

# Opinion

## Projections show a continuing decline in high school graduates

May traditionally is the time we celebrate the graduation of our high school seniors. According to national statistics, 2025 is expected to be the year in the United States to produce the most graduates ever. This year between 3.8 and 3.9 million high school seniors are projected to graduate from high schools in the United States. However, the projections also show it is going to be all downhill from there.

According to numbers release last Wednesday from the Western Interstate Commission for High Education's 11th edition of "Knocking at the College Door", report the US is about to see a peak in high school graduates. Their numbers project a decline of up to



**Northwest Passage**  
By Loyd Ford

a half million high school graduates by 2041. The number of high school graduates in 2041 is expected to be some where below 3.4 million kids.

The drop in numbers of students attending and graduating from high schools is higher in some states than in others. Kentucky is expected to have a nine percent

decline in high school graduates by 2041. Tennessee is expected to have a 15 percent drop and Illinois is expected to have a whopping 32 percent drop.

So, what happened? The national birth rates dropped sharply in 2008 due to the Great Recession and has continued to fall. The other contributor is the decline of students progressing through high schools to earn a diploma.

In Marshall County schools there is also a decline in enrollment and questions about funding levels.

Post World War II America has relied on large numbers of teenagers to fill positions in the work force, particularly in the service industry.

They are in short supply now, ask any employer that relies on young people to fill positions in their firms and they will tell you they can't find kids to work.

This drop in the birth rate coupled with the number of kids that for one reason or another can't seem to make it through high school is generating concerns. Fewer high school graduates mean fewer incoming freshmen at universities and in trade schools. Fewer kids mean smaller families or fewer traditional families. Much of our economy is based on goods and services provided to families with children. A continuing decline in families with children isn't going to bring changes that will

be easy to deal with. If this trend continues as it is projected, life in small rural areas like our state and region will see greater changes in how they live than ever before in modern times.

Right now, it is difficult to know what schools and even small communities may look like by 2041. There could be a flood of changes brought forth by not just population decline but advances in digital technology. Artificial intelligence (AI) is just now beginning to take effect, especially in education. AI is expected to create the biggest changes first in digital maintenance and engineering and then in the medical field. How we live in relationship almost everything could be

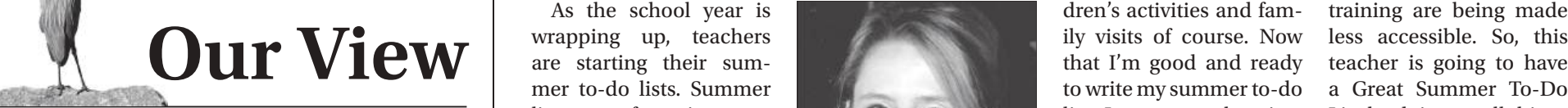
affected by AI very soon.

I have to wonder how the use of technology has led to where we are today. It has been my experience that too many people are separating themselves from the real world by living in a digital one.

I believe it would be a very wise idea to have a study done to see what we can do to increase the number of high school graduates, and especially be sure we turn around this trend for students not graduating at all.

While I don't believe we can return to that time in the 1950s and 1960s when we had that idyllic lifestyle that really only exists in our memories. But I do believe we can do better than we are doing.

## The great summer to-do list and good deeds



### Our View

## Where are you Mr. Lincoln?

In June of 1858 a clean-shaven Abraham Lincoln spoke before the Illinois State Convention in Springfield, IL. There he delivered his "House Divided" speech in which he said "a house divided against itself cannot stand". Words that are now enshrined in dusty history but are just as true today as they were then.

For most of us it is no secret that the United States is very divided. Perhaps as divided as the nation was in 1858.

Abe Lincoln was a flawed man who overcame political and personal shortcomings to take on the mantle of greatness. He had a vision for the country and he in a most determined way forced changed. He paid a price for that. We have to ask ourselves where is the Lincoln of today? Who will defend the Constitution? Who will make sure the inalienable rights we have recognized for over 250 years as belonging to every person will continue to exist on American soil?

Lincoln prosecuted a war that took more lives than any war in the history of the United States because he believed that it was a necessary evil to ensure the preservation of the Union. Are we willing to give up our Union and our belief that everyone has these basic rights because a sullen few don't respect them?

We think not. Lincoln by his actions, guaranteed that all men are created equal. No longer was this just a sentiment on parchment. The world has always been in short supply of individuals who, like Lincoln, will stand up and defend what is right, even when the cost they must pay is everything they have.

Our democracy needed a Lincoln in 1858 and she needs one now. Where are you Mr. Lincoln?

As the school year is wrapping up, teachers are starting their summer to-do lists. Summer lists range from time consuming tasks to bucket list items. They are all the things that simply could not be done during the school year.

