

Court ends school lawsuit but invites another round

The good news is the state Supreme Court finally let go of the 7-year-old school finance lawsuit.

Kansas schools will have more money and superintendents can get on with writing their budgets just as classes begin.

The bad news is the court all but issued an engraved invitation for yet another suit over the school finance law.

Ruling last week, the court said efforts by the Legislature to put \$831 million more into schools over the last two years had met its order requiring legislative action. It declared an end to a 1999 lawsuit filed by medium-size districts led by Salina, Hays and Dodge City.

In a way, the 4-2 decision represented an about-face by a court that had been tough and uncompromising earlier this year. Since then, the justices have had their noses bloodied by the revelation that one of their number was meeting with senators to talk about the case.

The court noted that is wasn't ruling on the constitutionality of the latest version of the school finance law, which depends more heavily on local property taxes. In the past, lawyers have argued that rich districts get richer while children in poor districts get a poor education.

A decision on that wasn't before the court in this suit, the justices said, and "must wait for another day."

Anyone willing to bet the aggrieved school districts won't take up that challenge?

By the time the next lawsuit is done, school finance will have been in court for more than a decade. The lawsuits are corrupting the legislative process and tilting the state's budget toward public schools and away from higher education.

The state's colleges now get less than a quarter of their revenue from state money. They have raised tuition every year, banking on students taking out more loans with easy federal-guaranteed credit.

That's leaving the next generation saddled with huge debt to get an education since, increasingly, a high school degree is not enough.

Other state programs, from highways to prisons, have suffered as well, since the Legislature has held the line on taxes.

The truth is, the court should never have become so deeply involved in spending decisions. The justices' job is to review the law to see whether it meets constitutional standards for fairness, but they shouldn't judge the amount the Legislature sees fit to put into schools.

Dividing up the tax pie is the Legislature's responsibility and duty under the Constitution.

In retreating to the issue of how the money is distributed, though, the court may be getting back to its own back yard. That's good. It's willingness to perpetuate school lawsuits is not.

This needs to stop somewhere.

— Steve Haynes

'Glory hound' back at home

The house has a hollow sound since a little 7-year-old is not there to fill it.

I don't know how a month went by so quickly, but it is gone, and Taylor is back with her family.

During her time with us, I may have created a monster. Taylor came to enjoy her notoriety. Most people she met would say, "So, are you the Taylor we read about in the paper?"

And she would pipe up, "Yes, I am."

It even got to the point where we'd do something and she'd ask, "G'ma, are you going to write about that in the paper?" I think she may be a little bit of a "glory hound."

Her mother met us in Wichita for the "swap." Their reunion was a beautiful sight. Kara was waiting for us at the motel door and Taylor was out of her booster seat before I stopped the car. She was calling, "Mommy, Mommy," as soon as she saw her mother.

I don't think Kara quit hugging and kissing Taylor for about five minutes. Yes, a month may have been a little too long — for both sides. It was fine with me, but I don't think the other two will ever go for that again.

Taylor was like a magpie, trying to tell her mother everything she had done over the month. She was like a machine gun; she couldn't talk fast enough. Finally, exhausted from listening, Kara said, "Taylor, please. Can you be still for just one minute?"

Later, Taylor wanted her mom to see that she knew how to play solitaire. Kara then showed all of us how to play "Kings in the Corners," a version of solitaire where there can



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
cplotts@nwkansan.com

be more than one player. Taylor, of course, picked it right up but G'ma wasn't quite so quick and I missed a play when it was my turn.

Taylor immediately saw my mistake and said, "Grandma, you have to pay attention." Then, using her hand and fingers in a spell-binding motion in front of my eyes, she said, "Focus. Focus."

Boy, am I going to miss her.

This heat has been brutal. I don't know how people stand to work outside in it. Well, they don't, I guess. I heard on the news that dozens of people have died from heat.

