

Newspaper will publish school district salaries

It's nearly time for Kansas school districts to publish their executive salaries again.

We want to serve fair notice that this newspaper will once again print the salaries reported by area districts and compare them with those of other districts and other public officials.

The reporting requirement is sort of a screwball law, but it's not a bad idea. It originated a couple of years ago when someone found that an old Kansas law required Kansas school districts to pay for a legal notice to publish administrator's pay.

There was much wailing and gnashing of teeth, and school groups tried to get the Legislature to repeal the law. Instead, it was changed so that districts only have to give out a press release with the salaries. It's up to newspapers and broadcast stations what to do with it.

We happen to think it's a healthy thing for the voters to know what they pay public officials, elected or appointed. Salaries of all public employees are open information, and any citizen can go to the courthouse or the school office and see them.

In some states, in fact, county and school payroll is published each month. There would be nothing wrong with that.

One of the things you give up when you take a tax-paid job is a certain amount of privacy. As a public employee, you know *when you take a job that you may be in the public eye,*

and your salary is public information.

We think it's hardly fair to pick on school administrators, though. If their salaries are going to be in the paper, we think other public executives — county officials, city administrators, hospital executives — should be there as well.

These people are your employees, your administrators, running your tax-supported agencies. You pay them; you deserve to see how much.

School people seem to be a little defensive about this, because on the whole, they make more than most public officials. They may well be worth it, considering the years of education and experience their jobs require, and the importance of the task they are charged with. That is not for the newspaper to decide.

Rather, the voters need to have this information so they can make informed judgments on who gets what, who needs what and who deserves what. Maybe some of the other officials are underpaid.

We plan to present the information in an objective manner, and let you, the taxpayers, voters and readers decide what you think.

We won't be revealing any secrets, but unless somebody does the legwork, it's hard to make comparisons. All the officials will get a chance to comment. The voters always have the final say.

And that's how it should be in a democracy.

— Steve Haynes

Long ride with cat was tranquil

I'm not a doctor, a nurse or even a veterinarian, but I seem to be pushing pills down unwilling throats lately.

Before youngest daughter moved to South Carolina, she asked me to get a couple of tranquilizer pills for her cat, Rupert. Rupert, she said, gets car sick and she really didn't want to take her on a two-day trip unless she was asleep.

Since Rupert has been to see my veterinarian more times than my pocketbook wants to count, he was willing to prescribe some mild tranquilizers, suggesting that youngest daughter try half a pill first.

I handed over the pills and daughter immediately gave half of one to Rupert. I reminded her that the pills only last about 12 hours and she wasn't leaving for a week.

She pointed to a big bite on Rupert's hindquarters and said that she had decided to see if half a pill was enough. She figured she could get the cat sleepy enough to clean and medicate the wound while checking to see if half a tranquilizer would be enough.

It wasn't. The cat staggered around a lot but didn't go to sleep, and she got quite huffy when we tried to snip the fur off from around the bite.

Another half pill, and the cat was still not happy about the manhandling but she was too sleepy to do much about it. Eventually, she hid in the cat carrier that would be her home for two days on the road.

After medicating Rupert, I decided that might work on my Molly Monster.

For the past couple of years, we have taken the dog Annie and one of



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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our cats on vacation. April Alice travels beautifully. She lays quietly in her carrier for hours on end.

Admittedly, near the end of a 12-hour trip, she starts to cry a little. I would too, if I was trapped in a box without bathroom facilities for 11 or 12 hours.

So the day before vacation, I talked to the vet about pills for Molly.

Molly doesn't travel well. She fights like crazy as we put her in her carrier for the annual trip to the vet.

When we brought her home from Emporia — she was a found cat — we thought maybe we should rename her Catzilla. She hadn't been declawed, and she spent the entire five-hour trip trying to rip the upholstery off the back of the seats.

Still, if those cute little pills could calm Rupert, I thought, they would calm Molly and she would love to be with us on vacation.

Last year while we were gone, she left several presents on carpets and chewed on things she shouldn't. I figured she missed us, so why not make it possible for her to enjoy vacation, too?

Steve said I was rationalizing. I popped a pill down her throat about two hours before leaving, and by the time we put her in her carrier,

she was docile but not asleep. Just past Colby, I gave her another half tablet. She's bigger than Rupert, and she was fighting those pills.

I won't say she slept all the way, but her meows were soft and infrequent and she sure has enjoyed the vacation — if not the trip.

See, see, I told you that she'd like going on vacation.

And the rugs at home appreciate us taking her.

From the Bible

Do good, O Lord, unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts. As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity; but peace shall be upon Israel. Psalm 125:4, 5



Can't wait for ripe tomatoes

Our tomatoes still haven't ripened.

But when I mentioned we wanted BLTs for supper, my friend Ila took pity on us and sent us home with some of her produce. When ours finally do turn, I'll return the flavor, uh, favor.

—ob—

Mom used to say, "Expect the unexpected." And nothing could have been more unexpected than the news we received this week from my brother Don's family.

Don's wife Liz has had a series of "mini strokes" and had been at their daughter Pam's in Phoenix when she needed to be hospitalized. Don flew from their home in Arkansas to Arizona to be with Liz. However, when he got there, he became ill, was taken to the emergency room, admitted for testing and learned that he has a form of lymphoma.

