

Viewpoint

The Jasper Newsboy

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In Jasper County

Sandy Creek Park on the mend...



Newsboy photo/ Charles Kerr

Your Viewpoint Letters to the Editor

Volunteers play vital role in city

By KEVIN KIPP
Jasper

I would like to thank the many volunteers who give of their time so that the youth of our community can have a productive baseball and softball season.

This includes volunteer plate umpires, volunteer field umpires, volunteer coaches and assistants, volunteer concession workers, volunteer administrators and board members, volunteer field workers, volunteer restroom custodians and volunteer team moms.

As you can see, the overwhelming task of operating a community baseball and softball program would not be possible without hundreds of unselfish and tireless volunteers.

Thank you. Your hard work does not go unnoticed.

A community baseball and softball program could not exist, and would not be affordable, if not for the economic support of area merchants and businesses. Local businesses have supported our youth by sponsoring teams, donating items and materials, and general donations.

Our local state prison provides labor through the trustee program. Because our baseball and softball complex is not maintained with city or county funds, as are most community ball parks, civic support is essential to the existence of the program.

The Jasper area has always done whatever is necessary, whenever it is necessary, to support our youth. I have always told my children to "do the right thing." My family is fortunate to live in a community that displays that philosophy on a daily basis.

Letters to editor criteria outlined

The Jasper Newsboy would like to publish your thoughts and concerns about issues that are important to you. All Letters to the Editor should be accompanied with the writer's name and daytime telephone number for verification purposes.

Phone numbers will not be published, but the author's name will be. Under no circumstances will the author's name be withheld. All letters are subject to editing for newspaper style and clarity, without changing the meaning of the content.

Letters should be limited to 300 words. Letters endorsing or opposing political candidates are considered political advertising and will be forwarded to the advertising department.

Deadline for letters is 10 a.m. Monday to be published in the following Wednesday's publication.

Mail letters to:
The Jasper Newsboy
P.O. Box 1419
Jasper, Texas 75951-1419
or e-mail to:
jgalvan@jaspernewsboy.com

Our Viewpoint Editorials

Dean the right fit for JISD right now

Last week, the Jasper Independent School District announced they were suspending its search for a new superintendent.

The district has been searching for someone to replace Dr. Eddie Dunn, who had resigned to accept a post with the Ennis School District late in 2006.

While some school districts may have been tossed in disarray due to the loss of its leader, Jasper ISD has continued moving right along under the leadership of interim superintendent Bill "Butch" Dean.

Dean, who has served as financial director for the district for years, was tabbed to lead the district in the interim but now the board has decided to leave him in the post for "an undetermined amount of time."

"We are very pleased with the way things are running and a lot of that credit goes to the board but mostly it goes to Mr. Dean and his staff," said school board president Eddie Hopkins.

Dean was to retire from the district this year but his leadership has proven to be needed as the district had to search for a

new athletic director and two well-publicized incidents at one of their campuses.

It is rather easy to be a leader through calm waters. But when those waters get rocky, only the strong survive.

Dean's leadership has had a calming effect on the district and his work is something this whole community should be proud of.

Roses go to....

▼ All the brave kids who took part in the annual Evening Lions Club Easter Egg hunt Saturday morning.

▼ First Baptist Church's Upward Basketball program, which promoted character and self-esteem in its participants.

Thorns go to....

▼ The Federal Emergency Management Agency, our lightning rod for controversy has once again given us a reason to doubt our federal government with letters to local citizens requesting a refund of \$2,000 evacuation funds.

▼ Snow in April? Last weekend's weather mix-up eliminated the use of those frilly Easter outfits as everyone bundled up for another cold weather snap. Blame El Nino'.

Guest Commentary One person's viewpoint

Nearer, my dust mop, to thee

When a ship goes down one seldom thinks of blaming the housekeeper for it, yet that has happened in Greece.

Last week the Greek passenger ship Sea Diamond cruised into some submerged rocks off the island of Santorini, and sank after fifteen hours, probably heeled over by the downdrafts of all the news helicopters.

The Greeks are the world's first and greatest seafaring nation, so after a few thousand years you'd think they'd know where the rocks are.

The captain was arrested. The first officer was arrested. The second officer was arrested. The third officer was arrested. Those arrests make sense — you're supposed to remember where the rocks are, guys, okay?

And then the chief cabin steward and the housekeeper were arrested.

What was their crime? Did they fail to empty an ashtray? Did they put too much starch in milady's pillowcases? Did they serve the merlot chilled instead of at room temperature?

The world watches and waits for the answers. In the great cities crowds gather around the newspaper offices and await the latest cables. American schools are calling in grief counselors.

The bridge crew knew something was wrong with the housekeeping staff when the lookout cried "Badly folded towel-bunny dead ahead!"

Rumor has it that the housekeeper bragged that "God Himself couldn't sink my vacuum cleaner."

Possibly the ship sank after being overloaded with really bad lines:

"Oh, Jack, draw me like you would draw one of your Greek housekeepers."

"My pancreas will go on."

