

Other Viewpoints

Electronic filing moves courts ahead

More and more transactions in daily life take place digitally – medical record-keeping, tax filing, bill paying – and the Kansas courts for some time have been seeking to join this digital revolution.

While initial implementation of an electronic court case filing system has been taking place, funding has been a stumbling block to statewide implementation. During the past legislative session, the state Supreme Court was unsuccessful in its request for \$1.1 million for such an expansion.

So Wednesday's news that the Kansas Supreme Court has received a federal grant of more than \$205,000, allowing even more counties to make the digital transition, was heartening. The federal Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant was awarded to the Supreme Court via the Kansas Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. The money will be used to pay for installation of e-filing systems in the district courts of Wyandotte, Butler, Reno, Saline, Finney and Geary counties.

Seeking out varied sources of funding is a great way to achieve these goals without tapping into state dollars. Of course, the grant dollars still come from Kansas taxpayers' pocketbooks, via the federal government.

While Chief Justice Lawton Nuss said an additional \$1 million still would be needed to reach out to the rest of the state, we anticipate the time when such e-filing systems could become self-sustaining. During an initial appeal to the Legislature in 2012, Nuss said the court would rely on fees and fines to pay for ongoing operations of the network.

Among its benefits, e-filing is expected to reduce the time spent by court staff processing case filings; enable court clerks, judges and participants to access court files any time; reduce data entry errors and physical storage costs; and reduce or eliminate postage, delivery, photocopying and other paper-handling expenses for courts, lawyers and court users.

The Supreme Court and the Kansas Court of Appeals already are part of e-filing pilot projects, paid for by another federal grant, in addition to the district courts in Leavenworth, Douglas and Sedgwick counties. Shawnee County is scheduled to implement e-filing this fall, Nuss said, and Johnson County already has e-filing available for several types of cases.

Nuss said that by the end of the fiscal year, counties representing 65 percent of statewide filings would have e-filing capabilities. During fiscal year 2012, more than 440,000 cases were filed in Kansas district courts.

"We are doing our best to become more efficient," Nuss said, a worthy goal at a time of shrinking budgets and reduced staff resources.

– The Topeka Capital-Journal, 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.

COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth St. (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

Send news to: colby.editor@nwkansan.com

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.

THE SARAH-PALIN-FOR-SENATE CROWD SENDS UP A TRIAL BALLOON...

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Food innovation is progress

Seems like not a day goes by without a media story on our country's food supply. Some folks have concluded that the best plate may be an empty plate. How else are they going to avoid killer popcorn, monster tomatoes, drug-treated cattle, radioactive chicken or toenail hotdogs?

Some would argue we do not need genetically modified organisms. Others would say keep all antibiotics out of livestock. A few would even argue we have too much food and this is what has led to this nation's obesity problem.

If you are overwhelmed by news reports that question the safety of your food, you're not alone. What can we do?

To begin with, exercise common sense.

Overconsumption and obesity are indeed health hazards, but generally speaking food scientists do not believe specific foods are health villains.

Most of us depend on advanced agricultural practices and food technology to give us an abundant, safe, reliable and affordable food supply. As the world's population continues



John Schlageck

• Insights
Kansas Farm Bureau

to increase, U.S. farmers and ranchers need to continue to find new ways to produce more food, more efficiently. Much of the world continues to face food shortages that our country can address.

Why shouldn't we have access to delicious fruits and vegetables all year round, especially when the increased intake of such food items has been scientifically proven to be healthy and reduce the risk of disease?

Technology critics have been around since the first caveman rounded off the square edges of a stone block and chiseled out the first wheel. People fought the coming of steam locomotives and buggy makers cried out against the coming of the Model T.

Food irradiation and bioengineered foods can be summarized in one word – progress.

Food safety has always been an emotional issue. Reactions to some of these food scares confirm the old adage that a rumor can travel half way around the world before the truth pulls on its boots.

Too often today, most news translates to bad news. The prospect of sensationalism is often irresistible and easier than digging a bit deeper and finding the truth.

If more scientists stepped forward to correct this misinformation we would all be better off.

Until that occurs, be wary of food scares. On the other hand, don't forget to eat and drink from our food supply brought to you by this nation's farmers and ranchers. It remains the safest, best tasting in the world.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm near Seguin, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

Endowment Foundation has limits

To the Editor,

There seems to be some confusion about the role of the Colby Community College Endowment Foundation and the financial needs of the college. Hopefully this letter will help clarify issues of concern about the foundation contributing money to subsidize the college's general fund.

I. Purpose

The Endowment Foundation is a nonprofit organization incorporated under the 501c3 laws of Kansas. Its objectives are: to raise funds to support and promote education undertaken at the college; and to that end, receive and hold in trust any property, real and personal, in any way transferred to the corporation for the use and benefit of the college.

Although the foundation is an independent organization and is administered by its own board of trustees, its functions and policies will always be consistent with the functions, policies and destiny of the college.

The policy of the foundation is to seek out and accept gifts with the intent to manage the money and generate new income without erosion of principal.

The purpose of the income is to create money that will be used for scholarships, loans, departmental programs, faculty development and overall enrichment of the college itself.

The philosophy of the foundation is, "Money has the enduring characteristic of enhancing the quality of the college."

II. Mission Statement

The Endowment Foundation's mission is to support Colby Community College through performance of three fundamental functions: 1) raise funds; 2) raise friends; and 3) invest and disburse funds.



Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

The foundation currently holds and manages just under \$6 million, divided into three types of funds:

1. Permanently Restricted, \$4,192,000. Donors require the foundation to maintain the principal portion of their gift in order to generate long-term income. These funds cannot be given directly to the college without specific written consent from each individual donor.

2. Temporarily Restricted, \$784,000. Amounts that cannot be given to the college unless the requirement of the restriction is met. For example, funds restricted for use by the chemistry department can't be given until proper chemistry department requests are made. Funds must be distributed in accordance with the restriction on each fund.

3. Unrestricted, \$865,000. Fund used for administration of other funds. These funds can be distributed and used at the discretion of the board.

As you can see by the fund amounts and foundation policy, only unrestricted money can be used, as the balance has specific restrictions on use. The \$865,000 is the fund used to provide scholarships, and also provides operational funds for the foundation.

The Endowment Foundation currently has a fund for the purpose of reserve recovery and

we would be more than glad to make sure your contribution is receipted with full 501c3 status. For information please contact the foundation office.

Colby Community College Foundation board members: Shane Franz, president, Jay Todd, president elect, Jayme Pfeifer, secretary, Lisa Schamberger, treasurer, Suzanne Schielke, Darrell Pabst, Janice Cates, Pam Geihlsler, Cynthia Dixon, Kristy McCarty, Larry Koon, Sharon Redmond, Lynette Ball

Government needs God

To the Editor:

In 1787, the delegates of the Constitutional Congress met at Independence Hall in Philadelphia to hammer out the Constitution.

Tempers flared and finally, 81-year-old Ben Franklin, perhaps the least religious of those present, stood up and said, "I have lived a long time. The more proofs I see of the truth, that God governs in the affairs of men. 'Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.' (Psalm 127:1) We cannot leave it to chance, war, conquest or despair of establishing this government."

Franklin asked them to pray and ask the help of heaven's blessings before they proceeded on the business of writing the Constitution. George Washington felt it was a miracle.

The Declaration of Independence states, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights. That among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Darrell Keefover, Barnes

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Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