I warn Jim to be careful. He's still finishing up a house with brick and new siding. At least he quits early in the afternoon to avoid the worst of it. I feel a little guilty sitting in my air-conditioned office, but I get over

it real quick.

—ob—
The baby watch is still on for Jennifer. We do know that she will definitely be born by Thursday, so we are leaving for San Antonio on Saturday. That will give everyone a day or two at home before we get there.

Oh, I found out the middle name: Aniston Paige. We'll call her Annie for short. I like it.

From the Bible

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.
Isaiah 1: 2

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 obherald@nwkansan.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.

THE OBERLIN HERALD

Serving Oberlin and Decatur County since 1879

USPS 401-600

170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243

Phone: (785) 475-2206 Fax (785) 475-2800

E-mail: obherald@nwkansan.com

Nor'West Newspapers

STAFF

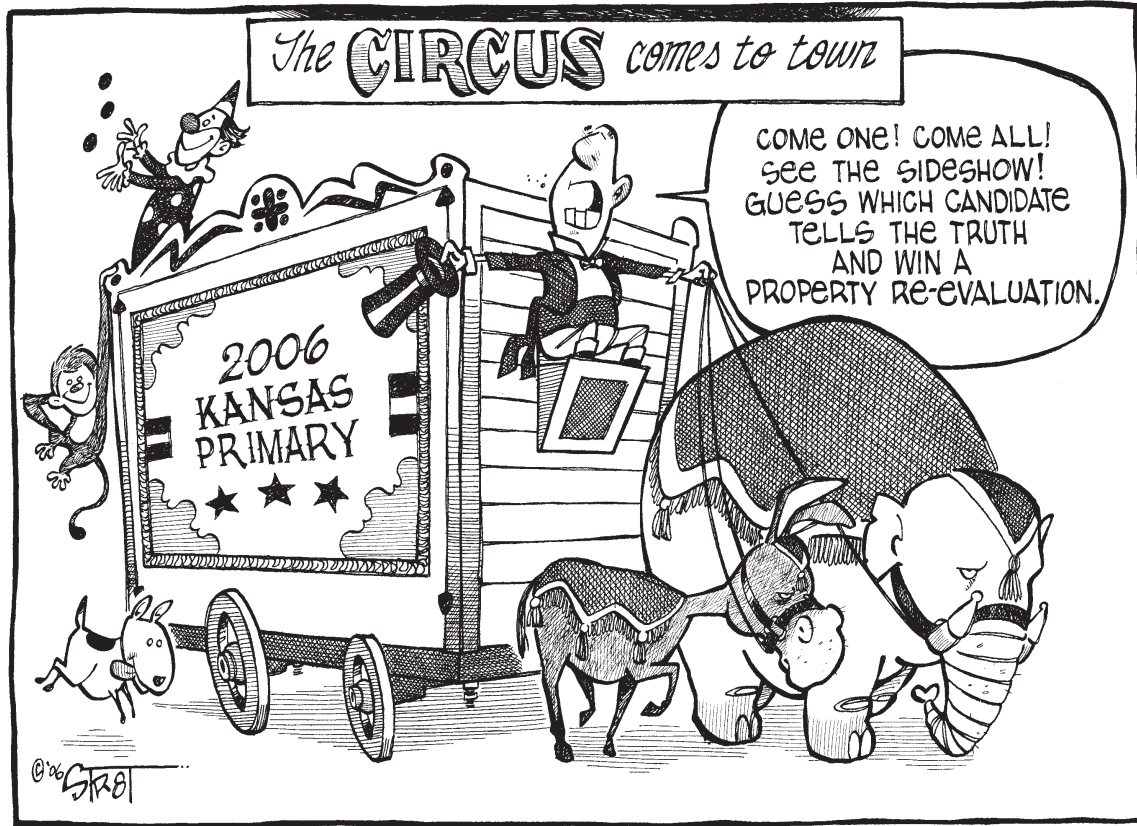
- Steve Haynes editor
- Kimberly Davis managing editor
- Mary Lou Olson society editor
- Judy Jordan proofreader
- Carolyn Kelley-Plotts columnist
- Cynthia Haynes business manager
- David Bergling advertising manager
- Pat Cozad wantads/circulation
- Karla Jones advertising production
- Joan Betts historian
- Jim Merriott sports reporter
- Whitney Beinke page makeup

Published each Wednesday by Haynes Publishing Co., 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749. Periodicals mail postage paid at Oberlin, Kan. 67749.

