

## School-sponsored prayer never a good idea for U.S.

It's been 50 years since the Supreme Court ruled in Engel v. Vitale that school-sponsored prayer was unconstitutional.

It was and is a wise decision, though much misunderstood by a great many. The court did not, as people often say, outlaw prayer in school. What is outlawed was state-sponsored prayer, dictated by the school administration or some state department.

There is a great difference. Students can and do lead prayer in school today, though not during class time when others might or might not want to take part. Sports teams join in prayer before or after a game. Many kids pray in school, before meals, or maybe just before a big test.

What's missing is the prayer led by the principal or written by the state Board of Education that often marked schools of yore. Many would say that's a good thing.

School prayer used to promote a pretty narrow view of God: Protestant, Christian, white-oriented, mainstream. OK for the children of white Protestants, we'd guess, but what about the others, the Catholics, the Jews, the Orthodox, the Muslims, Buddhists or atheists?

"Just write a prayer that everyone can agree on," someone will say. Easier said than done, however.

We've seen many examples of why state-sponsored or approved religion has no place in schools. In one town, a Baptist-sponsored troupe asked to put on a play at school. The

principal allowed as how he didn't see the harm in it.

Next morning, though, a gaggle of angry Mormon parents was waiting outside his office. They saw the harm, or feared they did. One man's harmless play, it seems, is the next parent's heresy.

The funny thing is, Baptists as a whole usually get it. The Baptist church understands and backs separation of church and state right down the line.

The country as a whole has more regard for religious rights today. It's not that long ago when some public school districts were run by nuns or pastors because "no one else went to school there," or "no one cared."

But aren't we a nation founded by and for God-fearing men? Yes, for the most part, but these same founders saw the need for the Bill of Rights, protecting citizens from the government they were forming, guaranteeing certain rights.

The Constitution says the government shall not favor any "establishment of religion," nor interfere with the free exercise of religious rights. That means schools can't tell students when or how to pray.

They're still free to pray, and we ought to be thankful for that. The freedoms guarded and guaranteed by the First Amendment are the bedrock of our liberty. Anything that threatens them — including school-sponsored prayer — needs to go.

— Steve Haynes

## Unfamiliar noise wakens her

I was awakened Sunday morning by a strange sound. At first I couldn't imagine what it was. Then I asked Jim, "Is that rain I'm hearing?"

He said, "I don't know; let me look."

He opened our bedroom door to the balcony and said, "Sure 'nuff! It's raining."

It was beautiful, a nice gentle rain that left puddles in the street.

It was early enough that no neighbors were up and I stepped out onto our front porch in my nightgown and drank in the smell.

Nothing fresher and cleaner smelling than an early morning rain.

I would say "giddy" best describes everyone's mood in this part of the country. There's a smile a mile wide on every farmer's face.

Whether this rain is too little too late or enough to save this year's corn crop remains to be seen. But for the moment, it just plain feels good, and that's enough for now.

-ob-

Our tomato plants are loaded. In fact, we've already had several vine-ripened tomatoes. They were delicious, too. But we've got to quit eating them right out of the garden. We'll never have any for BLTs.

-ob-

Jim is running for the title of "King of the Honey-Do" list.

This week alone, he has changed out and/or installed four light fixtures, built and installed two more pull-out shelves for the kitchen cabinets and made coffee three times.

In my book, that makes him a definite contender.

But then, since he has no competition, he is a shoo in.



### Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts  
cplots65@gmail.com

When I was single, I said I wanted a man who was "capable." Perhaps I didn't fully understand what that entailed, but I knew I wanted someone who could do things, fix stuff; you know, be useful.

Wow! Did I get what I asked for, and then some.

So far, I haven't discovered one thing Jim Plotts can't do.

He's an excellent carpenter; a good mechanic; an acceptable electrician; a decent plumber; he can dance, sing, mend his own overalls, cook (if he can fry it), play guitar and quote scripture like a preacher.

If he's asked to do something he's never done before, he won't say, "I

can't do it." Instead, he'll say, "Let me study this out for a minute." Jim always sees the "how to," not the "why not."

The flip side, however, to a man who can do everything, is that he does. Jim is a man of multiple projects.

He's happiest when he has many (some say too many) irons in the proverbial fire.

So, unless you are a woman who can tolerate some projects taking a little longer than you would like, don't pray for a "capable" man. You just might get what you ask for.