"This-ship-can't-sink-oh-yes-she-can-this-



Mack Hall

ship-can't-sink-oh-yes-she-can-this-ship-can't-sink-oh-yes-she-can-this-ship-can't-sink-oh-yes-she-can..."

"I'm the king of the world! Well, okay, at least king of my Xbox!"

"Be British, men! Be British — blame the Americans for this!"

"I'll never let go, Jack! I'll never let go...whoops!"

"What will we do, Captain!? There are little disposable bottles of shampoo for only half the passengers!"

"Person the lifeboats!"

"Outwardly, I was everything a modern I-pod girl should be. Inside, I was dreaming of Shakespeare, Milton, Spenser, and Donne."

"But what happened to the jewel? What happened to The Heart of Lake Sam Rayburn?"

"Back! Back, I say! Get back, or I'll vacuum you like mice in the pantry!"

"Oh, Jack, the people in third-class! They're so quaint and colorful and folksy and authentic! I want to give up my diamonds and champagne so I can wear dowdy rags and play the balalaika and take only one bath a week! Yeah, right! HAHAAHAHAHAHA!"

"Waiter, is this champagne fair-trade certified?"

"Men, I can't command you to stay down here and get blown up by exploding boilers and fried by short-circuits and drowned...men? Men? Hey, come back here, men...!"

"You can't come down here in a dinner jacket; this is third-class!"

As we leave the site of the sinking of the Sea Diamond, let us ponder this mystery of the cruel and wine-dark sea: why did the Greek government arrest the cabin steward and the housekeeper?

Mack Hall is a resident of Kirbyville

Capital Highlights A summary of the week's significant events in Austin

Senator proposes increase in state college funding

AUSTIN - Higher education continues as a top issue for Texas. State Sen. Rodney Ellis, D-Houston, said he wants more state funding to help more kids from low and middle income families get into college.

In an April 8 Houston Chronicle copyright story, Ellis said he wants to double state funding for the Toward Excellence, Access and Success (TEXAS) grant program to \$1 billion. Ellis said if action isn't taken Texas will be in crisis.

The Chronicle reported that about 70,000 students lost their tuition grants in the past two years, and according to U.S. Department of Education statistics, the Lone Star State is 41st in the nation in producing college graduates.

About 158,000 families are enrolled in the Texas Guaranteed Tuition Plan, formerly called the Texas Tomorrow Fund. Enrollees locked in the cost of tomorrow's college tuition and required fees at "today's prices." Plan benefits are

protected by a constitutional guarantee from the state.

The fund debuted under then-Comptroller John Sharp in the booming economy of 1996.

Waco economist Ray Perryman in early April published a 72-page report, "Thinking About Tomorrow, The Texas Guaranteed Tuition Plan: An Economic Assessment of Recent Evidence and Options for the Future."

Perryman proposes that the fund can and should be open to new enrollees. His report contrasts with a recent study by the state comptroller that warns the fund, which has been closed to enrollment since June 2003, is headed toward bankruptcy and should not accept additional enrollment.

Perryman says reopening enrollment makes sense when coupled with improved financial markets and a slowdown in tuition hikes. Those elements working together could return the strength to the fund, he said.

Measure puts road plan on hold



Ed Sterling
Texas Press Association

transfer the state's traditional role to private entities who build and maintain the roads.

When such deals are made, the public is left out of the loop, opponents say.

The Senate Transportation and Homeland Security Committee on April 4 approved a measure to halt all comprehensive development agreements for 24 months to allow the state to study the issue further.

The Trans Texas Corridor also continues as a major issue as the 80th session of the Texas Legislature inches closer to its late May finale.

Opponents of the proposed road system criticize the state's policy of entering into "comprehensive development agreements" that

Child restraint bill passes Senate

Also on April 4, the Senate passed legislation strengthening child passenger safety.

S.B. 60 by Judith Zaffirini, D-Laredo, requires that children seven years and younger, unless they are more than 4-feet 10-inches tall, be secured in a child passenger safety seat while riding in a motor vehicle.

Zaffirini said her legislation would save lives, preclude tragedies and injuries and qualify Texas for \$3.2 million in federal funds while saving the state \$17 million in health care expenditures.

House passes CHIP legislation

The Texas House on April 4 passed H.B. 109, relating to the Children's Health Insurance Program.

The legislation, authored by Rep. Sylvester Turner, D-Houston, returns coverage to thousands of families who lost coverage for their children due to cuts enacted by the Legislature in 2003.

Major things the bill would do include:

▼ Restore continuous 12-month eligibility;

▼ Eliminate the 90-day enrollment waiting period;

▼ When calculating family income include child-care expenses;

▼ Determine eligibility based on net income, not gross; and

▼ Create outreach programs to inform families about the availability of CHIP and children's Medicaid.

Parties settle Medicaid lawsuit

Parties settled the 1993 Frew v. Hawkins lawsuit, claiming the state of Texas did not provide adequate care for children enrolled in Medicaid.

To benefit from the settlement are some 1.5 million children whose families need help in securing health and dental care.

Ed Sterling is director of member services for the Texas Press Association in Austin.