Steve and Cynthia Haynes, publishers
Official newspaper of Oberlin, Jennings, Norcatur, Dresden and Decatur County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, Colorado Press Association, Nebraska Press Association and Inland Press Association.

Subscriptions: One year, \$33 (tax included) in Decatur, Norton, Rawlins, Sheridan, Thomas and Red Willow counties; \$38 (tax included) elsewhere in Kansas; \$42 elsewhere in the U.S. Foreign subscriptions, \$50-\$250 (in US dollars only) extra per year (except APO/FPO). POSTMASTER: Send change of address to 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243.

Office hours: 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri. (Also open most Saturdays when someone is in.)



Little visitor is one lucky feline

I'm not sure why we were counting cats, but it had something to do with our anniversary.

We celebrated our 35th on Saturday night by going out to dinner. On the way there, the subject of cats came up and Steve started counting the ones we've had over the last quarter century plus 10.

He came up with 16 plus many visitors, cats we picked up on the roadside and gave away and children's felines we kept for two weeks or two years.

Later that night, the count went up to 17 — or maybe not.

Gato Negro is a half-grown kitten. He's black, declawed, neutered and too friendly for his own good. He was lost and trying to hitch a ride at The Gateway in Oberlin when we ran into him.

After the car left without him — and somehow missed him backing up as he lay on the pavement behind it — I crouched down and whispered, "Kitty, kitty, kitty." He came running over, stopping when he came nose to nose with Annie, our Brittany. They were both fairly surprised.

Despite a hissy fit over the dog, Gato knew suckers when he saw them.

He trotted after us as we contin-



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
cahaynes@nwkansan.com

ued on our walk around town.

"Can I keep him," I asked, holding the purring bundle of fur. "He followed me home."

After we had left the parking lot, we kept a close eye out for little Gato.

After all, he's just a baby. When he cried, we carried him, and when he wiggled, we let him down. He spent the night in our garage.

On Sunday, he came in the house and took over the furniture, much to the surprise and disgust of the other four felines.

We figure that maybe he's one of those traveling cats that like to get into cars. They end up in odd places when the car stops and they get out or off without their owners knowing they even had a hitchhiker.

We called county dispatch and the veterinarians. Someone out there has got to be upset about the loss of

this little guy — he's a cutie.

Plus, they'd spent a bundle of money on the little nuisance.

I had come up with several names and Steve through in a few. Just in case we ended up with No. 17.

Cat No. 4 was named Midnight, so that's out, and we had Gato Negro, Blackie, Hitchhiker, Broom Rider, Shadow and Inky.

I kinda like Dang It's a Dog, but that may be a little bit long.

I needn't have worried, however. I struck pay dirt on my second call. The lady at the vet's office remembered the kitten. They had done his front and rear-end realignment just two weeks ago.

After a lazy Monday sleeping on feet, running around and bugging Tigger, the office cat, our little hitchhiker went home with his people. And wouldn't you know, his name is Midnight.

Reader will miss lifelong friend

To the Editor:

Congratulations on your eulogy for Charlie Corcoran. Charlie has been one of my friends all of my life. I knew the Corcorans as long as I can remember. My visits to Oberlin will certainly be less joyful.

My second item is the letter to the editor by Bernadine Samson regarding Connie Morris. Ms. Samson's remarks were totally uncalled for. Connie is one of the strong members

Letters to the Editor

of the state Board of Education and respected by most Kansas Republicans. She stands up for what she believes and does not accept unproven science standards.

