

Other Viewpoints

Mandated signs state the obvious

One of the borderline absurd elements of the new statewide smoking ban is a requirement that all businesses post signs with the no-smoking symbol, stating that smoking is prohibited by state law.

That goes for businesses that long have been smoke-free. And it goes for communities already smoke-free to one degree or another. So now businesses where employees and patrons long have been accustomed to being in a no-smoking zone, signs to this effect are just now being posted.

This same logic applies to the whole idea of a posting requirement. One would think that if the presumption is that smoking is not allowed in most every public space, then it wouldn't be necessary to state the obvious. Seems rather like posting a no-shoplifting sign in a retail store.

In contrast, when the state passed a law allowing concealed carry of firearms, businesses that chose not to allow guns on their premises posted "no-gun" signs.

In this case, businesses don't have the option, but you would think a similar logic would apply. You post for the exception rather than the rule. Maybe instead of no-smoking signs, there ought to be smoking-permitted signs posted in those establishments exempted from the new state law — private clubs, tobacco shops and casino gaming floors.

Posting the signs isn't a big deal. The new requirement just seems like more bureaucracy for places of business that have been smoke-free for years. It is one more example of how state lawmakers were late to the party on the no-smoking issue.

And, again, it defies common sense. If anything, a stringent statewide smoking ban seemingly would eliminate, not create, the need to post no-smoking signs.

— *The Hutchinson News, via The Associated Press*

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U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521

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COLBY FREE PRESS

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State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout, Columns, 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 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



Looking at heart could lead to stress

Seems I flunked my stress test, so I had to go to Kearney and have a cardiologist look at my heart.

I got the stress test because I flunked my electrocardiogram. Well, not flunked exactly. I had an enlarged "P wave," whatever that is. Might indicate an enlarged heart.

When I took the stress test, though, the "EKG" was good. I was encouraged. The cardiologist was not. When he read the X-rays taken before and after the stress, with radioactive dye in my blood vessels, he said the bottom of my heart was not beating strongly. Maybe I had blocked arteries, he said.

I was surprised, since I've never had any indication of heart trouble, pains, shortness of breath, or the like, and we exercise a lot, walking 15 to 25 miles a week.

So I got an appointment to be in Kearney at 7 a.m. the next Tuesday, which meant leaving work early and missing two days for the test and recovery. I didn't mind.

When we got to the heart clinic, the nurses welcomed us, gave me a hospital gown and showed us to a private room, really sort of a cubicle, Cynthia called it. Small, but comfortable. A nurse gave me a couple of Benadryl capsules to get me drowsy.

They took my vitals, asked a lot of questions, inserted an needle in my hand for an intravenous drip and then we had show and tell. One of the nurses brought in examples of the catheters used to inject dye into your heart, the sleeve used to guide them into an artery and the needle used to make the first hole.

It's a pretty slick setup, really. The catheters are just long, thin, flexible tubes that can go right up your arteries to your heart. Three have special tips, however, each built to fit into just



Steve Haynes

• Along the Sappa

one of the three main arteries supplying the heart. The fourth has a high-capacity nozzle made to go right into your heart and flood the ventricle with dye. More about that later.

Somewhere in here — I'm a little fuzzy on this — a nurse came in and gave me a shot of sedative which, she said, wouldn't put me to sleep but would make me drowsy. After that I'm a little less clear on what happened, but about 10 a.m., as promised, they led me into the room next door for the "procedure."

I hopped up on the table, where you lay down so the special X-ray camera can see your heart. When it starts, the doctor can see your little ticker pumping up on an overhead monitor. He can see the catheter snaking up your aorta and where to aim the little tips. And then he gets to watch what happens when he shoots dye out into an artery.

I got to watch the video clip later, so I know what happens: The dye fans out into all the little arteries that feed your heart. They do this in three spots, the two main arteries on the left side and the big one on the right.

Then they shove in the big tip and flood your right ventricle with dye. The nurses had warned me that would produce a warm sensation that often make people think they've peed their pants. No luck on that, but it was quite an experience as my blood carried that dye all the

way to my toes and back in under a minute.

I had no blockages, but if I had, they were prepared to wheel me over to the hospital and put stents, little wire mesh cages, into those spots to clear them of fatty deposits and hold them open.

