

Opinion

Health news service might not be unbiased

rough-and-tumble world where every town might have half a dozen newspapers, each with its own (or its owners') point of view, but culminated in the established, supposedly unbiased era we live in today.

Newspapers pride themselves on their independence and their supposedly unbiased look at the world around them. And while we all know the system is hardly perfect, that there's no such thing as a total lack of bias, it does work pretty well most of the time.

In its heyday, the business was not unlike today's Internet. Any fool with a press and some type could start a newspaper, and more than a few did. As it became more of an industry, however, it became both harder to start a newspaper – bigger, faster presses were a lot more expensive than the hand press of the 1830s – and harder to keep one going.

The industry consolidated and grew to the point where newspapers dominated the political and public conversation, but at the same time there were fewer and fewer voices. Editors responded by firmly establishing the independence of the newsroom, insulating it from the supposedly corrupting influence of advertisers and politicians.

When there was only one paper in most towns, after all, the responsibility was great to ensure that everyone was treated fairly and that all voices were heard. And that has worked out pretty well, too.

All of which makes it hard to explain the rise of something called the KHI News Service, a supposedly independent operation run by the Kansas Health Institute. The Institute itself is a little bit of a mystery, a "think tank" and advocacy organization established by the Kansas Health Foundation. And if you're getting a little tired of wading through the layers, take a breath and hang on.

The foundation was created by the United Methodist Church with money from the sale of Wichita's Wesley Medical Center to a private operator nearly 30 years ago. The church put a

The American press has a long history of \$200 million endowment into the foundation, independence, a tradition which began in a originally known as the Wesley Medical En-

> So the Wichita-based foundation begat the institute, housed in Topeka near policy makers and the Legislature. And the institute formed the news service, which lately has been pushing its "independent" status. At the same time, the foundation has branched out into offering commentary on heath issues.

> Some respected newspapers have accepted stories from the service, which hired several veteran Statehouse reporters at a time when the papers were cutting back on Topeka coverage. More recently, some have questioned the service's independence, especially in light of the commentary, or editorial, operation at the

> Certainly, the service is not an independent news source in the same sense as the Associated Press, a cooperative formed by newspapers to cover national and international news. No one tells AP how to cover the news, though the owner-members certainly set the budget and priorities.

But the institute still puts up most of the budget for its offspring, the news service.

So how's a reader to evaluate a news story from the institute? (These do not appear in our papers, by the way.) With care, we'd say, because the organization does have a viewpoint. It's up to each reader to evaluate the material.

The best advice is the old line, "consider the source," and this source has a bias toward public-health goals set by an activist few. Good or bad, these are things we could all disagree on.

A good example is a recent study by the institute trumpeted in Kansas newspapers that supposedly shows that the state's ban on indoor smoking has not hurt restaurant or bar trade. An independent review by one Kansas newspaper showed that the study's contention that sales have held up fails to consider inflation over the same years.

We'd say it's a case of "let the reader be-

Casey

McCormick

- Steve Haynes



Fund-raisers planned for 125th birthday celebration **Letter to the Editor**

Letter to the Editor:

There is a growing air of excitement as plans evolve and come Birthday Party. The party will be held on June 14, 15 and 16.

Many fun events are being planned for the weekend that should appeal to all ages.

Our goal, said Robin Burr, one of the organizers, is to make the weekend a fun, low cost weekend to all participants. As with any event there are ex-

penses. In order to assist with the cost, several fundraising events are being planned. The funds raised will go toward the expenses for the Celebrate St. Francis party.

May 11, a Community-wide Garage Sale will be held in conjunction with the popular St. Francis car show. It will be at the grade school playground from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. The committee is seeking donated items to be sold at the sale.

If you would like to donate items, please contact a committee member by May 4. Also, plan on shopping with us that day.

A 50-50 cash drawing is in the works. The money will be split 50-50 between the birthday celebration and the winning ticket holder.

Tickets may be purchased from True Value, Majestic, Bumper to Bumper, Cuppa Joe's, or any fundraising committee member. The drawing will take place on June 15 Saturday evening of the celebration. You do not need to be present

Check the website or facebook page to see the drawing fund growth and to see the events being planned.

We are also seeking donations. Four levels for donating have been established. They are as follows:

together for the St. Francis 125th Silver - \$10 to \$124; 125 Elite take to Majestic Service in care of -\$125; Gold -\$126 to \$500; - Diamond -\$501+

> We will be recognizing businesses and individuals for their generosity. Individual names/business will be listed and recognized throughout the weekend of the celebration. If you wish to remain anonymous, please state so with your donation and we will honor your request.

The committee members will be contacting area businesses and individuals in the next few weeks to seek assistance with the Celebrate Francis and 20 percent will be held St. Francis Party. We are established as a non-profit organization.

