

# OPINION

DAILY JOURNAL

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"The Daily Journal is dedicated to community service, to defense of individual rights and to providing those checks upon government which no constitution can ensure."

SCOTT ALEXANDER  
founding editor, 1963

## AT ISSUE

Repeating as state champion is even more difficult than earning the title in the first place.

## OUR POINT

Center Grove swimmer Michelle McKeehan's state titles are especially praiseworthy.

## Repeating as champion especially difficult task

The Daily Journal

A state title in any high school sport or activity is a significant and noteworthy accomplishment.

To earn two titles, whether in the same season or in consecutive years, is even more special.

So Center Grove swimmer Michelle McKeehan's accomplishments are at a height that is so rarefied, few people can even imagine.

McKeehan, a junior, has won individual state titles in the 200-yard individual medley and 100-yard breaststroke in each of her first three years in high school. She is only the third girl in state history to do that.

Then, as if adding an exclamation point to her stellar performance, she set a state record in the individual medley on Friday.

On Saturday, she electrified spectators and other competitors when she broke the national high school record. Her time of 1:58.06 was more than a half-second faster than the previous mark, set in 2000 by Natalie Coughlin, who later became a U.S. Olympian.

After her record-breaking performance, McKeehan remained humble. "I was hoping to go a little faster than what I did last night, but nowhere in my dreams did I imagine going that fast," she said. "I know that's what we strived for all year long. It's just very exciting now." Her coach felt no need to remain reserved.

During the medley, Center Grove coach Jim Todd stood at the edge of the pool checking his stopwatch, waving his arms and screaming for McKeehan to swim faster.

After she finished, Todd bent over and put his hands on his knees to catch his breath.

"She's in better shape than I am," he said.

Repeating as a champion is among the most difficult tasks in sports. There's no hiding from the competition.

Golfer Jack Nicklaus once remarked: "The demands of talent increase under pressure, and some players don't possess the talent to get through the hard part."

McKeehan herself understands that pressure. Before the state meet, she said:

"Every time I go in (the pool), I'm scared to death I'm not going to do as well as I want to or I'm not going to step up to that challenge," she said. "There are so many what-ifs in swimming or any sport. If one thing goes wrong, will I be able to handle that and turn it into something positive?"

It's clear McKeehan has the physical talent and also has the emotional talent to withstand the mounting pressure.

But she's no prima donna.

Teammate Morgan Davis said, "She's so modest; you would never think that she's a four-time state champion. She doesn't have a big head, and she doesn't like to talk about herself at all."

If she won't talk about herself, we will.

Congratulations to a champion several times over. After you graduate in 2008, it likely will be a long time before we see another swimmer of your caliber.

## Focus: Iraq

### Pre-war intelligence spun to fit preconceptions

Scrrips Howard News Service

Unhappy with the intelligence it was getting from established spy agencies, the Bush administration set up a special intelligence shop under then-Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith, one of the architects of the Iraq war.

Specifically, the administration was irritated that the CIA and others were unable to establish a clear connection between Iraq and al-Qaida. The special office provided one, citing "a mature and symbiotic relationship" between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaida that subsequently turned out never to have existed.

Even so, that supposed connection, a mutual pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, became one of the justifications for the war.

Now comes a critical report on the operation by the Pentagon's acting inspector general, Thomas Gimble, saying that Feith's office relayed to President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney conclusions "not fully supported by the available intelligence" and "inconsistent with the consensus of the intelligence community."

This is a bureaucratically polite way of saying "wrong and misleading," but given the predisposition of the Bush administration for war with Iraq, welcome even so.

The White House says that whatever problems were caused by what Gimble called assessments evolving from "policy to intelligence products" in Feith's operations have been solved by the creation of a director of national intelligence.

Defenders of Feith's policy shop and the Pentagon under former Secretary Donald Rumsfeld note that while the actions were "inappropriate," they were both legal and authorized. This is hardly an exacting standard for drawing conclusions that could — and did — lead to war.

