OPINIONS & EDITORIALS

Disappointed to see the Recent Decline of the White City American Legion Post

by Amanda Ryker

It's truly disappointing to see how far the White City American Legion has fallen in just a couple of years. There was a time when the Legion was thriving, membership was strong, and people came together willingly to make things happen for the community. Fundraisers, Memorial Day celebrations, Halloween events, hot dogs, and other community activities were things people looked forward to. There were members and volunteers who gave their time, energy, and resources because they genuinely cared about the Legion and the community.

Unfortunately, somewhere along the way, things changed. One person's arrival and the attitude, expectations, and need for recognition and appreciation for every single thing they do have contributed to driving away people who once made this organization what it was. People who volunteered, supported events, and gave their time without expecting recognition eventually walked away.

The American Legion should be about more than leadership positions, rules, recognition, or who gets credit. It should be about the veterans who served this country freely and willingly, the brotherhood and camaraderie they share, and the community they represent. Especially in a small town, the Legion should be a community asset, a place that brings people together, welcomes volunteers, supports families, and creates traditions.

It's heartbreaking that what was once a thriving organization with community involvement has reached a point where people no longer feel welcome or want to participate. Sometimes it only takes one bad seed to spoil something that so many good people worked hard to build.

An organization should never become so focused on one person's ego that it loses sight of the veterans, members, volunteers, and community it was created to serve. The Legion belongs to its members and should be a source of pride for the entire community, not a place that pushes people away.

Patron Concerned about Status of American Legion Post #299 in White City

To the Editor,

I am very concerned about the status of the American Legion Post #299 in White City! I have heard that there is a good possibility that our Legion Post will be closed at the end of the year or the first part of January.

I don't know how many members there are at the present time and whether or not we still have an SAL organization. This is very upsetting to me as I had 5 brothers and brothers-in-law who were veterans.

I remember when the building was brought to town and I remember all of the guys who worked very hard and lot of weekends were put in to getting it ready. My husband was one of these guys who put in a lot of hours helping with this project.

I also remember a lot of dances with live bands, a lot of potluck suppers and a lot of parties in this building. It makes me sick to my stomach to see how things have turned out because some people would not work together with others. I miss the Bingo nights, Slider Mondays and Saturday breakfasts. I am pretty sure these were both money makers for the Legion!!

I would like to see the community get together with Legion members and see what we need to do to keep our American Legion!!

A concerned citizen,

Bev Kraus

A Message from The White City Christian Church

Morris County,

Next Sunday, 11/8/26, we will celebrate our US Veterans on 11/11/26. We need to celebrate them for their sacrifice for our country's freedom. Let's honor them and their families for standing for this country's freedom. So come on by next Sunday and let's thank all US veterans for their service.

Come as you are, leave thanking our veterans for our freedom.

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Thank you, GOD bless you and keep you.

St. Charly





USD 417 District Spotlight

Tyson Eslinger
USD #417
Superintendent of Schools

Navigating Demographic Realities, State Policy, and the Future of USD 417

As we transition into late fall, our school calendar remains as vibrant as ever. Our fall student-athletes and activity groups are wrapping up memorable seasons, while rehearsals for winter music programs and plays and preparations for winter sports are already under way across our campuses. The dedication of our students, coaches, sponsors, and families during these busy weeks is a reminder of what makes USD 417 such a special community.

Behind the scenes of these daily activities, our Board of Education has been engaged in serious, deliberate discussions about the long-term future of our district. Because school operations do not happen in a vacuum, understanding the decisions facing our local board requires a clear look at both our local demographic numbers and the state policy landscape that governs how public schools are funded.

The Demographic Reality: Smaller Cohorts and Funding Shifts

Across Kansas, districts are confronting sustained declines in birth rates. In USD 417, this trend is reflected directly in our class sizes. Currently, our graduating senior classes typically range between 55 and 65 students, whereas our incoming kindergarten classes are averaging between the mid-30s and low-40s.

Even with families moving into our district over time, the net result is an ongoing cohort reduction of roughly 20 to 25 students per grade span. Under the Kansas school finance formula combining base state aid with student need weightings each student generates an average of approximately $10,000 in operational revenue for our district. When enrollment naturally contracts by 20 or more students, the compounding reduction in state revenue inevitably impacts how we must structure our operating budget.

