

Opinion



Free Press Viewpoint

Hey voters, better pay attention

Kansas legislators from Liberal to Atchison return to work Monday to begin the 2006 legislative session.

We need to make sure those men and women work, too.

More automatic than the sun rising in the east, every state legislature spends time on the budget and ways to create incentives for companies to relocate or grow in Kansas. But with a majority of the population and industry base in the state's east side, a majority of that work will benefit what is happening in Wichita, Kansas City and places in between.

It would be wonderful if something in one of those bills encouraged a business to consider places west of Hays. Some Kansas people think the state stops at Hays.

With high speed Internet connections, plenty of room to build and people looking for work, who says a small employer can't start up around here? Rather than continue the disgusting trend of outsourcing jobs to China, an American company's public relations would soar if it opened even a small branch facility in our part of the state all because Kansas legislators helped them do that.

Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer and Rep. Jim Morrison, our local legislators, said they expect health care costs to be on the agenda. Not only should legislators again look at that, but consider what can be done to curtail the growing problem of people using hospital emergency rooms as their primary physician. That hurts the hospitals in so many ways.

There are many more issues.

Despite the nationwide attention, Kansas legislators should just leave the entire intelligent design debate alone. There is no need to get involved in something that is to be handled by the state department of education.

Besides, Kansas public education will not fall apart because of the potential inclusion of intelligent design at every school district. Contrary to some people's beliefs, the world will not end because students are told that some thing that can't be explained created the universe.

As always, the legislature has plenty to do during the next few months. Voters also have plenty to do as well, including making sure the right things are done for Kansas.

— John Van Nostrand, publisher

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail jvannostrand@nwkansan.com or pdecker@nwkansan.com.

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What's a parent to do?



Patty Decker

● Deep Thoughts

After reading a brochure printed nearly 50 years ago, I've come to the conclusion that times really haven't changed that much when it comes to parenting.

The booklet titled, "Code for Parents of Teen-Agers," came to me via a good friend, who thought I might be interested in reading it.

The subject matter dealt with dating, diversion, dress, drinking and driving and offered workable guidelines to assist parents in preparing their young people to become productive, useful adults.

When I was shown the booklet, I immediately asked if I could borrow it to see what kind of literature was out there when my own parents were raising us. While I laughed at some of the ideas about dress in those days, I couldn't help but think about the more deep-seeded messages the booklet contained on the problems parents faced five decades ago.

The question posed to parents at that time was — *Do we really need a teen-age code?* — The answer: *Yes.*

Following up on the question and answer, the booklet went on to say that teenage problems are usually those which must be coped with in the home...problems such as dating, diversion, dress, drinking and driving.

"These are problems the family inherits because they are *social problems*, created by pressures outside the home. Principle is often sacrificed because *everyone is doing it...*...because *we must have peace at any price*," so said the information.

If I had a nickel for every time I've heard my children tell me that "everyone is doing it," or thought about turning my back on the problem in order to avoid a conflict with my husband, Randy, I'd be monetarily a whole lot richer than I am now.

So what can parents do to offset this mounting pressure? That was the actual question posed 50 years ago and I think that's still the question today.

It's a fairly simple answer, but not that easy to do. I also believe the solution suggested so many years ago is the same one today. The solution hasn't changed one iota, which is to have first, *united thinking*, and second, *united action*.

In a word, the solution then was parents must agree first on the *principles* that should govern the conduct of our teen-agers and second on taking *action* in accord with those principles.

The brochure went on to explain that many parents felt handicapped back then by not al-

ways having a clearly formulated code of principles and by not having the assurance that other parents would cooperate in putting these principles in practice.

Sound familiar? Parents today are not unique from the generations before us. It sounded to me like they had many of the same challenges in getting "solidarity" with other parents of their time that we, as parents, have today.

