



Free Press Viewpoint

School, parents need more choices

Coming into a new school year, we all must sympathize with the hard decisions budget cuts force at every level in the system.

The Colby School District's biggest headache seems to be the big cut in bussing, and the attendant difficulties for both school personnel and families.

There seems to be an effective provisional plan for dealing with problems, yet it is almost inevitable that problems will arise. There will be traffic snarls. There will be children, and parents, who are confused about where to go and what to do. There will be families who find the new rules to be a hardship.

A city district might be able cut back on busses, knowing there are city busses to pick up the slack. Colby doesn't have a backup system. Yet we have a suggestion.

The school has the busses. It has qualified drivers. What it doesn't have is money. So why can't parents buy bus tickets to get their kids across town? If schools can provide subsidized meals at a price, why can't they do the same for transportation?

The risks for children walking on their own are not the same as they were 50 years ago, before consolidation began doing away with neighborhood schools. The rules expecting parents to supervise every moment of a child's day have changed, as well, largely in response to increased risk. At the same time, fewer families than ever have a stay-at-home parent ready to drop everything in the middle of the afternoon to shuttle the kids to or from school.

There might be many hurdles to overcome before a school bus could be used as a "city bus for school children." There may be laws that get in the way; there are almost certainly liability and insurance issues. Study would be needed to determine fair pricing for bus tickets.

But both schools and families are feeling pressures that could be helped by a little creative problem solving. There's no better time to tackle the issues.

— Marian Ballard

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. Room 143-N, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7676 e-mail: jmorriso@ink.org web: www.morrisonfamily.com

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol Building, 300 SW10th St., Room 128-S., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 ralph.ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

We encourage comments on opinions expressed on this page. Mail them to the *Colby Free Press*, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth St. (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

Send news to: colby.editor@nwkansas.com

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout, Columns, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography. Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

Steve Haynes - Publisher
s.haynes@nwkansas.com

NEWS

Kevin Bottrell - News Editor
kbottrell@nwkansas.com

Andy Heintz - Sports Reporter
aheintz@nwkansas.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor
mballard@nwkansas.com

Vera Sloan and Aubrey Spencer - Society Editors
colby.society@nwkansas.com

ADVERTISING

Jasmine Stewart - Advertising Manager
j.stewart@nwkansas.com

Heather Woofler - Advertising Sales
hwoofler@nwkansas.com

Kathryn Ballard - Graphic Design
kballard@nwkansas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator
support@nwkansas.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Richard Westfahl - General Manager

