

Let's take care of the equipment in our park

The city of St. Francis is a city filled with people who have pride – people with pride in their schools, hospital, museum and the downtown area lined with trees. There is also pride seen in the parks – from the roadside park on the highway to the city park and Sawhill Park in downtown St. Francis.

Whether it is the well-kept yards, store fronts or streets, it is through the efforts of the city's residents – their sense of hometown duty and camaraderie.

Several years ago, the St. Francis Area Chamber of Commerce saw the need for safe, colorful playground equipment for children.

People volunteered through organizations, school classes and individuals to make the playground project a success. There were only a few pieces of equipment to begin with but, on almost every nice day (and some not-so-nice days) there were kids playing there.

Phase two was finished this spring. Benches were set for parents and plenty of pea gravel

was spread for safety.

Through the summer, the new playground equipment was used plenty. However, not only small children were using it but some older, too-big-to-use-it children were also seen sitting and swinging on it.

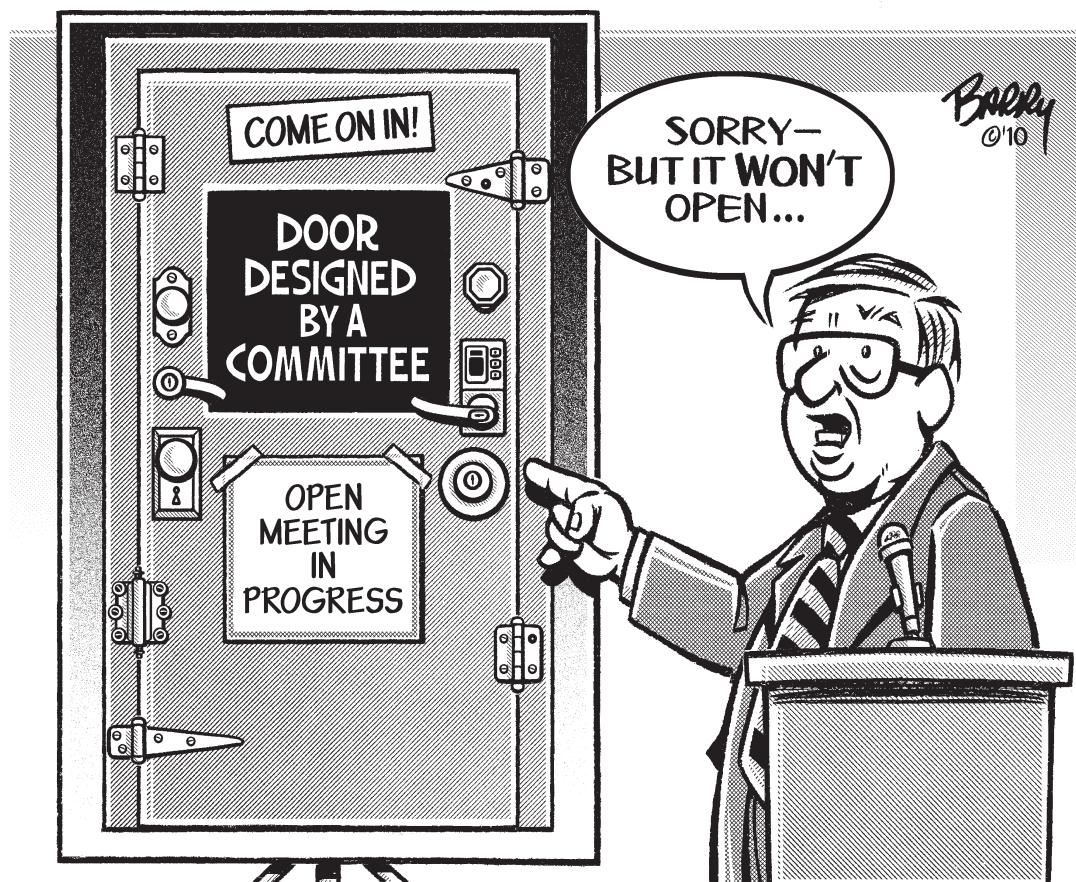
The equipment was bought for the younger children and it is made for small children. It cost \$13,000.

This equipment could not have been possible if it were not for the many people who pitched in and helped with the fundraiser. Almost everyone, whether they are adults or students, were helping at some time.

Yes, that makes us all owners of the equipment and it makes us all responsible for seeing that the equipment is kept in good shape for children to play on for year's to come.

Everyone needs to consider your size and, if you are too big, make sure you are not one of those people using the kid's equipment.

—Karen Krien



Don't increase taxes to give people raises

The nation remains in the grip of a three-year recession. Unemployment hovers near 10 percent, growth is stagnant, recovery slow. Economists talk about a possible "double dip."

In business, many have lost their jobs. Those lucky enough to have one probably haven't had a raise in three years. Many would like to have those jobs.

Times are hard, yes, but across Kansas, perhaps across the country, public employees are demanding – and getting – raises. Many times, city councils and county commissions are raising taxes to get the money.

In the middle of the worse economy, many say, since the Great Depression, who has money to pay higher taxes? Well, everyone, if you listen to the public employees demanding raises, budget increases, guaranteed jobs.

