

Opinion



Free Press Viewpoint

Miles of money

By John Van Nostrand
It's ironic the amount of funding for Kansas public education was threatened by lawsuits, but how those funds are specifically spent may not be questioned enough.
Take this week for example.
Friday, Colby High's football team travels to Concordia for a game. By way of Interstate 70 and U.S. Highway 81, that is about a 500 mile round trip. Those kids will ride in a diesel powered bus that gets six miles to the gallon. The price of fuel constantly fluctuates, but according to Colby School District records on Friday, the school paid \$125 for 48 gallons of diesel. That's about \$2.60 a gallon.
Do the math for the trip to Concordia. It's going to be expensive. You would think those who thought what was proposed to fund public education was too much would use Colby's game as an example of how money is unnecessarily spent on public education.
The question to ask is, "Does Colby have to play Concordia?"
Football schedules are made a couple of years in advance. Schools strive to play similar-sized schools (Concordia is also 4A), which is honorable, but with the growing pressure on schools to save a buck, some things must be changed — including athletic schedules.
It's common practice, for example, for Colby and Concordia to alternate who gets to travel to the other place each year.
All teams want to win, but if those traditional opponent gets good and you don't, losing makes the expensive trip hurt more. After so many years, one of the teams, probably the loser, might want to break the agreement and find somebody else to play.
It would be great if Colby could create some more regional rivalries to avoid paying so much for one game.
Can Colby ever play the likes of Burlington, Colo., McCook, Neb., or Scott City on a regular basis? Regional rivalries can mean more fans will show up which means more ticket revenue. It's about 70 miles one-way to Burlington than the 250 to Concordia.
Years ago the NCAA's Western Athletic Conference expanded to 16 teams from Louisiana to Hawaii. The oversized league did not last long because school administrators realized the gigantic expense of road games for all the sports. Some member schools eventually broke away to create another conference and both leagues were better geographically aligned. Remember, NCAA schools work with millions of dollars for sports and those schools found a way to save a buck.
Colby's trip to Concordia is probably a drop in the proverbial bucket. Colby's entire transportation budget is about \$300,000 a year.
But if we are worried about financing all aspects of public education, Kansas must take some serious steps to find ways to get more drops in the bucket including athletic schedules.
— *John Van Nostrand is publisher of the Colby Free Press*

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COLBY FREE PRESS
155 W. Fifth (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
Colby, Kan. 67701

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 every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and 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 \$40, 8 months \$56, 12 months \$74. By mail with in Colby and the nine-county region of Thomas, Sheridan, Decatur, Rawlins, Cheyenne, Sherman, Wallace, Logan and Gove counties: 4 months \$53, 8 months \$65, 12 months \$82. Other Kansas counties: 4 months \$60, 8 months \$70, 12 months \$85. All other states, \$85, 12 months.

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Who is in your wallet?

It happens to people in every walk of life.
It costs consumers and businesses billions in losses every year.
It strikes when a person least expects it.
What is It?
Identity theft.
A corporate attorney I recently met shared her story about being a victim of identity theft and she is offering people tips on how to protect themselves. Most of the tips are simple and ones I'd never thought about.
For instance, when ordering check blanks don't list your first name, rather only put your initials and last name on them. If somebody steals your checkbook they won't know if you sign your checks with just your initials or your full first name. Your bank will know how you sign your checks and it's the one who needs to know, not others.
She also said do not sign the back of your credit cards. Instead, write "Photo I.D. Required" in the spot where your signature should go.
Speaking of checks and credits cards, the attorney advises not writing your complete account number on the "for" or "memo" line. Instead, she said, just write the last four numbers of your account.
The credit card company knows the rest of your number and anyone handling your check won't have access to your full account number.
If you have a work phone number, list it on your checks or any other place you need to disclose a phone number. If you have a post office box, use that instead of your home address. If you don't have a post office box, list your work address and