### Write

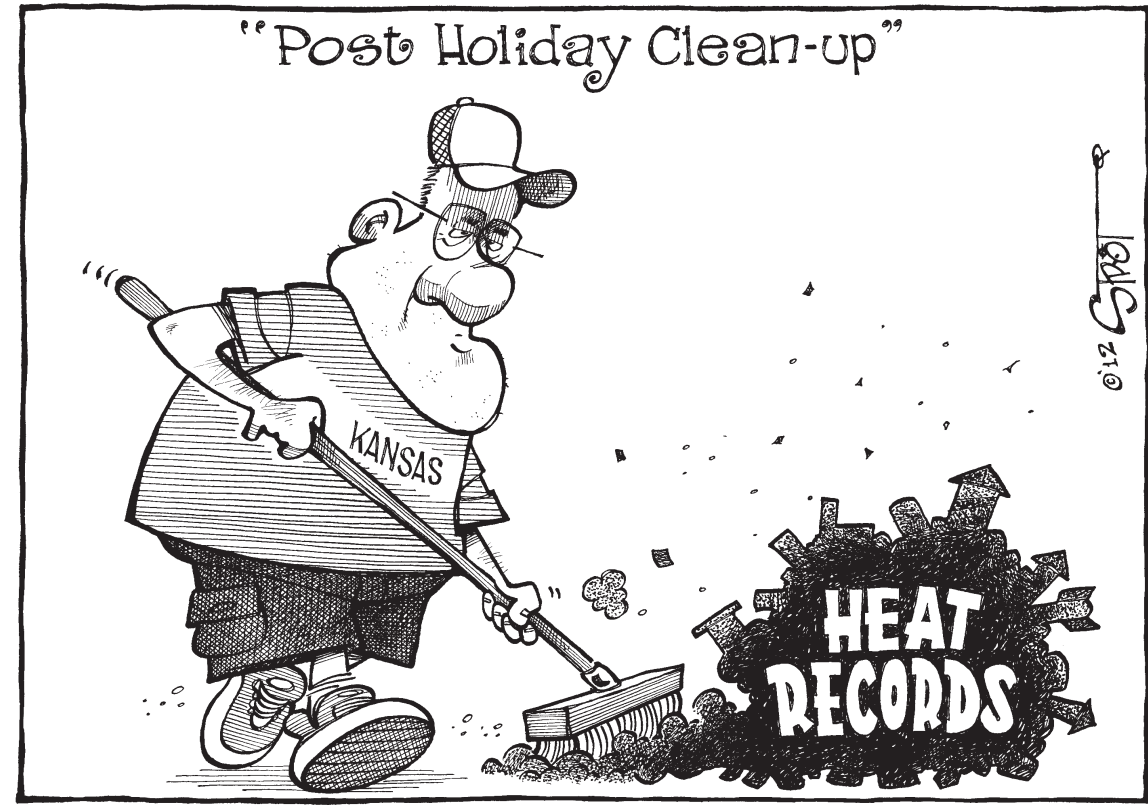
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Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses which do not pertain to a public issue.



## We'll be ready for next year

Just in case we don't get to have a Fourth of July fireworks demonstration next year, I've come up with a few ideas to fill in the gaps:

- Give everyone a small flashlight. Tell them to flip it on and off and pretend it's a sparkler.
- Synchronized porch lights: Get the whole neighborhood to turn on their porch lights and then turn them on and off in set patterns. Have the next block over come and watch yours, then go over there and watch theirs.
- Gather all the lightning bugs you can find and put them in a glass jar. Put the jar in the street and break it with a rock while yelling BOOM. The fireflies will take off like a fountain, and you have the added bonus of a mess in the street, just like regular fireworks.
- Give your children a hammer and nails and tell them that's almost the same as firecrackers. You not only get them out of your hair, but you might get the fence fixed at the same time.
- Have everyone on the block hit the wrong button on their car alarm. This should give you at least 10 minutes of noise and light as the horns all honk and the headlights flash. However, it will seem longer.



### Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes  
c.haynes@nwkansas.com

At least, it always seems like forever when I hit the wrong button.

• Walk up behind strange dogs and yell BOOM. This will provide no end to entertainment for everyone else in the area and will probably get you some exercise.

• Use gasoline instead of the regular lighter fluid to start your barbecue. After all, you weren't very fond of that haircut anyway, and who needs eyebrows?

• Declare a '70s day and burn your bra, or your draft card, or pretend you're a member of a southern school board and burn a book — "To Kill a Mockingbird" perhaps.

• And the final one, from Steve: toss a raccoon in the city transformer for a real whiz bang time and a lasting memory as the 'coon lights up and the lights go out all over town.'

Well, then again, maybe next year we can just look up as the firemen touch off the rockets' red glare instead of trying to stop the one lighting up the horizon.

