



Other Viewpoints

Lab funding boosts Kansas economy

It's great news for Kansas that President Obama's budget includes \$714 million to build the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility in Manhattan. The lab is projected to have an overall economic impact on the state of \$3.5 billion during its first two decades.

As Gov. Sam Brownback said in a statement: "NBAF is vital to the security of our country's food supply, the health of our livestock industry and growing our state's economy."

Though the U.S. Department of Homeland Security already has invested nearly \$200 million in site preparation and design work, there's been doubt about whether the lab would be built. The economic downturn caused some members of Congress to rethink the project. Others raised concerns about possible risks of an infectious pathogen leaking from the lab. And some Kansas leaders worried that the bad blood between Rep. Tim Huelskamp, R-Fowler, and House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, could endanger the money.

So Wednesday's announcement was a relief.

Obama is requesting that Kansas invest \$202 million more in the project. The state already has committed \$105 million in matching money and \$35 million for research.

The additional money could be a challenge, given the state's budget squeeze. But Brownback says he plans to work with the Legislature during the upcoming veto session to approve more bonds.

Congress must follow through on Obama's proposal, so hurdles remain. Still, as Sen. Pat Roberts of Kansas noted, the funding request is a milestone.

— *The Wichita Eagle, via the Associated Press*

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U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124. Web site: huelskamp.house.gov

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Old hospital has haunting history

I was visiting with someone about the possibility of the old Thomas County Hospital being renovated into apartments for retired people. This person asked me if I thought that building would make good apartments.

I'm sure that with the right architect and a good amount of resources, that building could be made in to a very good apartment building. But then I began to think about when I used to work there as a nurse and realized I would have a hard time adjusting to the surroundings if I ever moved into one of those apartments.

Of course, people who never worked there wouldn't have the same feelings nurses might have, especially if they had the night shift like I did when I began working on the third floor. At night, when all the patients were sleeping and there was nothing going on, that building could be a little spooky.

For example: after we got all the patients to bed and our work was completed for an hour or so, we would find time to grab a cup of coffee and sit down at the nurses' station to visit, catch up on our charting, or answer a light or two when a patient needed something. That's when we could hear all of the creaking and cracking sounds present in most old buildings, especially when the wind was blowing.

There was something else, too: we would hear the elevator start coming up from the first floor. It seemed to come up extra slow in the middle of the night. When it got to the third floor, the doors would slowly open and there would be no one there. After waiting for a moment or two, the doors would close and it would slowly go back down. One of the nurses said it was letting off patients from the past like those ghosts in Dickens' "Christmas Carol."

Since you can enter the basement from the



Marj Brown

• Marj's Snippets

ground floor on the south side, it is considered to be the first floor, so the building actually has four floors. First floor housed the lab, x-ray, central supply and the emergency room. The south side of the basement housed the cafeteria. It was always dark in the basement at night and a bit frightening.

When I had to go down to that dark basement in the middle of the night to answer the emergency-room door it could be rather frightening. There were two large glass doors and you could see who was standing there, but they could also see you. If someone decided to take a shot at you, they could shoot right through the door. Thank goodness that never happened.

The emergency entrance had a balcony over the top that was rather low. Once when a pickup truck with a camper on it came through there in a hurry, it took the camper right off the back of the truck.

That balcony was also a problem for those of us who worked on third floor. If we didn't remember to check and make sure the door was locked at night, an elderly patient could get up without us knowing and wander out there. That could be a dangerous situation. One night I, had a patient go a little crazy and I had a real wrestling match trying to get him off the balcony.

The second floor had admissions and offices

in the front where most people came in. The intensive care area was right beside the nurses' station when you came through some double doors. The rest of the rooms on second floor were for general medical patients and isolation.

The chapel was also on second floor, just below obstetrics on the third floor. I had all three of my children there when it was still St. Thomas Hospital and operated by Catholic nuns. I would wake up early in the morning when I was recuperating from delivery to the beautiful sounds of the nuns singing during their morning Mass.

When I was working at night, if the wind was blowing, there were times when I actually thought I could still hear them singing.

Third floor, where I worked, housed the obstetrics patients, the delivery room, labor room, the baby nursery and surgical patients.

Fourth floor was for surgeries and immediate post-operative care. I don't know if there was anything else up there because I was never up there. I'm sure that some of the nurses still working at Citizen's Medical Center who worked at the old hospital longer than I did could add more information about that building, because I didn't become a nurse until after I was 40.

Yes, I could have a bit of a problem living in an apartment there unless it was completely remodeled so I wouldn't recognize anything. Otherwise, I would always remember the sounds in the night and that elevator opening for no reason. It might be the ghosts of some of my old patients coming back to haunt me.

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.

Education 'villains' have their reasons

A physician who murders. A policeman who commits a crime. These are especially heinous, because we expect doctors to save lives and police to prevent crime.

So when 35 educators in Atlanta, including their district superintendent, are charged with criminal conspiracy in cheating, this is particularly egregious. We expect educators to be models of honesty for our students. Their role is to nurture the best of behavior in students. The alleged massive cheating by teachers in schools in Atlanta and Long Island, N.Y., and other districts across the United States deserves the condemnation and loathing it has received.

There are no excuses. But there are reasons. This dramatic upturn in cheating coincided with the No Child Left Behind high-stakes testing. And there are other parties who are culpable.

Consider a hypothetical hospital with competent doctors and nurses and a normal range of patients. However, the governing board decides to interfere with their professional responsibilities and demands that all patients will survive. "Outcome-based" criteria narrow to one test: "happiness" as the patients leave the hospital.

Failure to "be accountable" will mean defunding the hospital and firing the doctors and nurses. The staff knows the critical value of their hospital to the community. They must



John Richard Schrock

• Education Frontlines

work to preserve it. They try to preserve the range of care and medication and surgeries they conduct. But dosing patients with Valium to score high on "happiness" when they leave becomes Job One.

For public schools across America, this is not hypothetical. Last month's statewide testing has caused teachers to distort their whole year's curriculum. Administrators contrive every possible mechanism for extorting student cooperation to raise scores.

Harsh testing regimes have been put in place to ensure that teachers do not hover over a student or frown at a wrong answer or raise eyebrows as a clue. Letters sent to parents threaten ostracism of their child if the parents do not sign and return a promise to coerce their student to make maximum effort on the test.

Some affluent school districts have privileged students and can meet test standards without prostituting their curriculum. Some rural school principals tell their teachers to teach as professionals and let the test scores fall where they may (but at the principal's and

school's own risk).

But high-stakes testing corrupts our educational system. Kansas has not made headlines about teachers gathering in locked classrooms at night to change test scores. But an atmosphere of academic tyranny sets the tone in many Kansas schools with large numbers of disadvantaged students — places still branded as "failing schools."

So how is a teacher — who wants to preserve some small fragment of academic integrity, who wants to teach the whole child about more than test-taking, who wants to remain a professional — able to survive in this "Fourth Reich"?

The heroes are the teachers in Seattle. These freedom fighters confronted the pressure to raise scores on high stakes tests as professionals. They refused to administer a test they know is wrong. Despite threats, they formed "The Resistance."

If teachers who change test scores are the villains, then these teachers are the heroes.

For those who quietly "go along" with the destructive high-stakes testing, there may never be a "Nuremberg Trial."

But remember, "I was just following orders from above" will be no excuse.

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

