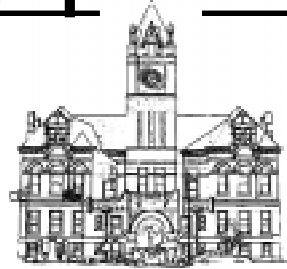


# Opinion



## Letter Drop

- Our Readers Sound Off

## Local coverage questioned

To The Free Press:

I would like to take a minute to thank Pam Augustine for her article on the K-18 baseball team at the state tournament on Saturday.

Also to thank Kathy Arnberger for her article on the 12 and under baseball team's results in their tournament in Hays.

They were both written well and were very informative on what is happening locally with some of our young people.

Now after having said that, I also want to say how sad it is that parents have to be the ones who write the articles about sports events in the area. Silly me, I thought that was why newspapers had sportswriters.

With all the activities going on during the summer it should be no problem doing a story about a baseball game, softball game, swim meet, junior golf tournament or anything once in a while. At least put the scores of these events in the paper.

But when was the last time there was anything about some of these and not what the Rockies or Royals are doing put in the paper? Those teams are national news.

The Colby Free Press is a local newspaper. Please cover local events!

Robyn Rogers  
Colby  
(Letter #107)

About those letters . . .

The *Free Press* encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, if at all possible, and should include a telephone number and an address. These are used for verification of the writer only. If, however, you want your address and telephone number to appear with your letter, please ask us to do so when you submit your letter, or include a note with your letter. Most importantly, all letters must include a signature. Unsigned letters cannot be published. We reserve the right to edit for clarity and length, and, likewise, reserve the right to reject letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive or libelous. You can expect your letter to appear in print within 24-48 hours of receipt. Letters to the Free Press allow readers to become engaged in public debate on topics they deem important. Please consider sharing your thoughts with the family of Colby Free Press readers. Thank you.

## Addresses of elected officials:

**U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 302 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-4774

**U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-6521

**U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 1519 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715

**State Rep. Jim Morrison**, State Capitol Building Rm. 174-W, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7676 e mail: jmmorriso@ink.org web:http://www.idir.net/~jmmorriso/

**State Sen. Stan Clark**, State Capitol Building Rm. 449-N, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7399 e mail: sclark@ink.org

## COLBY FREE PRESS

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Colby, Kan. 67701

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State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout Excellence, Column Writing, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography.

Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published daily, every Monday through Friday, except the day observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Haynes Publishing Co., 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE is paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday.

MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news credited to it or not otherwise herein. Member Kansas Press Association, Inland Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

**SUBSCRIPTION RATES:** In Colby by carrier: 4 months \$32, 8 months \$47, 12 months \$64. By mail with in Colby and the nine-county region of Thomas, Sheridan, Decatur, Rawlins, Cheyenne, Sherman, Wallace, Logan and Gove counties: 4 months \$44, 8 months \$56, 12 months \$72. Other Kansas counties and surrounding states: 4 months \$51, 8 months \$61, 12 months \$75. All other states, \$75, 12 months.

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## There's a first time for everything

In life, there is ALWAYS a first time for everything. Many times we don't always remember our firsts...things like first step, first tooth, first hair cut, but as you take a walk down memory lane with me, I am sure there are many firsts you will remember. Part of living a full life is experiencing new things. One of the things that makes me who I am, is the fact I love to try new things. Many times I may not like them, but I am always willing to try.

For instance, did I try water skiing??? Yes. Did I like water skiing??? No. Many other things can fall into the tried but didn't like category — line dancing, snipe hunting, hackey sack, expresso, snorkling, capri pants, horseback riding, blond hair, tofu, eating goat, the Tower of Doom, and yogurt.

On the other hand there are many things I have tried and loved so much, they are now a part of who I am. Things like photography, football (spectator of course), asparagus, cowboy boots, traveling, mancala, cross-stitch, playing the piano, writing, NASCAR (Go Junior), golf, roller coasters, paté, and swing dancing.

I remember one of my big firsts — the first time I was not an only child any more. Yes, in June of '81, my reign of being the only Hawkins child was over. My first and only sibling Michael appeared on the scene. At the time, what a cool thing. Very vividly I remember the first time I sat at the edge of the hospital bed, dressed in a small hospital gown, and looked down on the new family edition.

Wow, what a first! The problem was, I didn't fully comprehend at the age of five how many other firsts would soon follow — first time sharing parent's attention, first diaper change, first time spitting up on



Michelle L. Hawkins

### • Pursuit of a Richer Life

my shoulder, first argument, first punch, first invasion of privacy, and first "she's looking at me".

On the flip side of the negatives, I have had a ton of positive firsts with my brother. First time he drank a bottle and fell asleep in my arms, the first time he said my name, first apologies after fighting, first time filling the sand box with water, first time playing baseball, first time sitting next to him while he drove a car, and first adult conversation. This list could go on and I am looking forward to all the other firsts we will now share as adults.

