pinion



A Kansas **V**iewpoint

Search and find

From The Hutchinson News

The Kansas state treasurer's office always seems eager to promote its unclaimed property service, including a Web site to connect residents with money or property temporarily in the state's

The agency sets up a booth every year at the Kansas State Fair, holds television and radio telethons and fills the airwaves with commercials about the bounty of unclaimed cash just waiting to

But the agency seems to fall a little short when it comes to actively notifying residents, businesses and governmental agencies about the potential windfall sitting — and collecting interest — in state coffers.

A search by The News revealed that local nonprofit agencies, government entities and even the Kansas Board of Tax Appeals all have unclaimed money at the treasurer's office. ...

The treasurer's office reports that one staff member is dedicated to active outreach, with the rest of the staff helping out as time permits. When new property hits the unclaimed status, staff searches for the owner or the owner's heirs and sends a claim to the potential recipient.

By the department's own admission, such efforts often produce better results than telethons and fair booths.

Yet somehow those searches didn't reconnect the city of Hutchinson, the Girl Scouts or the Kansas Association of Chiefs of Police with their money. It seems the state office could do a better job of making individual contact with agencies and businesses that have unclaimed property.

It might be difficult to find individual property owners who have moved to another county or even another state, but it shouldn't be too hard to find a phone number or a mailing address for a longstanding nonprofit agency or a state or county agency.

By devoting more staff to direct outreach efforts, the treasurer's office could help clear its list of unclaimed property, while keeping its Web site visible to curious Kansans searching for a wind-

Where to write, call

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 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, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715 or Fax 202/225-5124

State Rep. Jim Morrison, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St. Rm. 143-N, Topeka, Kan. 66612. 785/296-7676 e mail: jmorriso@ink.org web: www.morrisonfamily.com

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol, 300 SW 10th St., Rm. 128-S., Topeka, Kan. 66612, 785/296-7399 ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

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@nw kansas.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the Free Press.

Colby Free Press

155 W. Fifth Colby, Kan. 67701 (785) 462-3963

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.

John Van Nostrand - Publisher

NEWS

Patty Decker - Editor

Joe Falkoff - General Assignment/Sports Reporter

Jan Ackerman - General Assignment

ADVERTISING

Crystal Rucker - Advertising Sales/Director

Jasmine Stewart - Advertising Sales

Hannah Pyle - Advertising Sales hpyle @ nwkansas.com

Avery Schultz - Advertising Composition

BUSINESS OFFICE

Jeanette Applegate - Bookkeeping, Ad Building

Kathy Arendt - Circulation, Classifieds karendt @ nwkansas.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator

NOR'WEST PRESS

Jim Bowker - General Manager

Richard Westfahl, Lana Westfahl, Becky Foster, Jim Jackson, Kris McCool, Betty Morris, James Ornelas, Cheryl Holub, and Amanda Campbell

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 within 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.



Enjoying the great outdoors

Patty

Decker

Deep

Thoughts

Some people are outdoor-types and some are indoor-types. I happen to fall in the latter category — except this past weekend.

My husband, Randy, loves working outside in the yard and I like puttering around inside

But lately the tables have turned and he's working inside on remodeling projects, which leaves outside chores on hold. Being a good sport, though, I decided to try my luck at outside work.

If the truth be known, though, I think Randy worries about me becoming even more of a recluse than I already am — so I think he creates jobs to get me out of the house.

Actually, it's sweet to be loved.

Anyway, as I was saying, this past weekend, he bought some ferns and hosta (plants), along with pulling the elephant ear bulbs out of storage.

After reading the directions on the package, I started digging half-inch holes or so and gently putting the little guys in their new homes.

One hosta, one elephant ear bulb, one hosta, etc., and across a whole row.

After that, I planted the ferns and was ready to call my outdoor experience over. Not quite.

No sooner did I finish planting about 12-14 different varieties in the flower bed, I noticed Randy had dumped what seemed like hundreds of elephant ear bulbs on the table outside — all in different sizes and shapes.

"What am I supposed to do with all those? I asked.

Randy suggested planting most of them in the same spot we did last year, which I didn't think was too bad. That particular patch of soil was already moist and would be easy for dig-

Within a couple of hours, I had gotten all the bulbs, ferns and plants in the ground and was ready to call it quits for outside work.

I was starting to think Randy had planned an entire day for me outside because he didn't quite tell me everything that needed to be done

outside at the same time.

Maybe he thought my brain would short circuit if he told me all the things that needed to be done.

As I was cleaning up the mess from the first group of chores, Randy "suggested" the maiden grass in our yard and our little basement house's yard needed to be cut back.

That didn't sound too hard, I thought to myself. So I went into the garage and got out the two types of clippers.

For those unfamiliar with maiden grass (like I was a couple of years ago), this is not the ordinary run-of-the-mill grass. This grass is more like "cane" in thickness and grows to 12' high or more.