### From the Bible

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

— Ephesians 1:13-14

## Grant writer wants notice

To the Editor:

I read with interest your article "Several at Hospital Shifting Positions" in the July 4, 2012, edition of *The Oberlin Herald*, in which Decatur Health Systems Administrator Lynn Doeden made the comment that the Distance-Learning and Telemedicine Grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture was "applied for ... two years ago but the application was denied. It was pulled back out this year and she was notified about it. She estimated that the hospital will receive \$169,100 from the grant."

Excuse me? Exactly where was it "pulled back out" from?

Here's a news flash: I was the one who researched, wrote and put all

### Letters to the Editor

of the original application together for submission to the U.S. Department of Agriculture for a Distance-Learning and Telemedicine Grant two years ago. Some people may actually remember me requesting letters of support to be submitted with this project with the intent of providing financial support for a digital mammography machine.

For the record, I also researched and wrote the grant application for the Sunflower Foundation grant awarded to Decatur Health Systems in 2011 in the amount of \$200,000

to support a physician and nurse to staff a new rural health clinic. I have heard not a single thank you for that one, either.

Thank you, Decatur Health Systems board and administrator, for your absolutely superb and stupendous effort to give credit where credit was due, and for recognizing someone for a job well done. Your kindness and appreciation are immeasurable.

Othelia Vacura, Oberlin

## Woman thinks town should help

To the Editor:

I received and reviewed the letter of notification sent to Richard and Clara Russ stating their property is not compliant with Oberlin City Ordinance No. 265, Article 2, and find this disturbing, to say the least.

About three years ago I visited a dear friend in the small town of Blackburn, Mo.

A federal agency had inspected the property of a local businessman and had given him a certain amount of time to clean up his property before they returned. The consequences for not complying were a fine of thousands of dollars and to shut down his business.

When he announced to the community that he was closing his doors, the community came together and

the able-bodied men spent a day helping while the women prepared a picnic. At the end of the day, the citizens of Blackburn came together to eat, rest and celebrate. The businessman was not compliant with the laws of the land but community spirit prevailed. Yep, folks, this really happened and I was there to witness it.

Which brings me back to this letter sent to my parents. I remember the number of times the community has helped our family and know it was greatly appreciated. I do want to describe to you my childhood memories of the times my folks have taken meals to shut-ins, given when they didn't have it to give, worked hard and on occasion were not compensated for their labor. Dad

and mom always told us kids that "God would supply our needs, not necessarily our wants."

Shame on you Oberlin. Shame on you. It is easy to send out form letters with x's marking the area of noncompliance and harder to actually see what you can do to help. These people have given to this community and there is not one person in that whole town, to this day, that they would not help if they could. This whole affair is, as you stated in the letter, "excrement," and in my opinion it is excrement from a chicken's behind.

If community spirit dies, it will be replaced by??????

Della L. (Russ) Phillips, Bentley

## Former representative is worried

To the Editor:

Kansas government is now coming slowly out of a recession. During the recession, there were limited amounts of money for schools and other state government work. During the last legislative session, Gov. Sam Brownback asked to decrease income tax. The Senate did not have enough votes to pass the governor's plan until the governor and his representatives pressured key members.

The Senate passed a bill with added possible tax reduction ideas with an understanding that this bill would be used to compromise but would not pass in whole. The senators tried to work with the House of Representatives on tax reduction and other key bills and budgets, but

the House failed to compromise. Near the end of the session, the House by a narrow margin concurred with Senate tax reduction bill described above.

The actions of this administration are baffling and lacking in common sense. The income tax reductions will reduce the state's carryover by fiscal year 2014, beginning next July, unless our economy grows spectacularly. This means for the next several years, no new money for schools or other state efforts.

As a result, I and many other former members of the House and Senate have set up a group we call Traditional Moderate Republicans for Common Sense. See the website www.kscommonsense.com.

Fred Gatlin, Topeka

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Mr. Gatlin, a former Atwood resident, served as state representative for the 120th District from 1987 to 1996. He was the last of the "traditional" or "moderate" Republicans to hold the seat. — Steve Haynes

### Honor Roll

Welcome and thanks to these recent subscribers to *The Oberlin Herald*:

**Elsewhere:** Ed Wright, Westminster, Md.; Donald Feely, Hemet, Calif.; Dr. and Mrs. Carroll Smith, Park Forest, Ill.; Jimmie Kappers, Aurora, Colo.

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Phone: (785) 475-2206 Fax (785) 475-2800  
E-mail: oberlin.herald@nwkansas.com

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