

Opinion



A Kansas Viewpoint

Minds should remain open

From The Coffeyville Journal

Kansans can expect to hear two words in the coming year, mostly from their local school boards: charter school.

Parsons and Oswego are the most recent districts in southeast Kansas to plan charter schools, which are known for producing positive academic results for students.

The basic concept of charter schools is that they exercise autonomy in return for accountability. They are accountable for both academic results and fiscal practices to several groups: the sponsor that grants them, the parents who choose them and the public that funds them.

They are not religious schools.

Most charters are granted for three to five years. At the end of the term, the entity granting the charter may renew or cancel the arrangement.

In most cases, a local school board serves as the charter school sponsor, and that is the case in most Kansas communities where such charters are being considered.

While most teacher organizations oppose the creation of charter schools, many local school boards and administrators are finding value in them.

Again, these are not to be confused with religious schools or the voucher system of paying for public education. A small portion of a school can be set off as a charter, such as a high school or middle school, while other grades can continue to be funded and operated using traditional methods.

Regardless, the Kansas Legislature and the Kansas State Board of Education appear on the verge of making it easier for local entities to create these charter schools. Minds should remain open because our public school system in Kansas needs creative ways to improve the results, which parents often find to be sorely in need of repair.

It's worth a try for a local district to carve out one portion of its school system and join the charter school experiment.

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@nwkansas.com or pdecker@nwkansas.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.

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Haunted history

Tisha Cox

• Off The Beaten Path



Two men were riding by the sod house on their way to an event at a schoolhouse in the area and stopped at the soddy to take a smoke.

While there, they noticed an "eerie glow that began radiating from inside the windows of the house.

One man, his pipe lit, casually turned around to glance at the house. What he saw caused him to grab his partner's arm and forcibly turn him around to face the house. "Gawd. Do you see what I see."

What they saw is described as a "bright white light" coming from inside, which then "penetrated through the sod wall" and appeared outside like a "ray-like beacon." It then moved away from the house toward the southwest.

Instead of taking off, though afraid, the men followed the light, which took them on a route that eventually ended at Fairview Cemetery, where it hovered over a grave then disappeared.

After waiting to see if it would appear again, they entered the cemetery and went over to the grave where it vanished, and found the name on the marker, which read Gilbert Holmes.

The book goes on to chronicle another couple of appearances of the light. However, sightings ended only a few years into the 20th century.

In 1907 or 1908, Holmes' wife allegedly had her husband moved to eastern Kansas and buried there.

Another spooky story also exists about north-west Kansas, although it involved a joke. A chap-

ter in the book "Lore of the Great Plains" by Jessie Kennedy Snell relates the story toward the end of winter in Page City.

A group gathered at the local depot, where "the whole town was startled by a weird cry."

Some thought it was a coyote, others thought it could be a person, while others suggested it was a mountain lion.

After a couple of nights of this, the sound disappeared for a few evenings before coming back for about a week, sometimes the sound was close, sometimes far away.

People got worked up over the noise, and deciding to do something about it, organized a hunt.

"Twelve or 15 of the best shots in the country were gathered together on the appointed night.

The cries started earlier than usual. As darkness settled down the group marched cautiously down toward the gully from which the last calls seemed to come. Another cry came, close at hand. There was a volley of shots rang out."

The men took a closer look and found no dead mountain lion, but a "wooden cracker-box with a white towel drawn across the front. Riddled with bullets? Not a powder mark on it!

But a young section hand came forward with "Hyer's your panther." And in the light of a lantern he held out a small wooden block with a groove whittled out, over which was fitted a narrow piece of corset stay, fastened so that both ends vibrated. Raising it to his lips, the young fellow made that ungodly cry ring out for the last time."

Happy Halloween!

Tisha Cox is a general assignment reporter/photographer for the Free Press. Her column appears on Mondays. tcox@nwkansas.com.

Your turn

Thanks for the help

Steve Lampe
Colby Community College

This is just a quick note to say thank you to all who sponsored, attended and helped in any way to make the Dan Gable event the most successful fundraiser in Colby Community College Trojan wrestling history.

It was a great night to say the least. Dan Gable's presence is one of awe for anyone who knows anything about wrestling. He is, without

argument, the greatest wrestling icon of our time.

Rich Epp brainstormed the event and donated five entire working days to the effort of securing sponsorship from area businesses so that any student 18 and under could attend at no charge.

Dr. Lynn Kreider also donated three whole working days of his time as well.

Thank you gentlemen.

Preliminary bookkeeping shows that we profited over \$9,000 for the evening.

The Colby Community College wrestling boosters are an amazing group. Donations and fundraising efforts over the past two years have topped all records by nearly \$17,000. Wrestling is alive and well at Colby, thanks to you, boosters.

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.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce

Tinsley