Cutting back some of the maiden grass required roping it off in the middle and then using the clippers to cut through these rather thick stalks.

With more than a dozen or so clumps of maiden grass clustered throughout the yards, I knew this was going to be a two-day affair. Maybe some gardeners familiar with the

process might not need two days, but for me, I knew it wasn't going to happen in a day.

While clipping away, our neighbor, Daniel Morris and his little girl, Annie, peered over their fence in disbelief.

"Patty, what are you doing out there? I can't believe you are working in the yard?" Daniel

It's really bad when even my neighbors know I am a slug on weekends.

After watching me for a few minutes, Daniel suggested I should use a chain saw to cut column appears on Mondays.

ting stage as much as he was the picking up

ing. I can be gullible at times too.

through the grass.

in harms way.

and hauling portion of the job. After about three or four razor-sharp slices

think Randy was so concerned about the cut-

"That's not a bad idea," I said. "Can I do

When Daniel didn't answer and went back

Randy warned me to wear gloves for this

particular project, but I didn't think I needed

to. I planned to be careful and the clippers

were long enough so as not to place my fingers

However, I learned the hard way. I don't

to work in his own yard, I figured he was jok-

on my fingers, I decided he was right about the gloves.

Of course, now I have a vested interest in my little plants. I put them in the ground with my own two hands and will be keeping an eye on their progress.

At first, I was a bit upset when I went outside Sunday and noticed the robins had already been pecking in the dirt where my elephant ears were.

I didn't mind the birds digging around for worms, it's just they poked about as many holes in this one spot than I had planted el-Even though I joke, it was actually fun work-

ing outside. I got some exercise, sun, and enjoyed talking with people walking by - who were also doing healthy things I admit I am still ignorant about our plants

and what to do when, but it was relaxing and I had a great time wallowing away the hours outdoors.

If Randy was trying to motivate me to spend more time outside - don't tell him - but I think it worked! I am already looking forward

to next weekend and what kind of outdoor chores I can find to do. Patty Decker is editor of the Free Press. Her

A struggle for freedom

By Sarah McIntosh

My six-month-old dog Franny loves going outside. Rain or snow it doesn't matter she begs to go out. When she has the opportunity to explore and run free she is happy as can be. But, whenever I put her on a leash to go outside she isn't quite so happy. One of two things happens. Either she tugs as hard as she can, trying to bite off the leash or she sits and stares up at me with a look saying, how can you do this to me? The thing is I can't really blame her; I love my freedom too.

We often get caught up in patriotism especially around Independence Day and Memorial Day. Sometimes we even refer loosely or in passing to the elusive terms of freedom and liberty. But we should all take pause, no matter what time of year, and consider what freedom and liberty means to us, and why we care about it.

Most of us know something about the founding of the country. The Founding Fathers came from England, some under persecution for religious practices, others looking for a better life; all looking to start a country where they retained freedom and liberty under the law.

The laws of the land look considerably dif-

volume upon volumes of codes and regulations. Each level of government has grown larger over the years.

Sadly, the truth is that we give up freedoms nearly every day. Each time a law is passed, whether at the municipal, state, or federal level, we lose a little bit----and sometimes a lot---of freedom. That's not to say that every law is bad, there are a few that actually preserve freedoms and some that are necessary to maintain a safe and secure community. But those are the exceptions, not the rule.

Most of us are lucky. We lead such comfortable lives that we rarely worry about how laws affect us. When there is plenty to eat, comfortable housing, and American Idol, who has time to worry about what happens in Topeka, or in Washington?

The problem with this is we are relinquishing our responsibility. In a representative democracy, we, the people, are supposed to hold our government accountable. We should be vigilant about observing what is taking place. For, once we lose a freedom, it is next to impossible to get it back. Government grows, that's its nature. Laws grow more and more complex. And often, government lacks trans-

ferent than they did 200 years ago. We have parency. So, it's up to the people to make sure that what is taking place is in our best inter-

> When determining what laws we agree with and which we do not, we should all consider the consequences not just to us but also to others in our communities and country. Every time a freedom is taken away from someone else, it chips away at the barriers protecting our own rights. And, if we aren't all vigilant about protecting everyone's rights, there may not be anyone left to speak up for you when the law personally affects your rights. So it's up to each of us to pay attention to what is happening and respond when we are unhappy with the outcomes.

Unfortunately for Franny, she will just have to put up with being on a leash. And perhaps in any society we are all on a leash. The question is, how short are we willing to let that leash become?

Sarah McIntosh is Vice President of Programs for the Kansas-based Flint Hills Center for Public Policy. She can be reached at sarah.mcintosh@flinthills.org. To learn more about the Flint Hills Center, please visit www. flinthills.org

Mallard **Fillmore**

Bruce

Tinsley