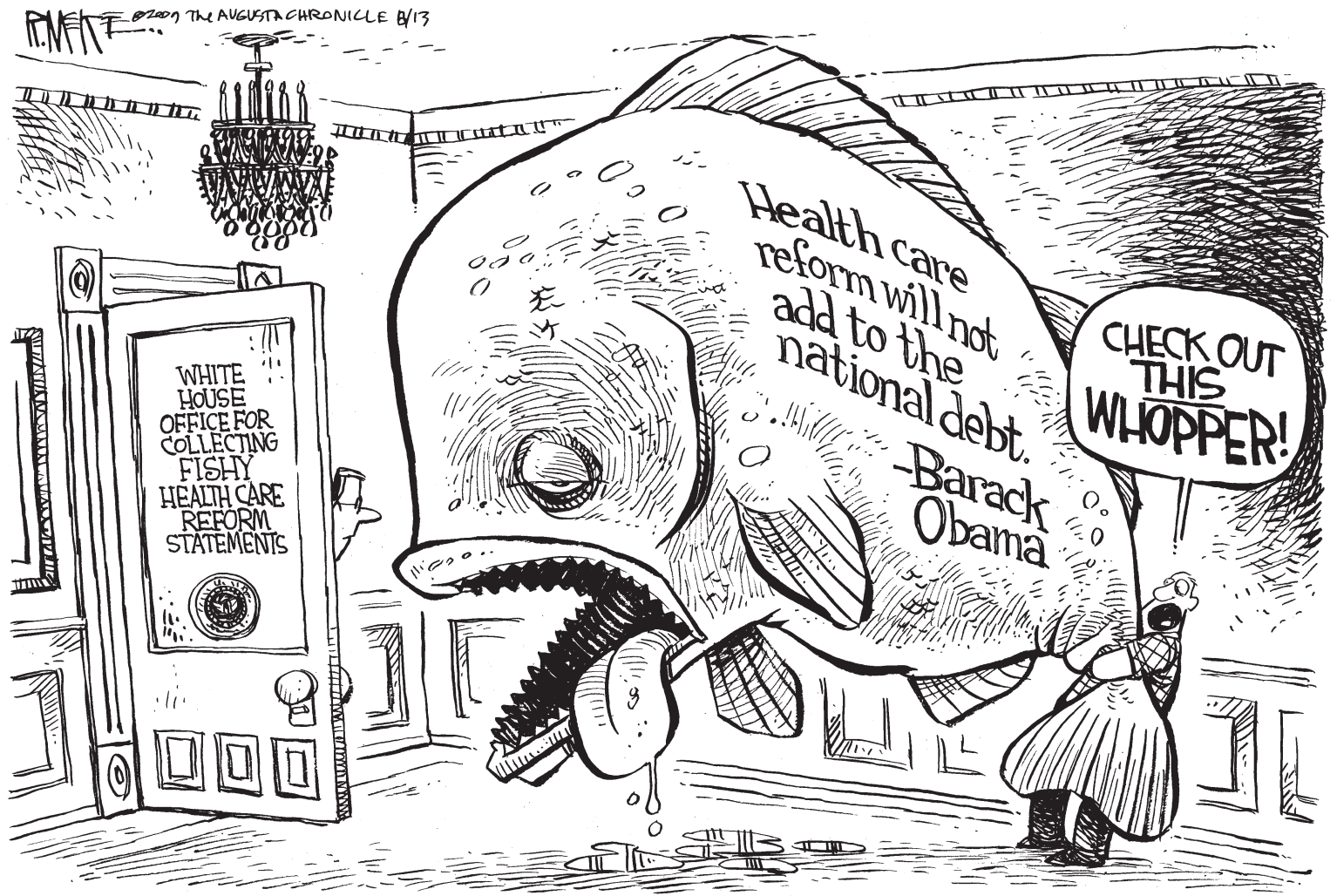
Lana Westfahl, Jim Jackson, Betty Morris, Jim Bowker, Judy McKnight, Barbara Ornelas, Tasha Shores, Daniel Spillman, Patricia McGoyne, Kris McCool

THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

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

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 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 herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72



Old school friends keep being friends

My family moved to Colby from Oklahoma the summer before I was to enter the seventh grade, and the first person I met who was my own age and who was also going to be in the seventh grade was Pat Young, but of course, her name was Pat Swanson then.

We became close friends because my parents rented a house from Pat's folks and it was just across the alley from where Pat lived.

My mother went to work for Pat's mother at the little family-type café she owned, on East Fourth, just across the street from what is now High Plains Printing. It was named Mary's Café.

Pat's mom was a generous woman who would not hesitate to feed anyone who was down and out and needed a meal, and they could count on it being a good plentiful meal. Pat's dad, Neb, was a farmer and they had a farmstead east of town, but they lived in town.

After getting acquainted with Pat, it wasn't long until I discovered there was something rather outstanding about her: she could drive a car. I didn't realize at that time, that it a farm area, it wasn't at all unusual for children to



Marj Brown

• Marj's Snippets

learn to drive before they reached the age of 12. That was because they learned to drive on the farm in order to run errands for their parents and to drive to get help in case it was needed.

However, it just so happened that the Swansons had an old farm truck without a top on the cab, and Pat and I had a great time that summer driving it around the outskirts of Colby.

In those days there were many more outskirts to Colby. There was no senior citizen housing or apartment building area in south Colby and that end of town was pretty sparse, and the north end of town was also rather vacant past the railroad tracks.