Over the years, I have talked to many science and biology teachers

about the science standards and none of them were ever able to show me proof of the Theory of Evolution. It is still to this day just a theory.

Leonard W. Cullison
3012 S.E. Starlite Dr.
Topeka, Kan. 66605

Student visits the Panama Canal

This is the second letter from Rebecca Helm, who is on a Rotary exchange in Panama City, Panama, taken from the July 18 Norcatur News. She is the daughter of Mike and Debra Helm of Norcatur.

On Saturday, July 8, I went to see the Panama Canal. There was a little museum to look at while we were waiting for a boat to go through the lock.

The first floor of the museum had the history of the building of the canal. The second floor was about the wildlife around the canal. I learned that the land around the canal is protected because of all the insects and animals the canal is important to. The third floor was about the mechanics of the canal system. The fourth and final floor showed which shipping businesses use the canal and the routes they take.

After the museum, we went to the theater and watched a short presentation on the canal. Then we went outside to wait for the ship. We took lots of pictures and then went home.

The next day was the FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) World Cup soccer

finals. I went to the house of one of Gretel's friends to watch the overtime part of the game. It was an exciting game that ended with Italy winning.

After the game, we went to one of the three malls in Panama City. Shopping seems to be a very important part of life here. It is considered very weird here to go into a store and not buy anything. So far, it has been a wonderful trip. I'm sure the rest of it will be just as great.

While I'm here in Panama, I'm going to an all-girls Catholic school. It is called the School de Esclavas of Jesus' Sacred Heart. I have to wear a uniform, a white blouse, plaid "skort," tall socks, and brown dress shoes. The girls aren't allowed to wear any jewelry except small earrings and a watch.

Each grade is split into two classes of about 40 girls each. School starts at 7:30 a.m. and gets over at 2 p.m. Each class period is 40 minutes. Instead of the girls changing classes, the teachers do.

The classes that we have change from day to day. I have math, art, technical drawing, religion, science,

science lab, English, English lab, computer, Spanish grammar, Spanish literature and history. Some classes are every day, like math and English, and others, like religion, are a couple of times a week. There are classes we have only once a week.

They don't have a lunch time here, but the girls pretty much eat when they want to. They have two periods of "recess" at the same time every day.

Behavior in class is a lot different. The girls talk through every class and their version of talking is yelling. If they have any trash, it just gets thrown on the floor for someone else to pick up.

The girls do take a lot of classes, but really our public school system is better than their private one. They lack many teaching supplies, so teachers provide their own. They are on a lower level in things like math. School is very different here and expectations are different. It is an interesting experience to come here and see their school.

Rebecca Helm
Norcatur

Parents need to teach accountability

To the Editor:

When I was growing up, my parents taught me that I must be accountable for my actions, knowing they were responsible for what I did.

At an early age, I learned to respect neighbors' property.

I think most parents do a good job of watching and raising their children. It is the few who are more interested in themselves than their children that irritate me.

Roaming unsupervised, children tend to look for something to do and, if they have not been trained responsibly at home, they tend to be the few that develop problems later in life.

A back yard with no one at home is a target for these children, espe-

cially if the child does not have a pet — or a parent at hand. With parents out of sight, these kids find ways to entertain themselves, throwing rocks at innocent penned dogs and pulling up a person's garden for no other reason than to amuse themselves.

I found onion sets pulled and

thrown around my dog's pen, lettuce pulled up, spinach trampled, cabbage stepped on, and 10 cantaloupes smashed in the middle of the street.

Wouldn't a responsible parent question this behavior?

Jim Merriott
Oberlin

Photo Policy

The Oberlin Herald wants to emphasize photos of people doing things in the community. If you know of an event or news happening that we should attend, please call 475-2206.

Please be sure to allow a couple of days' notice so we can arrange to be there.

Space in the paper is limited and so is the time of our staff, so we may not be able to get to every event.