If you wish to make a donation, checks should be made out to: "Celebrate St. Francis." Mail donations to: Robin Burr, PO Box 286, St. Francis, KS 67756 or drop donations to any committee member or Kary Meyer.

We are looking forward to visiting with the people and businesses in our area in the next few weeks. It will be the BEST 125 birthday party because of all the wonderful people that have a connection to St. Francis!

If funds should exceed the amount needed for the expenses, then 80 percent of that money will go into the swimming pool fund that has been established by the city of St. back for future St. Francis Heritage

Fundraising Committee members: Robin Burr

Kelsey Andrist Cara Hunt Dennon Flemming

Daughter cancels parent's newspaper

Letter to the Editor:

Since my parents, Clarence and Ruth Zimbelman, are no longer alive, I have decided to terminate had faded in the fog of dementia, their subscription to The Saint Francis Herald.

Although they moved away my mom and dad maintained their subscription to *The Herald* for the entire 66 years of their marriage. They genuinely looked forward to its arrival every week; it helped them to maintain a tie to both their

heritage and their many living rel-

atives over the years. Even after my mom's mind I could still evoke a spark sometimes while reading her a story from your newspaper. In recent from St. Francis in the late 1940s, years, she particularly enjoyed the two stories that you did about Dr. Peck and Mr. Greene, the high school principal.

> Margot LaPanse Superior, Colo.

Casey's Comments-

My folks thought that Walter

term, "evolved," when they con- Korea. He tells us that the Ameriveniently change course on a line can media is making a much bigof reasoning. Therefore I'll state ger deal out of the Korean Mis-

There was a day when I be- that my trust in what is portrayed lieved what the evening news had as "news" has evolved into skepticism to say the least.

A case in point, I have a step-Cronkite was giving it to them brother who is teaching English sile Crisis than it is. straight. So why shouldn't I after at a school that is about a four hour train ride (two hours by bul-The Liberals like to use the let train) south of Seoul, South Kim Jong-un. But his blustering

Honor Roll

Johnson, El Dorado; Sheryl Pepas, Goodland; Laura Robbins, St. Francis; Shawn Alsup, Sterling,

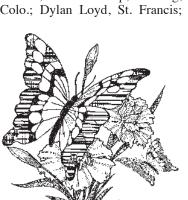
scriptions: Steve and Leanna Mitchell, Burlington, Colo.; John the underground bomb shelters Kamla, Bird City; Dustin Dunn, are on campus, which again is Mesa, Ariz.; Thelma Sherlock, Wray. Colo.; Dennis Merklin, standard practice. St. Francis; Victoria Clapper, St.

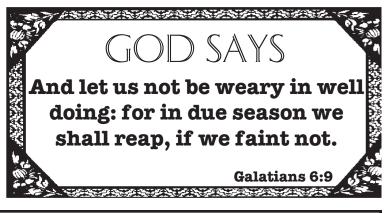
mccormickcasey@rocketmail.com

Sure the people of South Korea are concerned and wary of and bravado are nothing new. For them this is the third generation of dangerous and unstable leadership from across their boarder.

My relation says that Americans over there have been told to keep their passports handy, meanwhile New and renewed Herald sub- Dawn Zimbal, St. Francis; Harold students and faculty know where

But the panic they will leave to the major U.S. networks.







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 elsewhere in the U.S. Foreign subscriptions, \$28 extra per year (except APO/

adjacent counties; \$42 (tax included) elsewhere in Kansas; \$48 FPO).POSTMASTER: Sendchange of address to Box 1050, St. Francis, Kan.

Nor'West Newspapers

8:30 a.m.- noon - 1:00-5:00 p.m. Monday - Friday (785)332-3162 Fax - (785)332-3001E-mail - sf.herald@nwkansas.com

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1st Sunday of the month Morning Mass 8:30 am Sunday Mass 10:30 a.m. Weekday Mass 8:00 a.m. Confessions Sat. 4-4:30 Salem Lutheran Church

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Catholic Church

625 S. River • 332-2680

Fr. Carlos Ruiz Santos

332-3002 **Pastor Chris Farmer** Sunday School 10 a.m. Morning Worship 11 a.m. Communion 3rd Sunday

Seventh-Day **Adventist Church** 423-650-5663 · 3rd & Adams **Pastor James McCurdy** Sabbath School 9:30 Morning Worship 10:45

> First Christian Church **Pastor Jeff Landers** 332-2956 • 118 E. Webster Church Service 10 a.m.

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.

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.

Peace Lutheran Church, AFLC 202 N. College **Pastor Randy Nelson** Church 332-2928 Parsonage 332-2312 Sunday School 9:30 a.m. Worship 10:30 a.m. Communion 1st Sunday



St. Francis Equity

St. Francis Herald