

Other Viewpoints

Specific needs met by each local college

When discussions at the recent Kansas Economic Policy Conference turned to public education's role in workforce development, it was only natural that the state's community colleges took center stage.

The state's 19 community colleges are attracting more students who are preparing to transfer to four-year institutions as well as students who are seeking training in specific fields that will lead directly to well-paying jobs. With statewide enrollments that rose about 5 percent last year and 3.3 percent this fall, community colleges are an important post-secondary option for many students.

However, the discussions at the panel discussion at Kansas University also identified some areas that need improvement in the state's "seamless" education system...

What may look like program duplication, Dale Reed associate dean of educational services at Seward County Community College said, often is simply an effort to meet specific demands. For instance, he said, a welding program at Butler County Community College near Wichita may focus on aircraft welding while one in southwest Kansas might focus on skills needed in the oil and gas industry.

Community colleges across the state also are training people for a variety of high-demand jobs in medical fields. And, because of their lower tuition, Reed said, community colleges are becoming a popular choice for students who want to complete one or two years of college work before moving to a more expensive state university.

However, both Reed and Jacqueline Vietti, president of Butler County Community College in El Dorado, noted that many new high school graduates require remedial - "developmental" is the new preferred term - courses to prepare them for college classes.

Responding to a question Thursday, Vietti noted that K-12 schools perhaps needed to place less emphasis on tests and more on the learning process and pointed to what she saw as "a disconnect between ACT scores and the preparedness of students" coming to Butler County.

In a later interview, she acknowledged that 65 percent of recent high school graduates coming to her school require developmental work in math, English or reading. However, she also said she is encouraged by the work her school is doing with the Wichita school district to identify and correct educational deficiencies, as well as the work of the Kansas P-20 Education Council, which is charged with creating a seamless system of education from pre-school through graduate school or jobs in the state.

School districts across the state should be concerned to learn of the high percentage of their high school graduates that apparently aren't prepared for post-secondary classes. Community colleges are an important cog in the state's higher education system, but they, as well as the state's four-year universities, would be able to do an even better job with students who don't have to play catch-up.

- Lawrence Journal-World, via The Associated Press

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COLBY FREE PRESS

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Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

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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.



HIS STORY

Burglar alarm tough for Grandpa

We were visiting the granddaughter last week. Oh, and the daughters, too. They all live in Georgia.

I could write all day about how cute she is, but you'd be bored. Instead, a cautionary tale about visiting your city kin.

Not that Augusta, metro population 539,154, is a big city, but it is a Top 100 market (No. 95 in the U.S.). And more than 200 times larger than Oberlin, where we live.

Crime is more of an issue. Burglary is not a rare occurrence, but more of a statistic, or a way of life.

So when the kids moved from a smaller house in a supposedly better neighborhood to a bigger one near downtown, they got an alarm system. Why they needed one when they have two huge dogs - one of whom starts barking when a stranger is a block away - is beyond me, but they do like their electronics.

Anyway, the alarm took some getting used to, they say. Us, too.

On arrival, we were instructed not to go out without disarming the alarm. Taught the secret code that would silence it. Reminded that it would be armed at night.

The next morning, Cynthia the morning person was up before the household. The dogs wanted out. Wanting to let the kids sleep, she



Steve Haynes

• Along the Sappa

let them. The alarm sounded. She could not remember the code. The kids got up.

I slept through the whole thing, but got a blow by blow later.

A couple of days later, though, we were reading on the screened-in porch - it's still September down here - when Cynthia decided to turn in, leaving me to do some editing.

Sometime after midnight, I decided to call it a night. I realized what had happened when I opened the living-room door and the lights were all out.

"Skreeeeeeeeeeeee. Open door. Front porch. Skreeeeeeeeeeeee."

I remembered the code, ran for the controller at the back door, punched in the numbers. Nothing.

"Skreeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee."

Felicia ambled down the steps, rubbing her eyes and laughing when I explained.

"You have to hit 'off,' Daddy."

Well, nobody told me that. When we arrived, I was instructed not to go out at night unaware. Children, we lived in the city for 10 years. Give us a break.

Of course, we both got robbed during that time.... So, when we wanted to go for a twilight walk, we took the aforementioned dogs. One is a huge Lab, the other, half rottweiler and half something else, either great Dane or maybe wolf.

