

State should farm out workforce to our area

Let's revisit a proposition championed by the late Sen. Stan Clark, who thought the state should have more offices out in the hinterlands and fewer in Topeka.

Sen. Clark once suggested that, instead of buying up more buildings in Topeka to house an ever-expanding work force, the state should start farming out its work to places like Oberlin and Atwood.

With modern communications, he argued, most jobs could be done in Colby or Hoxie as well as they could be in Topeka. Some might argue that the state would get better workers and a better product out in rural Kansas.

Half a century ago, the state built an office tower in Topeka. Today, the government spills out into two more office buildings and a passel of other space.

There's no reason why all that money has to be spent in Topeka. Some of it could be creating economic development in rural counties bypassed by state government in the last few decades.

There's a whole litany of crimes against the rural economy the state should atone for: closing Social and Rehabilitation Services offices, highway shops in smaller towns, consolidating Highway Patrol dispatch centers, the list goes on.

Sure, that's the way utilities like Southwestern Bell (now the "new" AT&T) do business. Once Bell had operators and a business office in nearly every town; today our small towns have been deserted. Those functions have been "centralized" in Wichita, Tulsa, Dallas — or Bangalore.

But Ma Bell isn't run with tax money and has no responsibility to promote economic development. We all know how much she loves us.

The state of Kansas, though, in many ways has been a booster for rural decline. New highways concentrated traffic, drying up commerce along the two-lanes across our state. Consolidations closed schools, offices and services.

If we're interested in a stronger state economy, shouldn't we demand that the state reverse this trend? And shouldn't we want every county in Kansas to be prosperous, not just a few?

Stan Clark thought so. He'd only begun the fight before his untimely death in a prairie dust storm three years ago.

The rest of us should take up the torch. A computer center in Atwood. An engineering office in Hill City. Maybe a prison in Oakley and a research center in Goodland.

Oh, here's an idea: welfare offices in every county where people can go down and apply for help — in person, not on the phone. Maybe state service centers where people could get all kinds of services at the county seat without a day-long drive to some consolidated office.

Someone will say state workers don't want to move out to the sticks. Too bad. Hire people who want to live here.

There are, last time we checked, lots of other jobs in Topeka for those who don't want to move.

— Steve Haynes



Counting cat noses, one missing

We're still a cat short when the roll call comes around.

There's Mollie. She's the top cat, bossy and thinks she's a dog. Her preferred place is the food bowl, anywhere she wants to be and at the foot of bed at night.

April Alice plays second cat most of the time. She walks carefully around Mollie and prefers to be nonconfrontational. She likes sunbeams and by my side at night then right next to Steve when I get up in the morning.

Jezebel is daughter Lindsay's cat. She will disappear down in the basement for months on end, then appear in our sitting room and demand to be petted — NOW!. She has adopted Steve and disappeared the week he was gone. Now she's back — now and then — demanding more love and affection.

Then there is what-her-name, the kitten.

She disappeared in the basement and has only been seen in flashes over the last several weeks. We've seen so little of her, we haven't even named her yet.

She's definitely the mystery cat.

In the last two weeks, I've seen her twice. Once while in the basement I spotted her walking along the rafters. She looked at me, turned her back and continued on her way, way



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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above my head. I spotted her through our glass back door when I came home unexpectedly one night. She immediately disappeared down the basement steps.

I sat downstairs on the floor for almost an hour one day with a can of wet food. After an hour, I picked up my can and headed upstairs. April Alice ate the food.

I have moved the food bowl from the basement to the kitchen. This makes it necessary for the cats to come upstairs to eat — thus the second sighting of the mysterious kitten.

Sherry, my favorite pet pusher, lent me a cat and puppy trap to catch the kitten but I haven't used it yet. Steve says that if you have to trap a cat, it's probably not ever going to be a good pet. He has a point.

He also insists that any animal that doesn't contribute to our household should go.

For the dog, this means being insanely happy to see us any hour of the day or night, always ready to get in the car and go for a ride or a walk. The dog is our exercise machine. She needs to get exercised, so we walk.

For the cats, this means being cuddly, purring, warming laps and beds and providing occasional entertainment by chasing a moving light or string. The cat fights at 3 a.m. are an unplanned benefit.

Baby kitten needs to get with the program and learn to be more sociable, or she will get deported — no matter how pretty she is.

No, I wouldn't send her back to the Norton Animal Shelter. However, Steve's sister Barb lives on a farm with about 20 cats. I bet she'd take a pretty little Siamese mix into her barn. At least, I hope so.

In the meanwhile, "Here kitty, kitty, kitty."

Mexico family has new house

You could say the wind has gone out of my sails.

We returned from our Mexico mission trip late Saturday night. Got up pretty early Sunday for church and then conducted chapel services at prison in the afternoon. By 5 p.m. Sunday I was like a zombie, stumbling through the house.

Naturally, I wasn't too happy when two rambunctious cats decided to play "Let's Bite Her Toes" at 6 a.m. today (Monday). But I'm up now, cup of coffee in hand, bracing myself to get back in the saddle of everyday life.

I can't help but imagine what "our" family in Mexico is doing today.

The man of our family, Rogelio, is a very hard worker. He pitched in and helped mix cement and then gave the team members a lesson in how to finish stucco.

We learned his wife had died in September and he was raising his 15-year-old son by himself. Also living with him were his daughter and her son. That makes four people living in a 450-square-foot house.

I know Rogelio raises chickens, pigs and sheep. Can't really call him a farmer because he certainly couldn't "farm" anything. Cactus is about all that grows in that part of Mexico and water is too precious to waste on anything but survival.