It was truly fascinating as I continued to read. The first step in parenting was that everything starts with good parents and that they have the authority over their children. Since the brochure was distributed by a religious organization, one of the first ways to train them was in teaching through God's ways, which is the authority parents have over children.

Examples included teaching trust, helping them develop a sense of belonging in the family unit and sharing in responsibilities, training them to be good citizens and practicing justice and charity toward all — beginning in their own family.

Other suggestions included showing love, along with correcting them; being a good example to kids by avoiding profanity ourselves and not constantly quarreling; not expecting our children to worship God themselves if we fail to do so; looking upon each child as individuals; and helping children to understand that they must do what is right.

There were some good examples on teaching what is right conduct that had to do with cars, dating and recreation. Again, these are tough principles to hold on to, but I still think they apply as well today as they did years ago.

For instance, steady dating at 12 or 13 is not a wise thing because parents years ago thought that could lead to "difficulties." I think it still could today.

Back then, a number of high school students used intoxicants, according to the information. The suggestion then was to convince children why they shouldn't do this...again, I think that's still true today.

Even 50 years ago, the subject of teen-agers

having full freedom with the use of a car was discussed. The guidelines then were to explain to the teenager why this is a dangerous freedom and "sell them on rules that will protect them from danger."

Another area of concern was leaving children entirely free to seek recreation where, how and with whom, and as long as they please. The message was to convince them that there must be rules they are expected to obey.

There was just so much good information in this very old pamphlet, that it would take more length than what is allotted for a column. But, I will try to condense a few more highlights I found helpful.

Under the subject of diversion, also defined as recreation and social activities, the idea was not to squelch having a "good time," but rather to avoid dangers.

The principles associated with recreation to avoid dangers included making the home the primary center of recreation...where the whole family may share in it; or, enforcing rules in regard to times, places, activities and the companions of recreation outside the home.

Other recreational outlets suggested were constructive hobbies. Some of those could include good music, photography, spectator activities, movies and school-sponsored events.

This was a great book if for no other reason than to realize parents today have the same goal as parents did when I was a youngster. Every parent wants to be a good parent and parents need skills and practice.

What was really weird was the final thoughts for teen-agers only and it took me back to my teen-age years.

It read: *Teenagers are our favorite people. They're our fond memory of yesteryear, our great hope of tomorrow. And lest we sound sentimental — perish the thought — we're selfish. You, now we oldsters, will be making this old world the kind of place people live in a few years from now...and we like to think it will be a better place than it is now...thanks to you. So you can't blame us for taking such a special interest in YOU, your future and your present, on which so much depends.*

God bless our teenagers...and a personal thanks to all those parents out there for doing their best to make sure these young people take a useful place in society.

Decker is editor of the Free Press.

Your turn

You can make a difference

Tina Kersenbrock
American Cancer Society
Colby

What does hope mean to you?

To thousands of cancer survivors in Colby, hope comes every year in the form of a simple flower, the daffodil.

Daffodils, the first flowers of spring, symbolize an end to the dark days of winter and the beginning of brighter times ahead. To some cancer survivors, they represent the accomplishment of having beaten the disease for

another year; for others, the daffodil is a sign that we're always moving closer to a cure.

Daffodil Days is your opportunity to bring hope into the lives of friends and neighbors facing cancer. I urge you to join me in supporting the American Cancer Society Daffodil Days by ordering fresh-cut blooms or by going on step further and taking pre-orders at your workplace, church, school or organization.

Proceeds from the sale go to support the American Cancer Society's life saving programs, so when you participate in Daffodil

Days, you are doing more than just buying flowers — you're paving the way for revolutionary new cancer research; making sure someone can find a ride to his or her cancer treatment; and working to finally put an end to cancer and to improve the lives of people who have already been diagnosed.

For more information or to volunteer, please call your local American Cancer Society Daffodil Days Coordinator Cathy Harrison at 460-2501. Your support can and will make a difference. Together, we will make hope bloom this spring.

Doonesbury

● Gary Trudeau

