

OPINION

OUR VIEW

Benefits are many

Offering an additional all-day preschool option and eliminating tuition fees for all preschool at International Falls is a great investment in our future.

Kudos to the school officials for proposing the idea and to the board for embracing it.

The two moves by the district will provide a wider opportunity for more children to benefit.

We, like others, believe that children involved in a solid preschool program will do better generally in school than kids who are not attending preschool programs.

And while most kids will benefit from getting involved in a learning experience at a young age, children from families who may not be able, for whatever reasons, to provide a valuable youth experience at home will be much better prepared.

Research has shown that children who do not attend early-childhood programs enter kindergarten and often behind their peers in achievement. In

addition, an early childhood learning experience brings better graduations rates.

Eliminating the tuition costs will open the opportunities for families who may not otherwise be able to afford the program.

And even for those who can afford the program, the lack of tuition may free up money that can be spent elsewhere in the community.

And even while the district must absorb the costs once paid by parents in tuition, the benefit to the community outweighs the costs. Adding the early childhood options and eliminating tuition could very well draw students to the district, which will offset some of the costs.

Clearly, we want to give our children the best preparation to be well-prepared students as they travel the education path, and well-rounded adults and contributing members of our community and society.

These two moves by the district is a good start.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Vigoren book a good read

To the editor,

June Dougherty recently sent me a copy of a new book by Peggy Vigoren called “The Adoption of Charlie Keenan.” It tells the remarkable story of the life of Charlie Williams, who lived nearly his entire life in the local area from International Falls to Kettle Falls.

Peggy did a lot of extensive detailed research on the years spanning Charlie’s life.

The telling of the story becomes a remarkable history of the Falls/Ranier/ Koochiching County and indeed the state and nation. The historical content gives the book a special appeal for local readers, but the story of Charlie’s unique life makes the book a good read for anyone, anywhere.

I have always heard about the rough and tumble history of Borderland, but the book

brings it to life and makes one realize that not so long ago, this was the frontier.

“The Adoption of Charlie Keenan” should be on coffee tables all over the place. It is a good way to brush up on local history while at the same time enjoying a surprisingly fascinating story. I really liked it.

Dave Ramnes
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How to contact your lawmakers

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The Journal welcomes letters from readers

Letters should be limited to 500 words or less. Longer letters may be edited. Letters must be signed and include the telephone number and address of the letter writer. Only the author’s city address will be published.

Mail letters to The Journal, 1602 Highway 71, International Falls 56649. Letters can also be sent by e-mail to laurel@ifallsjournal.com.

GUEST COLUMN

Soft drinks: The beginning of the end?

According to the Los Angeles Times, California state Sen. Bill Monning on Feb. 13 introduced a controversial bill that could make California the first state in the nation to require prominent health warnings (about obesity, diabetes and tooth decay) on sugary drinks.

■ Monning sees his proposal as a model for the rest of the nation, so suddenly I see my history with carbonated beverages in a different light.

■ When my late father was a Webelos Scout leader, he would use an antique cream separator to dispense a multi-soda concoction affectionately known as “Suicide.” Taking into consideration recent health warnings, was the name prophetic? (And has anyone studied the long-term effects of scouts squirting Cheez Whiz into fellow campers’ sleeping bags?)

■ As a teen, I pored through yellowing newspapers and magazines and discovered cartoon advertising icons “Pepsi and Pete, the Pepsi Cola Cops.” Nowadays a “Pepsi Cola Cop” would probably be someone who profiled purveyors of second-hand syrup.

■ My college advertising professor used to emphasize how Coca-Cola products were so ubiquitous in the South as to make Coke a generic name for soft drink, as in “Would you like to go for a Coke?” Debonair chap that I was, I approached an attractive classmate with the



Danny TYREE
TYRADES!

question “Would you like to go for a Coke?” Perhaps we went out only three times because she came to be creeped out by the subtext of “We would make a cute couple until we become snaggle-toothed burdens on society.”

■ I have quaffed my share of carbonated beverages. Selling soda pop and junk food helped finance my teenage hobbies. Soft drink ads probably help support this newspaper. On the other hand, I’ve known way too many people with diabetes and tsk-tsked countless portly kids waddling to the drink dispenser.

■ So I’m in a quandary about this issue. What’s the best I can hope for to come out of this?

■ Will the crusaders stop with labeling, or will they segue into ever-escalating “sin taxes” and public shaming? At the very least, they’ll probably commandeer soft drink slogans and indoctrinate us with “You can’t beat the Real Thing — but these dentures are a halfway decent substitute,”

“I’m a pariah, you’re a pariah, wouldn’t you like to be a pariah, too?,” “Do the Dew — Your Days Are Few,” and “You’ve got a lot to live and... oops. Guess you DIDN’T have a lot to live.”

■ Perhaps the legislators will broaden their approach and provide other valuable information for the geniuses who don’t know about weight gain or basic dental hygiene. (“Honest, there is not an invisible person opening the supermarket door every time you approach it.”)

■ Perhaps parents en masse will suddenly advise “Drink your salad,” and our intelligence agencies will stick with good old waterboarding instead of descending to the level of savages by “7 Upping” terrorists.

■ Maybe the implementation of the plan would steer away from vilifying beverage companies and take a more positive approach of extolling the virtues of exercise, balanced diet and regular teeth brushing. You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar.

■ Of course in California once they caught the flies, they would put them in a wild game preserve spa.

■ SighMakes me long for a good stiff (soft) drink and a chorus of “I’d Like To Teach The World To Perform Dialysis, In Perfect Harmony...”

■ Tyree’s’ weekly column is distributed exclusively by Cagle Cartoons Inc. newspaper syndicate.