

## Other Viewpoints

### You can act to prevent abuse

It's a heartbreaking, tragic situation. When child abuse occurs, reactions range from shock and outrage to sadness for the victims.

Beyond that, many people give little thought to what might have been done to prevent such horrific acts. And some simply prefer to look away.

Kansas Children's Service League and other child advocacy groups want people to know they can do something, and hope to raise awareness of those strategies as part of Child Abuse Prevention Month in April.

One way is responding to warning signs of abuse. While children often get bumps and bruises through everyday play, wounds to their stomach, cheeks, ears, buttocks, mouth or thighs, as well as black eyes, human bite marks, and circular burns the size of a cigarette suggest something more serious.

Other signs of possible abuse: Unusual, excessive or patterned injuries, or injuries that are inadequately explained. A child who is excessively sad and cries a lot. A child who fights with classmates, acts out, destroys things or is violent toward a pet or sibling. Listless behavior, trouble sleeping or nightmares. Fear of a parent or other adult. A child who avoids going home after school, as if afraid of something.

The Kansas Attorney General's Office urges anyone who suspects a problem to call the Kansas Protection Report Center at (800) 922-5330.

Beyond that, attacking the problem also means making sure people on the front line have sufficient resources to help at-risk families.

Home visits, parent education, mental health services, convenient and affordable day care and substance abuse treatment all aid in the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

Strong programs and interventions can be lifesavers, particularly in a state that every year sees about 300 infants die for various reasons.

In a poor economy, the stress on families too often leads to the mistreatment of children. Rather than scaling back assistance, it's necessary to recognize programs that work and expose them to as many at-risk families as possible.

The cycle of violence that starts with the abuse of a child exacts a painful, far-reaching toll on communities. We can't afford to look the other way.

—The Garden City Telegram, via The Associated Press

### Write us

The Colby Free Press encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of general interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise. Nor do we run form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous from this area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses not pertaining to a public issue.

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HITCH SUNDAY TELEGRAM



## Journalism rule skipped by grandparents

There's an old newspaper adage that goes, if your mother says she loves you, check it out.

I'm adding a corollary to that. If your husband says he knows his granddaughter's name, check it out.

I was telling everyone in three towns that our granddaughter was to be named Taylor Morgan Blake.

Her parents had started out with the normal 5,000 or so names, pared it down to only a couple of hundred and then worked their way carefully to Taylor Morgan for their daughter, who was supposed to be born on or about April 1.

Taylor had other ideas. She came March 7. Her Mom called to say she and hubby were on their way to the hospital, and her sister made the phone call to Mom and Dad announcing the birth.

It was Sunday and I was in a bit of a state of shock. The photo, sent from oldest daughter's cell phone of her new niece, was not good enough to use in the paper. So I put off doing the announcement for a week.

During that time Steve, who had taken the call that he was a grandfather, convinced me that I was wrong. The baby's name was Taylor Madison.



Cynthia Haynes

• Open Season

OK, I figured. That was an easy mistake to make. Neither name is attached to any family name or anyone I know, so I probably just got it mixed up.

What I failed to do was call her mom and dad to check the story. I assumed my husband knew what he was talking about.

Assume is a dirty word in journalism. Journalists take it apart and say that to assume is to make an ass out of u and me.

So true.

I put the birth announcement together and Steve checked it over, changing the city where the paternal grandparents live from Chicago to suburban Naperville. He even checked with the new parents to make sure that was correct.

He obviously did not check the rest of the story.

So a week after she was born, the story ran

in both Oberlin and Colby that we had a new granddaughter, Taylor Madison Blake.

Oops. And you thought that we only misspelled your kid's name?

What worries me now is the problem that seems to hit now and then. It seems that sometimes when you make a mistake on someone, you can never get anything right about them again.

There are some very nice people around here whom, every time we put them in the paper, I cringe. No matter how hard we try, we never seem to be able to get it right. Names are misspelled, ages come out wrong, pictures are misidentified, they are said to play baseball instead of basketball. You name it.

So, I guess that there's only one thing to do. Make Steve write the social notes about our amazing and talented grandchild for ever after.

They may not be right, but at least I'll have someone to blame.

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor'West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes@nwkansas.com

## School music deserves a boost

To the Editor:

I'd like to thank the Colby Free Press and the advertising sponsors for dedicating an insert to Music in Our Schools. It was wonderful to see all the music students being recognize. I also appreciated Kevin Bottrell's editorial in the March 12 paper.

I, too, feel that music is an important part of life and the learning process. Many of the students pictured in the insert have been taking lessons, mostly through our schools, for many years. Students start at the end of their fourth grade year, and many play throughout middle school and high school, some into college.

Who does not enjoy seeing the marching band at football games and pep band at basketball games? This year, our high school band was selected to march in the Independence Day Parade in Washington. I think this speaks highly of our program, and we should be proud of all our students.

This success stems from a program rooted in good elementary and middle school instruction. Studies show that students involved with music are more likely to excel in math and reading. We've had an excellent music program for years, and we've done well with state assessment tests for years as well.

During the recent budget talks, Wichita School District parents said that the arts and music were important to them because it stimulated imagination and did not want to see these programs cut.

I would like to thank our music directors for their hard work. All of them take their personal time before and after school to enhance our programs by directing the Soaring Singers (the grade school honor choir) and small ensembles or giving individuals help with solos before regional music festivals. The Colby School District music teachers are Jennifer Koel, elementary; Jill Nichols, intermediate and middle school choir; Stacey Williams, middle school band; and Joey Nichols, high school band and choir.



Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

Music is an activity that can be enjoyed for a lifetime. It doesn't stop when we graduate or when we get too old to do what we once could. It stays with us forever, and that's a good thing.

Jan Barnum, Colby

### Doctors praised

To the Editor:

Dr. Slavens and Andy Rose are two of the finest people we have met since moving to northwest Kansas. For all intents and purposes, the two of them made decisions in September that just may have saved my husband's life.

I also know how sad you feel when your intention is to serve the public, but gossip causes pain on top of pain. We visited Dr. Slavens after hearing the news that he was closing his practice to see if we could help. Dr. Slavens told us he was committed to trying to turn things around after a financial disaster. He looked tired and sad that day, but was still seeing patients faithfully.

Together, these men brought a top-notch medical facility to a small town with the best of intentions. It is a business like any other, and small businesses are struggling today. How do you feel when you have to tell people that work for you, "count on bad news." I know how that feels; we just had to do the same thing.

Dr. Slavens, please do not waste a stamp mailing us a letter. We will be in. We want to say thank you and bless you wherever you go

and whatever you do.

To Dr. Slavens, Andy Rose and staff at Doc's on Call, we will forever be grateful for what you have done for us. Words will never be able to express the warmth and happiness we wish for each one of you.

Rick, Earla and Nicole Connell  
Brewster

### Tax proposal offered

To the Editor:

In Monday's editorial you invited us to share our tax ideas for you. Here are mine:

I think the state should implement a \$.01 sales tax. I'm not excited about it, but I think it makes the most sense. However, I don't think they should repeal the churches' or schools' tax-free status. I also think the legislators should put a freeze on any more spending to finish their "fixing up" project on the outside of the State Capitol building. At our house, when we are into a decorating project and we run out of money, we stop until we save up more.

Another idea that would help the state save a bundle (I've been told up to a million dollars a day) would be to tell the legislators that there would be no payment for days of extra sessions. If they meet, it's on their own dollar, because if they get paid anyway, what motivation do they have to get the work done in the regular 3 month session?

Marilyn Walz  
Colby

### Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