When we dedicated the house to the family and gave them the keys, there were lots of tears shed; not only from Rogelio's family, but from the 25 young people and adult



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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leaders who helped build the house. It is always a moving moment.

And even though we have done this 16 times now, it still touches our hearts. That's why we keep going back.

-ob-

I have to confess, it wasn't all work. We had made plans before we left for Mexico for our daughter, Jennifer, to meet us in Odessa, Texas, on the return trip. She brought her two daughters, Alexandria and Aniston, and we had a mini-reunion.

Alex is 12 years old and Ani is eight months. What fun we had to-

gether. We played miniature golf, went swimming and even managed to get in a little shopping.

It was only for a day, but we crammed lots of memories into a short time.

-ob-

Little Taylor, our 8-year-old granddaughter, had an assignment at school. She was to complete a well-known adage.

The first was, "You can't teach an old dog — new people."

Next came, "If you lie down with dogs you'll — get up dirty."

And our all-time favorite: "Don't underestimate the power of — me."

Was he your teacher?

To the Editor:

My husband, John Saddler, is retiring after having taught for 35 years. He taught in Herndon from 1976 to 1982. I am trying to assemble a scrapbook of "well wishes" from former students or faculty.

Since this is a surprise, I will need them sent to me at school: USD 238, Box 188, Kensington, Kan., 66951

Letter to the Editor

or e-mail them to me at kreneberg@ruraltel.net.

Becky Saddler
Kensington

Chickens may affect property value

To the Editor:

The subject that I would like to address here is the Chicken Issue.

A resident of Oberlin passed a petition around town to get the issue of having chickens in her yard placed on the ballot for a vote of the majority without regard to what this means, long term, to the general public and the effect this will have on property owners of Oberlin.

The present ordinance, regulations and laws were established to keep the city clear of livestock, farm animals and exotic species. This has improved property values and also improved the pleasure of community life, so we don't have to smell pigsties, barnyards full of manure and urine, dead animals, feathers, dead animal skins, dry feces, hair mats and hair balls flying in the wind, dirty chicken coops, deteriorating chicken coops and despicable barn structures, and people who just don't give a hoot about the cleanliness of their yards.

Neighbors don't normally like to

Letters to the Editor

live with a dirty, stinking chicken coop, pigsty or barn next to their patio and/or barbecue grill. Can't you see it now ... barbecuing a steak and having chicken feces flying into your grill, adding flavor!

Sunday, March 11, was a cloudy day with a light mist falling, and the air was permeated with the smell of the stockyards. Do you want this pall hovering over Oberlin 24/7 because of your neighbor's being allowed to have farm animals in their yards?

I bring this up because if you allow one type of farm animal in town, you open up the door to all the rest. There will be no end to this, and the door will be swung wide open. Allowing chickens would grow to pigs, cows (bucket calves), horses, mules, unlimited dogs (kennels), cats and exotics.

Then, your property values will

go down the drain. The town's property values will deteriorate just because of one person's wanting chickens, without thought to the consequences to the neighbors and to the neighborhood or community. This is a question of responsibility to our neighbors and community.

If a community is to survive and grow, it must become a united community in all respects and not a barnyard to a few. In the long run, this change in the ordinance would be detrimental to the whole community of Oberlin. Property values will be hurt, and this would affect all of us. It will do nothing to attract outsiders to settle here in our town in the future.

Please think twice about this when you go to the polls on April 3.

Bernie Goetze
Oberlin

March is American Diabetes month

To the Editor:

Did you know it was not until 1922 that insulin was first used for people with diabetes? At that time it was rare for people who were diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes to live more than one to two years after being diagnosed.

The American Diabetes Association states that the "equivalent to less than a nickel a week is invested to find a cure, detect and treat diabetes?"

There are nearly 21 million people diagnosed with diabetes, including 10 percent of American seniors. More than 1.5 million people were diagnosed last year. This is an epidemic!

The American Diabetes Association has come a long way, if you think about the technology that has given us the use of the Hemoglobin A1C test and other laboratory tests that are essential to diagnose and treat diabetes.

Along with the American Diabetes Association, I, as a diabetic, encourage you to have essential lab tests to help you be in better control of your diabetes. The A1C test is excellent, as it goes back some three months to let you know what kind of control you are maintaining. Keeping your diabetes under control will help minimize complica-

tions. Kidney function tests should be done at least once or twice a year, more if needed. Have your eyes checked at least once a year with dilation solution. Your cholesterol and triglycerides should also be checked.

These tests may help prevent a stroke or heart attack, which diabetics are more prone to. This is a good time of year to have the necessary tests done so complications can be prevented.

With Christmas and the holidays, my blood sugar tests were not good. The doctor had to make some

changes. I am thankful for the A1C test.

It is a good idea to keep track of your blood sugar tests and bring this record to your doctor at each visit. Your blood pressure and weight need to be checked with each visit to your doctor.

Only you can help prevent the complications associated with this disease.

"Diabetes Under Control" is glad to be associated with the American Diabetes Association and all the help they have given to us.

Elsie Wolters
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, but we will try.

Because space is so limited, we

cannot run team or group photos, any pictures of people lined up or of people passing checks, certificates and the like. (We will always try to make room for a story about any of these events, however.)

We do run wedding and engagement pictures and "mug" shots with stories and obituaries, when they are provided to us.

Please remember that we need a clear, sharp picture. Dark or fuzzy prints will not work.

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