How did these people become so entitled? And where do they think the money to pay them more will come from? The unemployed?

Public employees have it pretty good. They may not make as much as factory workers or others with good unions, but then a lot of those jobs have gone overseas. Public jobs, for the most part, can't be exported.

Public employees, by and large, have better insurance and get more holidays than anyone else. We wonder how many of our readers in private business get a full 12 days off each year – other than bank employees, whose workplaces must be closed by federal regulation on holidays.

How many of you out there have full Blue Cross coverage? Have a state-funded retirement plan that allows you to retire early and take another job, while collecting a full pension?

(Forget for now the fact that many state pension funds, which cover city, county and school workers also, are badly underfunded and in

danger of collapse. It'll just take another tax increase to fix that.)

Public employees have more job security, under civil service rules, than most in private business, especially at the small businesses that pay much of the tax load.

Public employees have it pretty good – but they're not satisfied with that, apparently. They want more. Whether anyone else can afford to pay is not their concern.

In Kansas, for instance, when schools faced layoffs, teachers and others banded together to force the state to raise taxes. Can't blame them. But who can afford to pay a 19 percent increase in the sales tax?

In a situation like this, an economic crisis of major proportion, that any government body would consider money for raises may seem absurd. Still, most are. Most will approve raises and push them through, raising taxes to pay the bill.

Voters ought to call for an accounting. We're not saying public salaries should be cut, but raises ought to be out of the question right now. Tax increases, especially the property tax, should not even be considered.

But until voters get mad, this will keep happening. Voters seldom go to budget hearings where these things are discussed. They don't get mad until the tax bills come out at the end of the year, and by then, the decisions have been made.

If you're happy with all that, fine. If not, maybe it's time to find out if your city council, your county, your school district plans to raise spending, employee compensation or taxes this year.

If enough people ask, things might change. But it has to start with voters and taxpayers.

—Steve Haynes

Hangin' With Marge

By Margaret Bucholtz



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One day I was visiting with one of my daughter-in-laws and expressed to her that I would love to have the grandchildren during the summer. I told her that Kurt wanted me to have them one at a time for a week, but I knew that as many as we have that would mean company all summer long.

Dina suggested that I start having them for a week and call it "Granny Camp." I decided that fair week would be the perfect time.

Kurt and I went to Wichita and I asked if the kids were coming home with me and both of them said, "No." They would come if their parents could come.

However when Cooper got there from Kansas City he started telling them how much fun it is to go to Granny's and he talked them into it. Darrin and Dina wouldn't let me bring Porter because they didn't think he was old enough.

On Sunday morning we traded vehicles with Darrin so that all the kids could be in car seats. Then we started out.

The ride home wasn't quite like I thought. I figured they would all fall asleep but that was a joke.

First I heard Tucker and Cooper in the far back and they were talking about toe jam. Toe jam, now that word I hadn't heard for several years. Cooper, who is a few years

older, was telling Tucker all about it and how it is the stuff that gets between your toes. Tucker said, "Toe jam, you don't eat that so why is it jam?"

Then at least a couple a times every hour they would ask "How many more hours till we get there?" Kurt would tell them and they would all groan and asked why it has to be so far.

Finally Sawyer, who is 4 years old asked how many more hours and Kurt told her 3. She groaned put her head in her hands and said, "I need chocolate!"

Now I wonder where she got that from.

Casey's Comments

By Casey McCormick



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It's so easy to let your emotions get the best of you.

I know that when I'm hit with something I find offensive, my first reaction is to retaliate in similar fashion. Most times, once I've had a chance to think about it, there is a better course of action to take.

A good example of this type of thing can be seen with Reverend Terry Jones. All the news has talked about the last couple weeks was

how he wished to burn the Muslim holy book in retaliation for the 9th anniversary of the 911 attacks.

At first it seemed to almost make sense. Aren't the readers of the Koran the same people who hijacked the planes that terrible day? We see them burning effigies of our presidents and our flag anytime they get upset with our nation. What's wrong with giving them a little dose of their own medicine?

I heard a local individual say

this the other day, "We need to remember history."

Hum..., the past has all sorts of examples of burnings. Hitler had piles of books burned in the streets of Berlin. The Ku Klux Klan gave us wonderful images of crosses burning as a sign to their enemies. The flame has been used to destroy many things that go against someone's distorted views.

But there is something un-American about this. Aren't we a nation where people came so they could express their individual beliefs? Doesn't this country know tolerance for all?

It is sad to see the media give so much time to someone like Rev. Jones. He sure doesn't represent what's right with this great land.

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GOD SAYS Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me. Isaiah 46:9

The Saint Francis Herald (USPS 475-960) A Century of Service to Cheyenne County P.O. Box 1050, St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050 Published each Thursday by Haynes Publishing Co., 310 W. Washington, St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050. Entered as periodicals matter at the post office at St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050, and at additional offices. Official newspaper of Cheyenne County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, Colorado Press Association and Inland Press Association. Subscriptions: One year \$38 (tax included) in Cheyenne and adjacent counties; \$42 (tax included) elsewhere in Kansas; \$48 elsewhere in the U.S. Foreign subscriptions, \$28 extra per year (except APO/FPO). POSTMASTER: Send change of address to Box 1050, St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050

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