The Special Education Funding Gap

Compounding this challenge is the longstanding shortfall in state special education funding. By Kansas statute, the state is intended to reimburse school districts for 92% of the excess costs associated with providing mandated special education services. However, actual state funding has hovered near 62% for years.

Because providing special education services is an essential legal and moral obligation to our students, districts cannot simply cut programs when the state underfunds them. In USD 417, fulfilling this commitment requires our district to transfer nearly $900,000 annually out of our local general operating funds to cover the state's shortfall. That is nearly $900,000 generated to support general classroom instruction, programs, and staff that must be redirected because the state is not meeting its statutory funding obligations.

Weighing Operational Efficiencies at the Local Level

In light of these financial realities, our Board of Education is examining every aspect of our operations to ensure USD 417 remains on solid financial footing for years to come. These discussions encompass:

- Facility Footprint: Evaluating whether operating two separate elementary buildings—including the future role of Prairie Heights Elementary alongside Council Grove Elementary—remains financially sustainable, or if consolidating into a single elementary facility is necessary to preserve academic offerings and direct resources to classrooms.
- Long-Term Facilities Planning: Determining how best to phase, pause, or continue needed capital improvement projects so that community tax dollars are invested responsibly and strategically.
- High School Academic Scheduling: Exploring a potential transition at the junior/senior high school from our traditional trimester schedule to a standard semester model. While the trimester system has served our students well for roughly two decades, shifting toward a semester calendar better aligns our students with the state system, districts across Kansas, and post-secondary partner institutions while enhancing the science of learning with retention and relearning.
- Staffing, Transportation, and Programs: Continuously evaluating transportation, staffing allocations, and program efficiencies to minimize overhead without compromising the quality of student instruction and opportunities.

The State Road Ahead

With statewide elections now concluded, attention shifts to the Kansas Legislature and the upcoming legislative session in Topeka. The current Kansas School funding formula faces a statutory sunset, and a state task force and lawmakers are already preparing either to reauthorize or rewrite the state's school finance formula. Discussions around funding models, potential private school voucher mechanisms, and whether the legislature will finally address the

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Part 3 The Sky Was My Second Home

My Reflections on Flying Nearly 4,000,000 Miles During My Corporate Career

Written by Doug Scott, White City High School Class of 1967

Singapore's Changi and London's Heathrow are my favorite airports in the world. Perhaps I choose these two because I spent much more time in them than in any others, including those in the U.S.. I spent innumerable hours and walked endless miles through both of these fabulous international airports.

Singapore's Changi Airport is more than just a place where planes take off and land. In my mind, it's a symbol of what air travel can be when thoughtful design, national pride, and world-class service converge. Frequently ranked as the world's best airport, Changi has redefined the airport experience for millions of travelers each year, transforming layovers into leisure and memorable moments. It's not simply a transportation hub – it's a destination in itself.

Customer service and pristine cleanliness are signature traits of Changi. Staff members are trained to assist with warmth and precision. It's no wonder frequent flyers, like me, often rank Changi, with its 68 million passengers annually passing through its corridors, as THE place they look most forward to visiting, not one they dread. Just as Singapore transformed itself in 1965 from a struggling colonial marshy outpost into a global economic powerhouse, Changi International Airport has grown from a small regional airfield into a global icon of aviation.

London's Heathrow Airport is more than just an airport to me, as well. In my opinion, it's an institution. As one of the world's busiest and most iconic aviation hubs, Heathrow stands as a testament to Britain's global reach and historic significance. I love the place. It's a place of reunions and farewells, ambition and nostalgia, efficiency and occasional chaos. But above all, Heathrow is a reflection of London itself: vast, diverse, historical, and ever in motion.

Heathrow is a sprawling complex with five huge interconnected terminals and a network of rail, road, and tube (subway) links that make it the centerpiece of British aviation and travel. It handles over 84 million passengers a year (or over 230,000 passengers per day), connecting London to over 180 destinations across the globe. British Airways, the UK's flagship carrier, calls Heathrow home, and many of the world's major airlines operate out of its gates.

Heathrow is a global crossroads. Few places on earth bring together such a mix of languages, cultures, and stories. It's a place of deep emotion: the arrival hall witnesses the full spectrum of human connection – tearful embraces, nervous anticipation, tired homecomings. I've frequently watched from afar and have been touched by all the human interactions. In many ways, Heathrow reflects the evolution of Great Britain itself – from imperial hub to modern multicultural democracy, from post-World War II resilience to global innovation. It can be, in my experience, a bit overcrowded and noisy at times, but that's what makes it unique. It's remarkable in scale, in history, and in the way it captures the pulse of a constantly changing world. It's where the United Kingdom meets the world.