The problem with the truck was that it did just fine driving on level roads and down hills,

but it just couldn't quite make it up a hill. However, we soon discovered a solution to that problem. Also living in the south end of town was the Golemboski family, and they had a lot of kids. So when we went out to drive around in the old truck, our first stop would be to fill the back end full of Golemboskis. That way, when we needed to make it up the hills, we had plenty of help pushing.

After all these years, Pat is still my friend, and we have been through a lot together. However, the really wonderful thing about living in Colby is that I still have a lot of friends that I went to school with living right here in town, and on the second Friday of each month, I and the ones I graduated with all get together in a restaurant here in town and have lunch together.

How many people living in the big cities can make that claim? That's just another of the wonderful things about living in Colby.

Marj Brown has lived in Colby for 62 years and has spent a good deal of that time writing about people and places here.

Green, blue and white make August

This year, Kansas has green fields, kissed by the sun. There are blue skies with white clouds high above. There are even valleys where rivers run.

Seldom have the grass and crops been so green. If you've traveled anywhere in the state, you'll know this is true — and this late in summer — the middle of August.

Corn crops tower above the ground. Ten-foot-tall corn is not unusual. Some farmers say some of their crops are 11 and 12 feet tall.

Soybean leaves are the size of footballs. Pods weigh down the plants. Cattle graze in grass up to their bellies while looking around for their calves, some which are hidden in the tall, green vegetation.

Even in short-grass country in western Kansas, the buffalo grass is green and full of protein. It's a stark contrast to so many years when the grass has already turned brown, parched by the sun, by August.

The Sunflower State has been truly blessed with abundant moisture during the summer of 2009. Rainfall has been plentiful, timely and it keeps falling.

Hodgeman County farmer/rancher Jerry Whipple grew up on a farm about eight miles north of Jetmore. He's been around crops and cattle for more than 65 years.

"It's been a great year," Whipple says. "The cattle are looking good and in great shape. I can't remember when I've ever seen the grass this green this late in the season."

Plenty of showers, moisture from 35 to 60 hundreds of an inch, have been sure and steady



John Schlageck

• Insights
Kansas Farm Bureau

throughout the summer, the Hodgeman County farmer says.

On this early August morning, temperatures were in the low 70s. Barn swallows bobbed and weaved in the sky searching for insects. Many of the insects are pesky black flies that pester the cattle and calves.

These insects don't like to fly on such cool, early mornings. As the cattle kick them up from the ground, the swallows snatch them from the sky, eat them or carry them home to feed their hungry offspring.

Looking out the window at the Black Angus herd, Whipple says he'd rank them at the top on a scale of one to five. The plentiful moisture, good grass and plenty of milk for the calves have been a real asset this summer.

"They're in top condition — they're fleshy and their coats are sleek and shiny," Whipple says. "With these cows in such fine shape, they'll raise a better, healthier calf this coming winter."

While Whipple sold his cow herd in May, he still goes out to his farm most days. He also looks after his nephew, Dave Ochs', herd. He oversees the cattle like he did while he was

ranching.

The cornerstone of his livestock operation has always involved making sure they have good feed, good nutrition and the proper health care. He likened his cattle to his family.

The Hodgeman County stockman regularly drives out to look at his nephew's herd. Once in the pasture, he meanders slowly through his stock, checking carefully for any sick cows or calves. Whipple also checks to see if the cattle have water, mineral and salt.

Another important part of this routine is to count the stock and make sure they're all inside the fence. Whipple's pasture borders a busy highway and he doesn't want the cattle or calves hurt. He doesn't want any people hurt by running into them either.

"If you can keep livestock in, off your neighbor's property and off the road, that's a real accomplishment," Whipple says. "Every cattleman must keep track of his fences — make sure they're in top repair. Like the poem by Frost says, 'good fences make good neighbors.'"

Yes sir, out here on the Whipple place, cattle have always been his living. The better he takes care of them, the better they'll take care of him. That's the way it was with his dad and his grandfather before him. As a matter of fact, that's the way he says it will always be.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm near Seguin, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

