

Patients have the power to make clinic a success

Oberlin and Decatur County have a real opportunity to make our health care system the best in Kansas, starting with an established base at the hospital and clinic and building on that.

A "community conversation" last week sponsored by Decatur Tomorrow brought out many ideas, and a working group promises to move on them. As the doctor procurement committee and the hospital administration look for more "providers," both doctors and "midlevels" like physician assistants, the clinic will get a new start.

We're confident everyone will do a good job of recruiting and building. But the key part in this play, the lead, if you will, goes to the patients. They will decide just how successful the clinic and hospital become.

Both have been through a trying time. The old clinic was not healthy. Patients were leaving to seek care in other towns. Something had to be done. Hospital Administrator Lynn Doeden provided strong leadership as the county Hospital Board and the staff set about establishing a new clinic.

This was not unusual. Nearly every other hospital in our area has consolidated the town's clinics under its wing, some after major battles. That is in the past now, but damage was done. Many county residents have hooked up with doctors in other towns.

Now we all have to ask ourselves: Do we want a first-class health-care system here, with an emergency room and doctors we can see in town, or do we want to drive to some other town every time we need to go to the clinic or

emergency room?

All of us, the patients and health-care customers of Decatur County, will decide. We're confident the hospital will provide a good service. It's up to us to use it and keep it going.

If we do not, it could die, and with it one of Oberlin's largest employers and one of our most basic industries. Millions of dollars will flow out of town each year, and not just for medical care.

When people go to another town to see the doctor, they also shop and buy gas and eat at restaurants. When they have to go elsewhere to work, they may just move.

People who doctor in another county start to buy their prescriptions there and then maybe their groceries. Before you know it, Oberlin's economy could be history.

Is that what we want?

If the answer is no, then all of us need to examine how we spend our money. We should give the clinic here a try. Because if we don't, no one else will. Because if we don't, our town could die. First the clinic, then the hospital, then downtown businesses.

But none of that has to happen. What has to happen is that Oberlin people have to pull together and support each other, and the medical care and business institutions that support our way of life.

Yes, it's a personal decision. But the alternative is ugly.

We will be at the Decatur Health Systems clinic. At Ward Drug. At Raye's. At other Decatur County businesses.

Where will you be? — Steve Haynes



Degree turned out a blessing

"You're a d*^m fool, Jeff Ellis," his friends told him.

And maybe he was. Maybe it was a big waste of time and money to send a girl to college for four years.

After all, when she graduated, she would just get married. But he and Pearle had always believed that it was important to give their children the best education they could afford.

So he sent his youngest daughter to college, and here she was marrying as soon as she graduated. Not just marrying, but marrying a Yankee and moving to Kansas.

She came home to visit and eventually brought little Cynthia, his third grandchild, for a visit. But Jeff died before his Emma ever used that expensive four-year college education to teach school.

It had been tough getting married and moving to Kansas. It was so cold there in the winter. Not like Arkansas.

On the trip north, she'd asked her new husband what those funny looking little red fences were along the road. She'd laughed with disbelief when he had told her they were snow fences.



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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Then there were the people up here. Her father-in-law barely spoke English! And relatives, my goodness, there were a lot of relatives — aunts and uncles and cousins by the dozens. These people bred like rabbits!

It took a while to get used to joining such a big family. Buford had 16 aunts and uncles and several of them spoke nothing but French or a mixture, like her father-in-law, of French and English.

But they were welcoming and tried to be helpful, and she soon learned their language and their strange customs. She even got used to the cold, snowy winters. And when the call came, she took her four-year college education and got a teaching certificate and went into the classroom, even though Cynthia was just a little girl. She taught for

several years that time.

After her second daughter was born, she returned to the classroom, and this time it was more than 25 years before she got out of school.

There was the great need for teachers as the baby boomers clogged the classrooms. Then it was her girls' turn to go to college. As Cynthia went through five years of pharmacy school and Marie four of nurses' training, all she earned went to paying the tuition, fees, room and board of her girls.

It was payback time, a thank-you to her parents for giving their daughter the best education they could afford.

After all, only a d*^m fool would send a girl to college during a war — and after the worst depression the country had ever seen.

Dry or not, 110 just plain hot

"It's a dry heat," they always say.

That's just so much bunk. "They" should know if they live there.

But I don't care what they say; when it's 110, it's hot.

When we arrived at Phoenix for our meeting last week, it was, the pilot announced, 110 outside. And that's in the shade.

The walk down the jet way to the gate was stifling. The cool terminal only a brief respite. Outdoors, the full force of the evening hit you.

Since it's a dry heat, you have the illusion of not sweating. The droplets just evaporate straight off your skin. Dry does have some advantages. As long as you're not digging ditches, you can cope.

But then, by the time we arrived, it was evening, and the sun was no longer high.

At noon, dry heat or not, it's hard to function in the sun. Whatever they say.

And pretty soon you start to understand why Arizona does not observe Daylight Saving Time. They are in a hurry for the sun to go down. They don't need any more.

