collins, Colo.; Mrs. Alice Felker, Sacramento, Calif.;



GOD SAYS
They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

Titus 1:16

The Saint Francis Herald

(USPS 475-960)

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Casey's Comments

By Casey McCormick



scmcormick@nwkansas.com A frightening trend is occurring in America. Major city newspapers are going under.

This is due to a drop in advertising revenues and the increase of Internet use by more and more adults.

Perhaps this is the way of a free market economy and the change should be accepted as inevitable. But there is something that really worries me, both as a newspaper man and a citizen.

Sure websites can report the news and in a faster manner. You

don't have to wait for your paper to come out. But there is a downfall to Internet reporting.

Papers rely on reporters who use several sources to get the story as accurate as possible. Even then, follow up calls are made before an article goes to print.

In addition, stories are proofed by editors and checked for accuracy.

Who can say that the same diligence will come from the Internet?

This is not to say the newspa-

per's bias does not come through, but credibility is what keeps readers trusting their news source.

I'm bothered that the watchfulness that has exposed corrupt individuals, groups and organizations may disappear. And the thoroughness of big city coverage will become a thing of the past.

Will the Internet continue to play the roll of watch dog for our society?

Church of Christ
332-2380, Pars. 332-3424
502 W. Spencer
Norman Morrow - Minister
Bible Class 11 a.m.
Morning Worship 10 a.m.
Wed. Bible Study 7 p.m.

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church
625 S. River • 332-2680
Fr. Roger Meitl
Sunday Mass 11:00 a.m.
Weekday Mass 8 a.m.
Confessions Sat. 4-4:30

First Baptist Church
2nd & Scott • 332-3921
J.W. Glidewell, Pastor
Sunday School 9:30 a.m.
Worship 10:30 a.m.
Sunday Evening Service 6:30 p.m.,
Wed. AWANA Club,
6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

United Methodist Church
Church Office 332-2292,
Church 332-2254,
512 S. Scott
Pastor Morita Truman
Early Bird Service 8:30 a.m.
Sunday School 9:30 a.m.
Worship 10:30 a.m.

Salem Lutheran Church
332-3002
Pastor Chris Farmer
Sunday School 10 a.m.
Morning Worship 11 a.m.

St. Francis Community Church
332-3150
204 N. Quincy Street
www.sfccfamily.com
Pastor: David Butler
Sunday School 9:15 a.m.
Worship Service 10:30 a.m.
Potluck & Communion -
Every 2nd Sunday
Wednesday Bible Study 7 p.m.

Seventh-Day Adventist Church
785-890-5718 • 3rd & Adams
Pastor Jerry Nowack
Sabbath School 9:30
Morning Worship 10:45

Solid Rock Baptist Church
412 S. Denison
Welcomes You!
Pastor Allen Coon
Sunday School 9:30 a.m.
Worship 10:30
Prayer Meeting, Wed
7:30 p.m.

Peace Lutheran Church, AFLC
202 N. College
Pastor Ken Hart
332-2928 Pars. 332-2312
Sunday School 9:30 a.m.
Worship 10:30 a.m.
Sunday Eve. Bible Study 7 p.m.
Communion 1st Sunday
of the Month

First Christian Church
Pastor Jeff Landers
332-2956 • 118 E. Webster
Bible Fellowship 9:15 a.m.
Church Service 10:15 a.m.

St. Francis Equity

Saint Francis Herald

Knodel Funeral Home
202 S. Benton • St. Francis
785-332-3131

