

## Other Viewpoints

### Growing school boost to health care

Even though it has been training doctors for 35 years, the University of Kansas School of Medicine-Wichita has been an underappreciated asset. But that could change as the school expands to a four-year program and has an even larger impact on the area's economy and our state's health care system.

The school is in the process of expanding its medical program from training only third- and fourth-year students. It has spent the past year developing its curriculum, and it already has commitments for half of the \$5 million it needs to raise to help pay for the expanded program.

An accreditation team recently completed a campus evaluation. If the governing body approves the program expansion in October, as expected, the first new students will begin next August.

The school will start small, with only eight first-year students, but it plans to grow to 50 first-year students in four years, and have 250 first-through-fourth-year students by 2015.

That expansion would have a significant economic impact. The current two-year program has about a \$50 million economic impact, says H. David Wilson, the school's dean. He expects the four-year program and new KU School of Pharmacy to triple that.

But more important is the impact the school can have on health care.

The KU School of Medicine-Wichita is the primary provider of doctors for rural Kansas. Remarkably, the school's graduates serve in 102 of the state's 105 counties. More students could result in more physicians in underserved areas.

The school supplies most of Wichita's doctors, too. Half of the doctors in Sedgwick County are Wichita graduates, Wilson says.

And because medical students help provide care for uninsured and underinsured residents, an expanded program should be able to help more needy people.

The school is smartly partnering with Wichita State University, the KU School of Pharmacy and possibly Newman University to share facilities and faculty. There's no need to duplicate resources.

Wilson has high expectations for the four-year program and expects it to be on an equal footing with the campus in Kansas City.

The Wichita expansion was unanimously endorsed by the Kansas Board of Regents and enthusiastically supported by the Wichita medical community.

"People want to see this happen in this town," Wilson told *The Wichita Eagle's* editorial board.

That's because they know it will be great for Wichita and the state.

— *The Wichita Eagle, via The Associated Press*

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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.

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### Look at stars restores sense of wonder

It's been a long time since I've been out stargazing.

For someone who is as much of a science fiction fan as I am, I don't spend much time looking at the stars. A lifetime spent living in well-lighted areas is probably to blame. From the urban Front Range in Colorado to 5,000-person towns like Torrington, Wyo., and Colby, I haven't spent much time away from street lights.

On a whim Friday, I decided to get away from the lights and see if I could catch a glimpse of the Perseid meteor shower.

It was really my brother Andy who inspired me to do it. At a recent family reunion, everyone was wondering what planet we were seeing in the western sky. Andy pulled out his trusty Android phone, hits a few buttons and held it up to the sky. On the screen was a real-time view of all the constellations, stars and planets in that section of the sky. Turns out it was not just one planet, but three very close together.

I don't have an Android phone, but I figured surely there must be an iPhone app that would do the same thing. Turns out there are quite a few, some better than others, according to the user reviews. I settled on one. It doesn't move with you as you move the iPod (for that I think you need an iPhone), but it was easy to use and looked good.

I knew it wouldn't be hard to find a good spot out of town. Pull off to the side of a county road, turn off the lights and you'd see the stars a lot clearer than you could in town. But which way to go?

I settled on heading west toward Levant on U.S. 24. Plenty of good places to turn off there, I thought.

I did some quick research on the Internet and found out the best time to go was any time between midnight and dawn. The sliver of moon was setting early, my source said, so it would



**Kevin Bottrell**

• Simple tricks and nonsense

be a good night for stargazing. I'm not much of a night owl, even on a Friday, so I decided to leave about midnight.

What I always forget about this area is how pitch black it really is once you get out of town. Even when you set your headlights on bright, they don't reach very far.

I was a bit concerned about hitting a deer. I've seen them around at night, and I know they like to hide in the fields when the corn gets tall. I saw a deer (it was either that or a large kangaroo) in broad daylight running into a cornfield in Brewster just a week ago. They tell me to watch out in the evening, but I figured I should watch out in the dead of night, too.

Fortunately we're between harvest seasons, so I didn't have to worry about hitting a Deere.

I set off down the road, driving carefully. There wasn't much traffic, just the one big truck right behind me the whole way. Bad luck, I guess. I found the turnoff to County Road 12 where U.S. 24 curves south by Levant. There's a nice triangle of grass there between the highway and Levant's Fourth Street before Road 12 crosses the railroad. I figured this would be a good spot. I was planning to turn my headlights off, of course, so I needed a spot where nobody would be barreling along and hit me.

Once I turned off those lights, I could see millions of stars not visible in town. It took me back to when, as a kid, I'd go on campouts away from civilization and look at the stars.

The iTouch app was helpful. With it I could easily identify constellations like Ursa Major and see a few stars in other constellations like Hercules.

One interesting feature on the app I chose is an info panel you can bring up on any particular star. I picked the brightest one I could find and looked it up. It was Vega, the fifth-brightest star in the sky. Apparently, Vega spins so fast it has flattened out, rather than being a perfect sphere like our sun.

I always forget how easily visible the Milky Way is when you get away from town. This time of year, it's nearly vertical in the southwestern sky, and it stretches all the way overhead.

As for the meteors, I saw four or five in the half hour I stayed there, but nothing like the 50-60 an hour predicted on the Internet. I could have stayed longer, but it had been a long day.

I didn't see any deer, thankfully, and I made it back home without incident. I learned Monday from the sheriff's report that some did hit a deer earlier that night, so I guess my concerns were warranted.

The trip brought back the simple joy of looking at the sky and the curiosity about the universe that I just hadn't paid any attention to in a long time. It's easy to take the stars for granted, but every now and then we should remind ourselves that there's more out there to experience than the few you can see beyond the glow of street lights.

So the next time there's a moonless night, I may just pack up my iTouch and head out into the country.

*Kevin Bottrell, news editor of the Colby Free Press, is a Colorado State University graduate who believes that the middle road is often the high one. Contact him at [kbottrell@nwkansan.com](mailto:kbottrell@nwkansan.com).*

### Cemetery damage beyond understanding

To the Editor:

(Last) Tuesday morning, I was informed that there had been some desecration done to headstones at Beulah Cemetery, one of which was a family member.

Some people who wished to honor their loved ones with a stone have themselves died and there is no one to replace their monuments.

I will see that my brother's monument is replaced, but these senseless acts of vandalism are beyond comprehension. Whoever did these acts would not like to have their homes trashed or cars damaged.

If the person or persons who are responsible for this damage are ever caught, I hope they



#### Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

get more than just a slap on the wrist.

I have always been proud to say that I was born and raised in Colby, but something like this takes some of the enjoyment out of a lot of people's lives.

Betty (Boeka) Walker, Hoxie

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