The doctor said the good news was no blockages. He said he thought he could see some slow clearing in the lower part of the heart, where it wasn't pumping as fast. That could clear up, he said, if I can manage my diet and lower my blood sugar level.

Diet and exercise? Isn't that what they always say?

Still, I was glad to have another chance to make things right.

About a week later, I went to my doctor here to get the final report. I asked for copies and read them, medical dictionary in hand. They said pretty much what I expected, with one bright note.

The nurses, I mentioned, asked a lot of questions, starting with my age. If you answered no, they wrote that you "denied" having, say, chest pains. I took that to be medical lingo, or maybe they just don't quite believe you. But the nurse who took my history was nice. She wrote, "the patient is a 61-year-old male who appears younger than his stated age."

I think I'll go back to Kearney and give her a big hug — long as it won't stress my heart too much.

Steve Haynes is editor and publisher of The Colby Free Press and president of Nor'West Newspapers. In his spare time, whenever that is, he like to ride and watch trains.

Children are immersed in electronics

Media use by American children has surged to 10 hours, 45 minutes a day, according to a survey released by the Kaiser Family Foundation.

American children 8 to 18 spend 4 hours, 29 minutes with television each day, compared to 3 hours, 52 minutes in 2004. Music and audio use, now with iPods and MP3 players, jumped from 1 hour, 44 minutes in 2004 to 2 hours, 31 minutes.

Video games took up 1 hour, 13 minutes, reading electronic print 38 minutes, and movie-watching 25 minutes per day. The data inspired *The New York Times* to use the headline: "Children Awake? Then They're Probably Online."

The results surprised the report's authors, who thought that 8 hours, 33 minutes in 2004 left no more time in a student's day. But students were able to push their electronic life several hours higher, even "multi-tasking" by texting while watching videos.

The survey included more than 2,000 "tweens" and teenagers nationwide. The youngsters reported on their media use and about 700 kept week-long dairies to record each half-hour. The same questions were used in 1999 and 2004 surveys.

Ownership of iPods and MP3 players increased from 18 percent in 2004 to 76 percent today. Only 18 percent owned a cell phone in 2004; now it's 66 percent. Ownership of laptop computers has risen from 12 percent to 29 percent.

Home Internet access reached 84 percent in



John Richard Schrock

• Education Frontlines

this sample, although Internet marketing companies indicate this has dropped the last three years due to the economy. 59 percent of homes had broadband access.

While much media use is anchored at home, youngsters are spending about 2 hours each day on mobile devices. Even use of traditional radio and television is changing, with more youngsters using iTunes or Hulu to stream media on demand.

And the main use of cell phones is not as a phone! For youngsters, texting and watching media on the cell phone takes up more time than talking.

By far, listening to music and audio has surged the most, followed by television content, computers and video games. Time spent watching movies remained stationary, and reading of print went down. While eBook platforms are relatively new, many media experts suspect that youngsters' growing use of the cell phone for media will make the Kindle and related e-readers obsolete.

What is skipped in these reports is the educational implications of the Kaiser survey. There is an inverse relationship between media use

and good grades, with 51 percent of heavy users getting good grades versus 66 percent of light users.

"Nearly half (47 percent) of all heavy media users say they usually get fair or poor grades (mostly Cs or lower), compared to 23 percent of light media users," the report says.

Heavy users are less likely to get along with their parents, less happy at school, more often bored, get into trouble at twice the rate and are often sad or unhappy compared to light media users. The study is careful not to claim a cause-and-effect relationship, pointing out that media use and these dispositions could be caused by a third factor.

While daily use did not vary much by gender (11 hours, 12 minutes for boys to 10 hours 17 minutes for girls), girls lost interest in video games and played far less as teenagers, averaging only 3 minutes per day. Data again strongly suggest that video game use is a major factor in derailing boys from higher academic success. But despite the figures, that conclusion is avoided in all reports, including this one, since most Americans believe the new electronic media can do no wrong.

The report: "Generation M2: Media in the Lives of 8- to 18-Year-Olds" is available at the Kaiser Family Foundation website.

John Richard Schrock, a professor of biology and department chair at a leading teacher's college, lives in Emporia. He emphasizes that his opinions are strictly his own.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