I soon learned that if someone was near the sidewalk, you should not let your dog head their way. It causes panic.

We passed two guys with a black Explorer, the same car the kids drive. The Lab just naturally tried to get in and go for a ride. The men jumped, but I explained that a good licking was the worst fate they faced. Then the other dog came around the front of their truck.

"Oh, you must feed that one steak," one of them said.

"Anything he wants," I replied. "Anything he wants."

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.

To handle bugs, take a lesson from past

This bed bug scare really concerns me. If there is one thing I hate, it's to have bugs of any kind in my house. I will chase one little fly all over the house with a fly swatter until I get him. I just can't stand to have those dirty little critters landing on my food or on me. So you can understand that I would really be upset if I had bugs crawling around in my bed.

That's why I was so interested in the email I received from Maxine Nelson a day or so ago. It said that she had a friend, or it might not have been Maxine's friend, because she might have forwarded the email to me from another person. Anyway, this friend said that she had a friend whose son is an entomologist. This entomologist says that he feels we are getting bed bugs in the U.S. because of all the imports we get from other countries where people live with these insects every day and think nothing of it. He feels that the fabrics and clothing we import from these countries may be infested with these tiny creatures when they arrive here, because when bed bugs first hatch they are microscopic and we wouldn't be able to see them.

He suggest that when we first receive our clothing, we wash it and dry it in the dryer before we put it in our closet, and if we can't wash it, we should put it in a hot dryer for at least 20 minutes.

This makes sense to me, and I think we are probably receiving some of these little guys in the boxes of other products we receive from foreign countries. I know this sounds like I am putting these other countries down, but if we are going to stop this outbreak, we have to be honest about where the insects are coming from.

I remember when we used to laugh at my mother-in-law in past years. Every time we went out of town and started to check in to a motel, she wouldn't let us agree to sign for the room until she had gone in and lifted up the sheets to check for bugs in the bed, to also see if the bathroom had been cleaned, and check



Marj Brown

• Marj's Snippets

the rugs for spots of strange unidentifiable stains.

I imagine she got into this habit, because when she was a child in the 1920s, a lot of families had insects such as bed bugs and cockroaches in their homes. I can remember that my grandmother's house had cockroaches in it. You seldom ever saw them during the daytime but if you went into the kitchen at night and turned on the light, those little guys were taking over the place. She thought nothing of it, but it gave me the creeps.

After Grandma died I was given her round pedestal dining room table. We moved it to our basement - thinking nothing of the fact that she had cockroaches. Well it wasn't long until we started seeing an occasional roach upstairs in our home. Then, one night when we came home after dark and turned on the kitchen light, there were so many roaches in the kitchen that the kitchen cabinet appeared to be moving.

The very next day I had the exterminator over there destroying those little monsters. It actually took six months of treatments to get rid of all of them. The exterminator said, "There is no shame in having cockroaches, the shame is in keeping them." He turned over Grandma's table and the bottom square pedestal support holding up the table was full of cockroach eggs. The exterminator said each one of those eggs contains thousands of tiny microscopic insects. He said it take quite a while before they get big enough that you can see them.

This all brings to mind a little story I read in a book we were required to read in one of my

college psychology classes, I believe it was, "I'm OK, You're OK," by Thomas A. Harris M.D. In this story, whenever this family had company come over to their house, the mother would always hand her daughter the coats and whisper to her, "Don't lay the coats on the bed." This went on for several years until finally, the daughter asked her mother, "Why can't we lay the coats on the bed?" The mother said, "I don't know, that's what Mother always told me." So the mother asked grandma, "Why did you always tell me not to lay the coats on the bed?" Well, Grandma said, "I don't know, that's what Mother always told me." Finally, Grandma asked Great-grandma, "Why wouldn't you ever let me lay our company's coats on our beds?" Great-grandma replied, "Well, back in those days, a lot of people had lice and I didn't want their lice on our beds."

It looks like we might have to get back to the habit of not laying the coats on the beds again, or maybe not even bringing them in the house. I guess we could put a coat rack on the front porch.

Marj Brown has lived in Colby for 62 years and has spent a good deal of that time writing about people and places here. She says it's one of her favorite things to do.

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• Bruce Tinsley

