

Competition is the way to save our failing schools

How to solve the school mess? Mayor Rudy Giuliani has convinced us where Speaker Newt Gingrich never could: The solution lies in competition.

That means a complete overhaul of our school system, but then why not?

It's a mess today. Everyone agrees on that. Let's be fair. American schools, whatever their faults, remain among the best in the world. Government interference, first by states and then by the federal government, shackled them with an increasing burden.

When it appeared they were dragging, the solution always has been more money and more rules. Neither works.

Neither produced the kind of drive for excellence we perceived our schools as having a century ago.

Part of the problem is expectations. For much of that 100 years, we've pushed every year to get more and more kids into schools.

Out here in rural America, most kids succeed. Most graduate, almost all of those go on to some kind of post-secondary education.

In our cities, though half, even 75 percent of minority students still drop out. Without education, they face a bleak future of unemployment, poverty, crime, drugs and despair.

The No Child Left Behind Act, supposedly President Bush's crowning achievement, set even more regulations and spends even more money, but it won't work. All men may be created equal, but not all of us have equal capacity for learning, at least school learning.

But No Child may be the saving grace for

our schools. It may finally make things so bad we see that More of the Same isn't going to cut it. Thick books of federal and state regulations won't teach kids anything. Teaching them to pass standardized tests won't get them a job.

The solution, the mayor says, lies in creating competition, competition among public and private schools, church schools, charter schools and for-profit schools. If every parent gets a voucher to spend, and every parent shops for the best education for her children, then soon, only the best schools will survive.

Freed from burdensome regulations, public schools ought to be able to compete. Teachers could teach again, principals could supervise and discipline.

Only the market will tell, of course. There's no telling what education would look like in 50 years, but it'd be far better than the mess we have today.

Scary? Sure. The education establishment — school boards, superintendents, teachers, everyone who draws a school paycheck — they won't like it, not at first.

Change scares people. But we've been living with change for years now, and even teachers agree it hasn't been good.

The old days aren't coming back. We'll have to jump into the future, and the American experience shows, time and time again, with airlines, trucks, railroads, cars, appliances, that competition is the way to make things better.

Let's get with it. — *Steve Haynes*



Statues tell story of states' pride

Saints and sinners, rebels and kings, American citizens and those who came before statehood, all are immortalized in the National Statuary Hall at the Capitol.

We were in Washington for the National Newspaper Association's annual Government Affairs Conference. The meetings give us a chance to talk to our legislators, visit the embassy of a foreign power and hear some interesting speakers.

This year we got a special treat, as Rep. Chet Edwards from the 17th District in Texas took us on a private evening tour of the capitol. Rep. Edwards, a Democrat, has the distinction, if you want to call it that, of being President George W. Bush's congressman.

We visited the Senate floor, looked at a two-man debate going on in the House, looked at old rooms and new rooms, antechambers and hallways. Each had a story — sometimes lots of stories. Here were places where history was made.

The Statuary Hall, a beautiful room designed by Thomas Jefferson, held a special fascination for me.

The hall was the meeting place for the House of Representatives from 1807 to 1857. Now it houses a collection of larger-than-life figures of those who went before.

The statues, up to two per state, spill out of the large round room into halls on all sides.

By one door stands California's Father Junipero Serra with a cross. The early Spanish explorer and Franciscan monk spread Catholicism over Mexico and California in the 1700s. A couple of statues down is Huey Long, an infamous gover-



Open Season

By *Cynthia Haynes*
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nor and U.S. senator from Louisiana, who was assassinated. The populist Long was both loved and hated, called a hero and a dangerous influence.

A short walk around the hall brings you to the statues of a couple of Confederate heroes: Robert E. Lee, Virginia, and Jefferson Davis, Mississippi — patriots who turned their back on the Union in favor of their home states.

Another rebel statue is that of Po' Pay, of New Mexico, who helped lead an uprising among his fellow Pueblo Indians against the Spanish in the 1600s, before our founding fathers were even born.

Oklahoma's Sequoyah, a Cherokee; Wyoming's Washakie and North Dakota's Sacagawea, both Shoshones; and Nevada's Sarah Winnemucca, a Piute, represent native Americans.

Kings are represented by Kamehameha I, who established the kingdom of Hawaii in 1810, and Thomas Starr King, California, and William King of Maine.

Kansas has Dwight D. Eisenhower, who replaced former Gov. George Washington Glick, and John Ingalls, a U.S. Senator and noted wit.

Some Kansans hope to replace

Ingalls with a statue of Amelia Earhart.

Many names and faces were unfamiliar. I admit I don't have a clue about the significance of the statues of Lewis Wallace, Indiana; John Wheeler, Alabama; or Jason Lee, Oregon.

However, I recognized Texas freedom fighters and pioneers Stephen Austin and Sam Houston; Hawaii's priest to the lepers, Father Damien; Oklahoma's own Will Rogers; Missouri painter Thomas Hart Benton; Pennsylvanian and steam ship inventor Robert Fulton; Colorado scientist Florence Sabin; and a couple of patriots, Massachusetts' Samuel Adams and Virginia George Washington.

Other names from history, famous orators, judges and leaders, include Utah's Brigham Young, Nebraska's William Jennings Bryan, South Carolina's John C. Calhoun, Kentucky's Henry Clay, Tennessee's Andrew Jackson, Ohio's James Garfield and New Hampshire's Daniel Webster.