Critics charged at the time that this Office of Special Plans operating outside normal channels was intended to cherry-pick and spin intelligence to support the White House case for war with Iraq, and nothing in the inspector general's report much disputes that judgment.



## City's ever-rising taxes hitting its retired residents hardest

For the tax year 2004 payable in 2005, the Franklin Community

School tax rate was \$1.35 per \$100 assessed valuation. Then, for the year 2005 payable in 2006, the Franklin Community School tax rate jumped approximately 35 percent to \$1.82 per \$100 assessed valuation.

The early proposed rate had been advertised at \$2.42. That would have been a 79 percent increase in the school rate in one year.

In discussing this issue with the school corporation's business manager, Steve Millikan, the proposed tax rate for 2006 payable in 2007 is \$2.16, which would be another 18 percent increase.

Millikan explained the corporation is trying to hold the rate to \$2, but they are not sure that can be done.

If the rate can be held to \$2, that is still a 10 percent increase over 2006.

No matter which rate becomes effective for 2007, we are looking at a 48 percent to 60 percent overall increase from the rate in 2005.

Indications are the corporation is not finished yet. They just spent \$800,000 to remodel Webb Elementary School. Now, the powers that be want to build a new Webb school on the east side of town. They want to tear down Union Elementary School and build a new one. They also want a new administration building. This has to stop somewhere and soon.

Franklin Community School Corp. has the second-highest tax rate in the county as evidenced by the following figures:

Location	Rate
Clark-Pleasant	\$2.05
Franklin	\$1.82
Edinburgh	\$1.60
N-H-J	\$1.52
Center Grove	\$1.40
Greenwood	\$1.37

According to information

### BY THE NUMBERS

	Statewide	Johnson County	Difference
Schools	.54	.81*	.27 more
County	.18	.11	.07 less
City and town	.16	n/a	n/a
Special units	.05	n/a	n/a
Township	.03	.03**	same
Libraries	.03	.04	.01 more
State	.01	.01	same

\*Franklin Community School Corp.  
\*\* Franklin Township

received from Mitch Frazier, public information officer and legislative liaison of the Indiana Department of Local Government Finance, Franklin Community School Corp. ranks 49th out of 336 school corporations in Indiana with rates ranging from \$0.3012 to \$2.5926.

Franklin's rate is among the highest already and going higher.

The table above shows the distribution of the tax dollar for the most recent year data was available (2005). The first figure is the statewide average, and the second is what Johnson County received. The source was the department of local government finance.

The third set of figures has been added by me to show how the Franklin Community School Corp. compares.

In addition to all of the above, we are also looking at the implementation of trending and possible full-day kindergarten as well as other unforeseen expenses on the horizon.

What can you do to stop these kinds of increases?

Allowing these increases to go on year after year jeopardizes many retired persons' ability to continue to live in their homes. If my property were located in the city

limits where the tax rate is even higher, I would have to sell out.

For right now we are OK because we planned ahead. But there are many retirees who are not so lucky.

Please stop and think about what is happening to a lot of men and women who are having a hard time making ends meet. We do not have the tax base to support all the spending.

Copies of the above have been furnished to the Franklin Community School Board members, Superintendent William Patterson, Franklin Mayor Brenda Jones-Matthews, Franklin City Council members, Johnson County commissioners, Johnson County Council members, planning and zoning officials, State Rep. Woody Burton and State Sen. Greg Walker.

At the age of 72, I have done all I can do to draw attention to these concerns. My health will not permit me to challenge anymore.

Now it is up to our elected officials to address these concerns and to their constituents, you, the taxpayers.

Lester Burton is a resident of Franklin Township in Johnson County. He wrote this guest column for the Daily Journal. Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com

## YOUR VIEWS

### Education was original beneficiary of lottery

To the editor:

I think the legislature needs to go back and read what it promised when the Indiana lottery was being proposed and what proposition was used to get the people to back it up.

It was written and publicized and promoted by the Indiana legislature and the governor that the money would go to education. This was to be where most of the money would go. I, as well as others who remember this, have complained for years that the money is not being used as promised.