I always flew Business Class on all the international travels I undertook during my long work career, compliments of the companies I worked for. Occasionally, I flew First Class when my Frequent Flyer status provided me a free upgrade to First Class or when I flew with one of my company's senior executives (they always flew in First Class) who, several days ahead of flight departure, invited me to join them, knowing I would be on the plane with them. They would ask me to fly First Class with them at company expense.

The jumbo jet I most flew on was the Boeing 747. Its dimensions are 232 feet long with a wingspan of 211 feet. In other words, almost as long as an 11-man football field; the plane's girth is much wider than the width of that same football field which is 160 feet. At its cruising altitude of 35,000 feet when traveling at its routine 550 miles per hour, the four gigantic engines of the 747 produce 392,000 horsepower combined! In contrast, today's modern automobile produces 200-300 horsepower.

One sight never failed to amaze me: watching from my seat as the 747 rumbled down the runway and lifted off. The airplane's enormous main wings came alive as the 500-ton airplane lifted from the runway. As the aircraft started to become airborne, the wing tips slowly curved upward by as much as 7-8 feet. I knew this "bending" had been carefully engineered in order to absorb the tremendous forces of lift-off that were brought to bear from suddenly carrying the airplane's enormous weight, including the weight of its 58,000 gallons of jet fuel and the mass of its four engines which together weighed nearly 30 tons. But to me, it was more than marvelous engineering – it was one of those unforgettable sights that captured for me the wonder of flying.

The 747 was a plane that has carried untold millions of passengers across oceans and over the continents since the plane's debut in 1970. Flying Business Class on this majestic aircraft – which accommodates well over 500 passengers – was always something more than "just air transportation" to me. It was an experience that blended comfort, privacy, practicality, and poetry, all played out 35,000 feet above the world.

For sure, the Boeing 747 revolutionized long-haul air travel. With its distinctive front top hump and four enormous-size jet engines that together at cruising speed burned 1,400 gallons of jet fuel an hour, it was the first wide-body aircraft to make intercontinental travel accessible to the masses. During the 747's heyday more than 100 airlines around the world flew the aircraft. For each of those global airlines that purchased and operated the 747, it was not only about capacity and range for travelers, it was also about possibility and relaxation, too. No other aircraft remotely became THE symbol of global movement than the 747 during its 40 years at the apex of long-haul aviation.

The Business Class flying experience was transcendent to me. The upper deck was the reserved sanctuary for many of us Business Class travelers. I always sought to be seated in the upper deck, and was always successful. Climbing the narrow spiral staircase to the upper deck before take-off felt to me like I was entering a private club above the clouds. With its 32 plush seats, quieter surroundings, and the cozy-curved fuselage, it was, in my opinion, the most coveted real estate in the sky outside the First-Class cabin situated below in the nose of the aircraft. A glass of champagne and an assortment of sumptuous chocolates handed out before takeoff were traditional, as was receiving from the stewardesses steaming hot towels to wipe my brow. Seats converted into flat beds, large high-definition screens offered dozens of movies. The service was personal, never rushed. There was the linen tablecloth placed over my large tray table, the clink of real silverware, and the moment my flight attendant addressed me by my name, offering me a menu as if I was dining in the sky's finest restaurant. On all the international airlines I flew, Business Class service included multi-course meals curated by talented chefs.

And then there was sleeping – real, restorative sleep. On the 14-hour overnight flight from Singapore to London or on the 18-hour flight to London from Sydney, Australia, both flights on which I traveled many times, being able to stretch out in a lie-flat bed made the journey not only bearable, but surprisingly enjoyable. I routinely landed at my destination not totally exhausted, but prepared – ready for concentrated business meetings and for nonstop professional engagements.

Moreover, in the Business Class cabin, I met fellow global travelers – business executives, artists, engineers, diplomats, all types of frequent flyers – and we all shared a quiet understanding of the privilege of flying in this manner. There was a sense of community among us. Together, we experienced hours untethered from the demands of being "on land"; we were caught in a welcomed peaceful interlude of motion and stillness. At times, "just getting there" was often the best part of my countless international

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