It's a strange place that brings all these people of different beliefs and backgrounds together — in the heart of a country which believes in diversity and freedom.

Junk just took over the place

I just want to run away from home and not come back until the "Mess Fairy" has been there and cleaned up.

We finally decided to rent the Sunflower Inn. That meant we had to remove everything from the house. Everything.

Do you know how much pure-dee-ol' junk two people can accumulate in five years? Trust me, it's a lot.

The nicest lady is going to take up residence there on the first of next month. We, of course, have waited until the last minute to empty the remnants of our time there out of the house.

It's one thing to pack boxes when you have distinct categories. When everything is "miscellaneous," it's hard to know where to put it.

It all came down to the back porch, which was our "catch all." And, boy, did it catch it all.

The back porch was where the dryer sat, so there was always the stray sock issue. It was also where Jim stored his sign material and I kept old fabric. I found dishes, snow boots, canning jars, Model T parts, pecans, a box of new glasses, a typewriter, and on and on.

That "stuff," in and of itself, is not bad. But, bringing it all to the new house has put a definite strain on available space. Bags and boxes are stacked everywhere. We don't know whether to store it upstairs or in the basement. We just know it can't stay in the front room.

-ob-



Out Back

By *Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts*
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Our two kitties, Sammy and Petey, have been experiencing the great outdoors. The two came to live with us last fall when both were kittens, and we never let them outside.

Now, they are 7-month-old juveniles and ready to see the world. Since we were working in and out between the two houses this weekend, we left the doors open and kept an eye on the two while they explored the yard, climbed their first tree and stalked birds.

Problem was, they didn't want to come in when it was time to settle down for the evening. No amount of calling, cajoling or begging would entice them. Even the menacing yowls of a battle-hardened old tom cat that roams the town didn't bring them in.

Finally, I shut the door and turned out the light and said, "Fine. You want to stay outside, then stay outside you will."

I wasn't sure I meant it, but I kept to my resolve not to open the door for at least an hour.

When it was my bedtime, I couldn't stand it any longer and

went to the door.

Petey came in immediately, but Sammy the Siamese was reluctant. He was perched on top of a rock on the edge of my iris bed. But he didn't run when I went, barefoot, out to get him.

Finally, both "kids" were safely tucked inside.

But I know, from now on, they are going to want to be outside. It's a scary place, mean tom cats and all.

-ob-

Here's another of Miss Taylor's proverbs: *You can lead a horse to water but — you can't always ride him back.*

From the Bible

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3: 28

Vote might not allow chickens

To the Editor:

With all the bad information out on this "chicken issue," I just want the voters to know for sure what they are voting for.

If you vote "yes" on this issue, you are not voting to let Mrs. Enfield keep her chickens. You are voting to let her to apply for a permit to have chickens. Then the Zoning Board of Appeals will decide.

What you are voting for is to change the ordinance to allow somebody with less than 1 acre to apply

Letters to the Editor

for an animal permit. Those with more land can apply today.

That means your neighbor could raise a cow, sheep, goat, or a pig in their back yard, or front yard, maybe right outside your bedroom window, if the Zoning Board gives them a permit.

That is not an option I like. If this

passes, I don't think Oberlin will turn into a zoo, but sooner or later someone will want to press the limits.

Joe Stanley, Oberlin city councilman candidate for mayor

Chickens not worth loss of value

To the Editor:

Chickens are not worth the loss of property values.

In the coming special election, there is a proposed ordinance titled: An Ordinance Providing for the Keeping of Animals to be Ordained by the Governing Body of the City

of Oberlin, Kansas, Ordinance No. 800.10.

This ordinance sounds innocent enough in the way it is written. If passed, it allows for the planning board to rule over any animal issue such as the chicken situation.

But once the planning board votes

to allow any farm animal to be kept in the city limits of Oberlin, it has opened the head gate on all types of animals to be allowed in Oberlin.

If you say "yes" to one type of animal, how can you then discriminate against another?

Bernie Goetze, Oberlin

Damaged signs won't stop city council drive

To the Editor:

Before we left on our annual Mexico mission trip this month, Jim placed five campaign signs on properties around town in Norcatour where he had permission.

Imagine our surprise when we returned home late that Saturday night to find all of the signs defaced and stacked in our back yard. The sixth sign, in our own front yard, was not touched.

My first reaction was to call the authorities, but Jim said, "No, whoever did this has to live with them-

selves."

Jim and I live in Norcatour because we want to. He has served one term on the Norcatour City Council and wants to serve again to make this town better. He wants better streets and a better water/sewer system.

He is not afraid to stand up for what is right nor to speak his mind. He is not a "rubber stamp" councilman.

The signs have been repaired and replaced. This petty and cowardly act will not deter Jim from running his write-in campaign.

Make sure the people are represented on Norcatour's City Council: write in "Jim Plotts" when you vote.

Let's get Norcatour back to its slogan, "The little town with the big heart."

Carolyn Plotts Norcatour

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@nwkansans.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.

Chickens smell? Try cattle

To the Editor:

I might as well put in my two cents worth.

We live 2 1/2 miles south and east of Oberlin. We, too, get the aroma from the feed lot.

However, like a cattle buyer once told me, "That's the smell of money," and he's correct. Look at all of the millions of dollars (wages,

taxes, sale of hay and grain) this facility has brought into Oberlin and Decatur County.

If people think four or five chickens in a couple of spots in town will drive down the price of real estate, wait until the city starts using its new sewer ponds.

George Ruzicka rural Oberlin

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