If the promises had been kept, we would have the best educational system in the state from preschool through college. The lottery could have paid college tuition, books, all-day kindergarten, preschool and tutoring for at-risk children.

It belongs to us, the people. The state doesn't have a right to sell it. If it is to be sold, we must all have a say, not just the governor lobbying and making promises that most likely will change as he so chooses.

Oh, and by the way, we don't need more gambling.

Gamblers Anonymous is busy enough.

Katherine Fox Carr  
Indianapolis

## WRITE A LETTER

The Daily Journal invites readers to submit letters, opinion columns and e-mail comments for the opinion page.

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## Link love of pets to respect for the environment

With a full order of multi-grain, high-fiber cereal topped by low fat, all natural yogurt, Pandora Boxx made her way over to my table.

"It's such a hassle, day after day after day," she said.

"What's a hassle?" I asked.

"Oh, you know," she answered mixing her yogurt deep into the cereal.

"Why," she continued without continuity, "don't you write about global warming? It's a very serious problem that they need to do something about."

"Who are they?" I inquired.

"All the big guys," she said, "the power brokers, the decision makers, and the office holders, all of them."

"Pandy," I said politely, "global warming and other environmental dangers are very serious issues. But all those people you just mentioned will read about it only when they see that their power and wealth is challenged."

"It's the ordinary folks who have to be convinced, folks who still read newspapers, folks who could put pressure on politicians and businesses if they felt committed to finding and supporting solutions."

"Posh," she said with explosive emphasis. "You just don't want to admit how little



Morton Marcus

you know about the subject."

"That's unkind," I said. "Plus, I have been busy thinking about how pets are absorbing more of our lives."

"Nice effort to get off the topic," Pandy sneered.

"Not at all," I insisted.

"I'm just trying to put things into perspective. According to the American Pet Products Manufacturing Association, 63 percent or 69 million homes in the United States have pets; 43.7 percent of those with pets have dogs and 37.7 percent have cats. There are 90.5 million cats (I have two of them) and 73.9 million dogs (I've got three of those)."

"So?" Pandy asked, fishing with her tongue for errant bits of cereal in her teeth.

"Well," I said, "the association estimates that we are spending \$38.4 billion on our pets, double what we were spending 12 years ago. It reports that many hotels across the country are adopting

pet friendly policies. Apparently mouthwash and an electric toothbrush for canines are routine in doggies' beauty sessions.

"Consumers are buying faux mink coats for cold weather outings, feathered French day beds for afternoons naps, designer bird cages, botanical fragrances and ... a rhinestone tiara."

"That's just the extreme fringe of pet owners," Pandy said. "And what's it got to do with global warming, clean air and water, land preservation and healthy communities?"

"Are you listening?" I insisted. "Do you know what the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency spends each year?"

I didn't wait for a response.

"The president's budget for fiscal year 2008 is \$7.2 billion for the EPA. That's the fourth consecutive year with a cut in the EPA budget, down \$1.2 billion (14 percent) from its \$8.4 billion peak in fiscal year 2004."

"The national budget is a statement about our preferences as a people. We are willing to spend only \$7.2 billion on environmental protection while we spend \$38.4 billion on pets. Where is the public concern with the land, air and water we leave for our children and

grandchildren?"

"Even if you have no progeny, what kind of concern do you have for the Earth on which our pets are supposed to live?" I concluded.

Pandora gave me a long look. "Well, if you put it that way, I see how pets are related to the environment. But aren't you asking for a lot of trouble if you demand that people give up their pets?"

"I'm not saying people should give up their pets," I said. "The question is: How much do we spend on them?"

"Could we somehow tie spending on pets to contributions to environmental research and remedies? Right now we spend \$15.2 billion on pet food and \$9.4 billion on veterinary care."

"Let's find a way to link our love of pets to our respect for the environment."

"I don't know," she said. "You could be letting something unanticipated loose into our society."

"Right, and it could be something good, something responsible," I concluded as we parted.

Morton Marcus is an economist, formerly with the Kelley School of Business at Indiana University. Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com