First car. Everyone remembers their first car. The one inanimate object you treasure most. Doesn't matter if it is a rusted out Yugo, when you get your first car you will stand out in the driveway for hours washing, waxing, vacuuming and using an entire bottle of Armor-all, to make it look as spiffy as possible so you can waste a tank of gas cruising up and down Main.

My first car was a white 1990 Grand Am. I loved that car and drove it until I was a junior in college. After taking on car payments again, I wish I would have driven it longer. I was convinced it was time for me to get a car of my own when I was a senior in high

school. I had worked at my first job, the good ol' Sir-loin Stockade, for two years and was ready for the responsibility.

I took that car on my first road trip by myself. It was the spring of 1994 and I was ready to look at my perspective college, Southwestern Assemblies of God University in Waxahachie, Texas. What a trip. My first time out on the open road, driving through big cities, and proving I was adult enough for the task. This same trip was also the first time I decided to drive down a one-way highway the wrong way in Dallas. Not a fun adventure, but one marked in my mind forever. It came close to being my first heart-attack as well.

As I drove onto the campus for the first time and realized I was ready to move away from home and be one my own, it was a scary feeling, but yet a sense of "rightness" also prevailed.

A car and college are probably two of the biggest firsts a teenager can have as they start down the road to life. My road has come across many other big firsts — first college roommate, first spring break, first birthday away from home, first apartment, first Christmas away from home, first long distance phone bill, first big job, first dinner party in your own home... and the list could continue.

As you remember all of your firsts while reading mine, join me in looking forward to having many more.

\*\*\*\*\*

*Hawkins is Family Page and Religion Page editor, and also a general assignment reporter/photographer for the Colby Free Press. Her column appears on Tuesdays.*

## Expressions of concern, vague promises

John Hanna

### • Kansas Politics

With the primary election fast approaching, Republicans voters still don't have a clear idea of how the four gubernatorial candidates would fund public schools.

The candidates agree the state isn't spending enough money on its public schools. They also agree the state's 1992 school finance law isn't working.

But as a group, they have provided few specifics about how they intend to provide more money for schools in a fair manner.

On the Aug. 6 GOP ballot are State Treasurer Tim Shallenburger; Wichita Mayor Bob Knight; Senate President Dave Kerr, of Hutchinson; and Dan Bloom, a businessman and former Eudora school superintendent.

The winner advances to the Nov. 5 general election to face Democrat Kathleen Sebelius, the state insurance commissioner; Libertarian Dennis Hawver, an Ozawie attorney; and Reform Party nominee Ted Pettibone, a St. Marys businessman. Each of the four Republican candidates has expressed strong support for public education and a desire to improve schools. All have said good schools are important to the state's future.

Each tells voters he can deal with the problems inherent in school finance.

For example, Bloom points to his 17 years as a superintendent.

"Let's put somebody in office who knows about education," he said recently.

Kerr has noted that he first ran for the Senate in 1984 on a pro-education platform, and supported tax increases this year to avoid big cuts in education spending.

"Economic development and education go hand in hand," he said. "Kansans want us to fund a suitable education."

Knight portrays himself as the product of a public school and public university education.

"I will not balance our financial problems on the backs of our children," Knight said.

As for Shallenburger, he said, "We will fix the school finance formula."

The state spends about \$2.3 billion on public schools, distributing \$3,890 per pupil. Many education officials don't think the state provides enough money; others believe the formula is flawed.

Bloom has proposed increasing property taxes to help pay for schools, and has said the state hasn't provided extra money. But he hasn't said how much extra money the state should be spending.

Shallenburger also has said he doesn't think the state is spending enough on schools and that not enough of the money is getting into the classroom.

He believes the state should do multiyear appropriations for schools and get away from a strictly per-pupil distribution of money.

He says he wants to give districts more local con-

trol.

Shallenburger also has promised that his administration would initiate a study of what a suitable education costs, then attempt to finance it. He has suggested that school districts could free up enough administrative money to finance a suitable education.

But he hasn't said exactly what moving away from a per-pupil funding formula would mean.

And the Legislature already has a report from consultants that said the state should be spending \$4,650 per student to provide a suitable education.

Knight and Kerr are even less specific.

Kerr said the state faces two basic problems with school finance — that state spending per pupil is too low and that the 1992 law takes too much money away from schools as they lose students.

The Senate president has said the suggested \$4,650 per pupil is a good goal, but hasn't said how quickly the state should reach it or pay for it.

Knight has promised to appoint a task force to study school finance. He has said his running mate, House Speaker Kent Glasscock, of Manhattan, would be its chairman.

He said recently that the state needs a "solid base" in funding and more flexibility for local districts.

"You have to have some of our best thinkers in education and in finance to redraft something that confronts the realities of our contemporary society," Knight said recently.

So far, voters have had to settle for the candidates' expressions of concern and vague promises.

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*Correspondent John Hanna has covered Kansas politics and government since 1987.*

## Doonesbury

• Gary Trudeau