With both her parents in the hospital, Pam feels like she is living there, too. The good news, though, is Liz is much improved and ready to go home. Don feels good and is going home a few days ahead of her to remodel their bathroom from a tub to a shower facility. His doctors are encouraging about treatments and Don himself has a very positive outlook.

—ob—

We made major progress on our



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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remodeling project last week. We're focusing on the kitchen right now, and finished painting the walls. Jim ran the gas line for my cooktop and more electrical for an exhaust fan.

He also put in the heat ducts and leveled out the floor with some concrete. But the biggest change came when he laid out the frame for the cabinets themselves. I can stand in the middle of what will eventually be my new workspace and dream of the gourmet meals I will someday prepare.

Beans and wieners are gourmet, aren't they?

—ob—

Lemon meringue pie might not be gourmet, but I had the urge to make one this weekend. I had a fresh lemon in the crisper so I grated the rind and squeezed the juice. The pie itself turned out fine, but I always have trouble with the meringue. First, it was flat, it pulled away from the sides and got "weepy." I follow

all the experts' advice about sealing the edges, using a chilled bowl and beaters to no avail. It's the main reason I don't make more cream pies.

Besides, when I do, Jim feels compelled to ask everyone, in his broadest hillbilly accent, if they know what "ma-rang" is.

The unsuspecting victim will always answer, "No."

That's when he grabs my left hand and declares, "That's what my wife wears on her 'fan-gur'."

—ob—

There were three old friends out playing golf one day. All three were hard of hearing.

The first old man said, "It sure is windy."

The second man contradicted him and said, "No. It's Thursday."

To which the third man replied, "Me, too. Let's have a drink."

And confusion reigned supreme.

These birds are fascinating

I stand there, transfixed.

There is buzzing like the angry sound of bees, and it is the flutter of tiny wings.

Not bees, though.

It's dusk high in the San Juan Mountains of Colorado, and I'm in the middle of a hummingbird feeding frenzy.

With a hummingbird's metabolism, our daughter says, they probably have to eat a lot right before dusk so they can stay warm through the night. That could be true. There is ice on the roof each morning, and soon it will be time for these tiny visitors to head south.

Not tonight, though. For a half hour, dozens of them jockey for position at the four feeding stations on our front porch. I suppose the scene is repeated at houses up and down the Rio Grande.

The newest neighbors down the block have at least half a dozen feeders on their deck, overlooking the river. I wonder if they have this many visitors.

Seldom is there a time when no bird is at the feeder. They flutter in tiny queues, waiting for a turn at the perches, or duel in midair, the bigger or bossier bird getting to feed.

Their little dogfights soar to the



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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rafters, then spiral down. Eventually, one of the combatants breaks off, the other gets to eat — if some third party does not have the perch in the meantime.

Their engagements are brief, but spirited. I can hear the clack of their little beaks when they spar. No kidding.

Sometimes, one stops to hover just in front of my face. I'm glad I'm not wearing any red buttons. However, I am wearing safety glasses.

At times, there are more than a dozen little creatures hovering around the feeder at once. They spread their tails and flap those feathers to control the hover. You can see them operate, though the wings move far too fast for human sight.

There are ruby throats and plain birds, male and female. Goldens, with shimmering green backs. All

delicate, fast, furious.

I am not the only one watching. The cat, confined indoors, is in the window, fascinated.

How she would catch one she is not sure, but April Alice is willing to try.

We had a cat once, Midnight, who specialized in hummingbirds. He would sit under the aspen tree by the hour, just waiting for one to land.

Many made that mistake.

Not today, though. April does not have outdoor privileges.

Eventually, the show ends. Darkness gathers, and the birds apparently head for their perches. One straggler lands and slurps up a last meal.

It won't be long before they are gone for the winter, but for that half hour, it's quite a show.

Just ask April.

Rasure sends thanks to Oberlin

To the Editor:

Thank you to everyone for all the wonderful support you showed me over the past several months as I worked to become your state senator. Oberlin was a home away from home for me and my campaign staff; we were always welcomed whether it be a community event or just a stopover point.

Your work to bring new ideas and change to Topeka through talking, writing letters, putting up signs, and making phone calls made my campaign a success in many ways. I am only 22 years old, and the work we did will reap benefits in the future.

I am unsure what will come from our new Legislature, but we must stay involved and remind them they are representing us. It is our responsibility to make them listen. I always enjoyed the phone calls, letters, visits and e-mails I had with you and encourage you to do the same with your elected officials.

We must become more involved in our communities and finding ad-

Letter to the Editor

ditional job opportunities to sustain our way of life. Our future depends on it.

My goals in representing you and helping build up western Kansas have not changed. I will continue to work with local, regional, and state

organizations to get results for Kansas.

Thank you again for all your support, and I hope to earn your support in the future.

Dan Rasure
Goodland

Write

The Oberlin Herald encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of public interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

Mail letters to 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan., 67749, or by E-mail to oberald@nwkans.com.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise.

We do not publish 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 on private individuals or businesses which do not pertain to a public issue.

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