Jan Katz Ackerman
• From Where I stand

never put your Social Security number on your check. You can add it asked, but if it's printed, anyone can get it and use it.
Here's another helpful tip which I'd never thought about, but one which certainly is smart thinking.
Photocopy the contents of your wallet. Copy both sides of each license, credit card, etc. By doing this you'll know what you had in your wallet and have all the account and phone numbers you'd need to cancel cards. Keep the photocopies in a safe place, obviously separate from your wallet. If you carry a passport for any reason, make a photocopy of it too and put it with your wallet copies.
The attorney said within a week of becoming a victim of theft, the thief had ordered an expensive monthly cell phone package, applied for a VISA credit card, has a credit line approved to buy a Gateway computer, received a PIN number from the Division of Motor Vehicles to change her driving record information online.
Quick action on the part of the victim is necessary, said the attorney. She suggests the following if you become a victim yourself:

1. Using the phone numbers from the photocopies of your credit cards, call the companies immediately and report them stolen and cancel the cards.
2. File a police report immediately in the jurisdiction where your belongings were stolen. This proves to credit providers you were diligent and is the first step toward an investigation should one take place.
She said the most important thing to do is something she hadn't initially thought about. Only when a bank called and advised her that a credit application in her name was made out over the Internet did she:
3. Contact the three national credit reporting organizations immediately and have a fraud alert placed on your name and social security number. A fraud alert means any company checking your credit knows your information was stolen and they are required to contact you to authorize new credit.
"By the time I was advised to do this, almost two weeks after the theft, all the damage had been done," she said.
For your protection should your wallet ever be stolen, here are the numbers for the three credit reporting organizations in the United States:
Equifax: 1-800-525-6285
Experian: 1-888-397-3742
Trans Union: 1-800-680-7289
The number to the Social Security Administration's fraud line is 1-800-269-0271.
Jan Katz Ackerman is a reporter for the Colby Free Press

Your turn

Bob Schwarz is right for the job

Gary Davis Menlo
I don't know why we're reading about Sheridan County roads in the Colby paper.
If Mark Heim felt Bob Schwarz was not giving his roads proper attention, and if he could not get satisfaction from Bob directly, then he did the right thing by going to the county supervisors.

But, I want to say a few things on Bob's behalf.
I've seen a lot of good people come and go in this job.
We finally have a really good person in this position.
Bob is an excellent grader operator, and he is an excellent mechanic and welder.
If somebody is going to be a boss, they should

know how to do the jobs of the people that they are supervising, and Bob does. In addition he has to keep the EPA and KDHE happy on the landfill. Bob is enthusiastic, well qualified, and a hard worker. Sheridan County is lucky to have Bob.
Finally, the Sheridan County dirt roads are in far better shape than those in Thomas County.

Punishment does not fit the crime

From The Wichita Eagle
News that a Lawrence man who allegedly killed his pet rabbit will be prosecuted under the state's new felony animal cruelty law may start a rethinking of this legislation.
Kansans can decry such an act — the man reportedly put the animal in a plastic bag and tried to break its neck, which led to its death — while also wondering whether such a crime justifies a felony charge, a minimum 30-day jail sentence and a fine of \$500 to \$5,000, along with mandatory psychological evaluation and anger counseling. ...
But there is another point to consider, made earlier this summer by former Attorney General Bob Stephan, who chairs the governor's Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board.

Observing that on the animal abuse issue, "the howl and cry for change was almost deafening" around the state, Stephan wrote in a commentary released to state newspapers: "It is now time for legislators and editorial writers to raise the same cry for a change in the law that adequately punishes those who beat or torture women."
Right now, a first offense of domestic violence against a woman is punishable with 48 hours to six months in jail and a fine of no less than \$200 and no more than \$500. That is appalling."
On its face, the notion that animal abuse could warrant 30 days in jail and spousal abuse only two days defies common sense. ...
Since Congress passed the Violence Against

Women Act in 1994, victims of domestic violence have had more legal tools on their side. When local police arrive at a location and see evidence of domestic battery, they are required by law to make an arrest — though what happens next varies greatly from case to case.
Any discussion of domestic violence also must focus on prevention and help for victims, and Sedgwick County and Wichita have been leaders in both areas. Talk of tougher penalties for any offense also should be accompanied by an informed debate about the costs to taxpayers of locking up more criminals for longer.
But for the fall campaigns, Stephan's point seems worthy: Are Kansas' penalties for domestic violence now weaker than for animal abuse? If so, that's a problem.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