The evenings are pretty decent. In downtown Tempe, restaurants offer outdoor patios where misters spray water on the guests day and night. At night, though, with a little breeze, you really don't need it. It's only in the 90s.

We found Arizona a strange place, where tourist attractions close in the summer and open again in the fall. Who'd be crazy enough to go



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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to the desert in the summer? (Conventional wisdom does not account for convention planners looking for cheap hotel rooms, however. One museum we visited actually had to open up just for our group.)

At night, the students come out and roam the streets. Downtown Tempe and the Arizona State campus sort of meld together, the campus almost more a collection of city blocks than a park-like area.

Denizens of the night inhabit the sidewalks, college girls wearing too little and boys with more tattoos than any adult needs to see. Tourists who just shake their heads.

Street kids ride skateboards or play a guitar or dance for dollars. There's an argument. A guy playing a sax tells a young woman to find her own corner and start singing to "earn a living." He's not very nice, but neither is she.

You wonder where they will be 30 years from now. Sleeping under a bridge, holding a sign and a cup at an intersection? They're so young to have dropped out, but society doesn't offer much to the dysfunctional.

By midnight, it may be down in

the 80s. It never gets past the 70s. It might be that hot for a week or two out on the plains, but this is nothing like the heat we're accustomed to. In the desert, summer starts in May and runs to October.

I wear my shorts for three days. Most everyone else is in shorts, too. It's just a matter of survival. Going in and out, from heat to air conditioning, that's just normal. You'd have to think it'd cause a lot of summer colds.

Soon enough, we sweat our way through the jet way and let the little plane take us back to the plains, where it's cool. We follow thunderstorms east into the night, the temperature hovering in the 50s. It doesn't feel bad at all.

From the Bible

I Beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service,

Romans 12

Lose weight on watermelon?

Jim has created a new diet, the Watermelon Diet.

First, you buy a watermelon and eat it. Then you buy another watermelon and eat it, too. Next, you begin buying watermelons in pairs so one can be in the fridge while one is always in reserve.

We haven't progressed to the next step but, it might be he will come home with three watermelons next time he goes to the store. If I didn't know better, I would say he was pregnant.

The watermelon this year is especially tasty, and I love watermelon as much as the next guy, but Jim has taken watermelon consumption to a new level. However, I can't argue with the results.

He's losing weight like crazy, so I don't think he's going to quit anytime soon.

Here's my advice: invest in watermelon stock.

Harvest is just around the corner. Practically overnight, the wheat has turned. It's getting that golden hue that means it's "almost" ready. This is an anxious time for farmers



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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as they wait and watch.

We have one farmer friend whose daughter is getting married Saturday. I sure hope the fields aren't ready before then. She might have to wait for her dad to come in off the combine to walk her down the aisle.

Oh, come on. You know I'm kidding.

-ob-

Sunday, we had dinner out with our cross-the-street neighbors. Judy said, "Well, the other night I saw you two doing something I thought I'd never see."

"Oh, no," I thought. Was she referring to when I slammed the pick-up door shut and told Jim if he didn't like the way I was backing the trailer, he could do it himself?

"What was that?" I innocently asked.

She answered, "Oh, it was after dark and you were shining the truck lights so Jim could see where to mow. It sounded like a combine coming down the street."

Her husband added, "Now, that's what I call togetherness."

Whew! Our secret is safe. Nobody will know we aren't the "perfect" couple.

We have our little spats like everyone else. But, here's the real secret. We get over our disagreements just as fast as we have them.

We have this commitment "thing" going. Divorce is not a consideration. Homicide maybe, but not divorce.

Antique stores draw visitors here

To the Editor:

Australia, Italy, Zambia, Spain, Switzerland, Alaska, Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Minnesota and Wyoming. They come from all over the world and from all 50 states. They stop, they shop, they eat and they look at our Main Street and at Oberlin.

Why Oberlin? Canada, Chile, France, Norway, and Michigan, Missouri, Maine, Montana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Washington. Name another community our size and our rural location that has this wide a range of visitors.

Iraq, the Netherlands, South Africa, Germany, and Nevada, Kentucky, Utah, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Indiana, Maryland, Hawaii, Louisiana, Vermont, Oregon, Minnesota. Oberlin has no airport, no trains, no bus service. If you don't drive, you can't get here.

New Zealand, Mexico, Sweden and Massachusetts, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin

Letter to the Editor

and the District of Columbia.

What has brought all these people from these countries and states to our town? From the top of Penn Avenue to the creek are seven antique stores, serving all ranges and all interests, plus two quilt shops.

We have a treasure here, and we need to give the shop owners and employees their due. They have saved our Main Street and contrib-

uted to other businesses.

We should spread the word of what we have. I have suggested that all the antique and quilt stores paint their windows yellow so all of us can appreciate what they do for our Main Street and our town.

Dr. Jay Anderson, Oberlin
Note: Countries and states provided by Cabin Antiques.

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