Being a third generation public school teacher seasoned with experience I am a summer listing pro. Even my children have lists. Their lists are quite good. Swimming, gardening, playing with friends, and visiting family are



By Emily Morrison

their top priorities. So far, my summer list has only been ruminating in my head. There are doctor's appointments and trainings and classes and chil-

dren's activities and family visits of course. Now that I'm good and ready to write my summer to-do list, I see more than just me and mine.

I understand that America wants to be great. It has been loudly professed and posted on hats, signs and flags. As an American I feel I should do my part to help achieve this greatness.

People are hurting in America. Services are being cut when groceries and medical care are high. Education and

training are being made less accessible. So, this teacher is going to have a Great Summer To-Do List by doing small things with great love. My to-do list will feature things I can do for others. I can help grow vegetables. I can put books in the hands of children. I can give people rides to appointments. I can teach.

Our actions are what will make our nation great. It looks like there is a great summer ahead. I hope you make yours great too.

## A prayer, a pilgrimage, and an adventure

A few years ago, I attended a weekend conference for Christian writers. Successful writers in many genres of Christian literature taught sessions. Much of the information I gained that weekend was no more than information, but a couple of the speakers made an impression. One of them was a southern writer named River Jordan.

River Jordan is an author, speaker, teacher, and radio host. She has written both fiction and nonfiction books, including a personal memoir that I bought at the conference to take home and not open for a couple of years. But eventually, the book found its way to the top of my to-read stack.

"Praying for Strangers" is an account of a New Year's resolution River made as 2009 approached. Both her sons were about to go off to war, one to Iraq and the



**Tales of Grace**  
By Leigh Ann Northcutt

other to Afghanistan. As their leaving approached, she was consumed with thoughts and prayers for her boys. The only things on her mind were the faces of her sons and the hope that they would come home again. That is, until a resolution dropped into her spirit. God was leading her to pray for a stranger every day of the coming year.

So River began a daily pilgrimage to find strangers for whom to pray. But she didn't look for just any stranger. She knew

that she was supposed to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading to find one significant, special person each day. And then she prayed for that person at the end of the day.

After a few weeks of praying from a distance, River was led to meet her strangers and tell them she was praying for them. At that point, everything changed. Personal contact opened the door for her to share in their day's sorrow. The pilgrimage became an adventure for her, and the book made an impact on me.

A nurse whose husband just had surgery. A teenager with visible bruises on her neck and arms. A young soldier coming home to a newborn daughter. They were just a few of River Jordan's strangers. Each with a poignant story. And each was emotionally moved by the fact that someone had cared enough to pray

for them that day.

Prayer is a precept of the Christian faith. The New Testament writers often instruct us to pray for each other throughout their writings. It is a personal and powerful discipline. There is an intimacy between people when they connect over their stories and their prayers. One burden becomes a shared struggle. One joy delights two hearts. One life story becomes part of another.

River Jordan ends "Praying for Strangers" this way: "We belong to each other. We always have. And in the process of my understanding this, of walking out this resolution, I've lost my regret and instead have counted it loss if I don't touch a life, offer a smile, a prayer, a pause along the way. So every day, I continue to do this one tiny thing. This one tiny, incredible thing."

## Boredom quickly sets in with power outages

As the paper was being printed last night to be mailed out today, we are supposed to have more storms. I hope and pray they pass us by, again. I had golf ball sized hail on Friday. However, on Thursday night I lost power for some three hours, as did many across the area.

The thing is it brought out that bratty teenager in me that I thought was long ago gone.

As it wasn't dark when the power went off (btw, I still want to know why) I went to the patio. I just sit in the swing listening to the birdsongs and watching the lighting bugs. Well, this calming meditative state only lasted so long. Boredom set in. I went back inside and I had nothing that would work. All the stuff I had acquired since the Ice Storm for



**My Side of the Fence**  
By Mike Harrell

such an occasion had long ago died. I had a pineapple scented candle. I did remember to go out and get a solar light to put in the bed/bath area so I wouldn't be in the dark.

After not being able to stand the boredom any longer I decided to just drive around and maybe see what caused the power outage. Nope, I had put the car in the garage in

case of hail. You guessed it, that garage door wasn't going to open. Yes, I can open it without power, it just didn't seem worth it to do so.

I did finally find an old CD player (remember them?) and I still have lots of CD's that replaced my tapes, that replaced my LP's. So I managed to listen to some of my favorite "old" music until the power came back on.

I hope this week is no worse than last week. Although my great niece might just give me a stink eye for this. Friday a large tree fell on her house. Mostly it was the garage. Her cute little car was parked next to her husband's big ole truck. As the roof collapsed, the truck caught most of it protecting her car. Well, one of them got a smile

out of it.

We will be celebrating Memorial Day Monday. Remember this is for those that have passed that served our nation in peace and war, they served. It is not the kick-off to summer. That's not necessarily a bad thing, but take a second to pause and reflect why you are able to enjoy the day on the lake. I had two brothers that I was, and, I am still proud of, that served and others in the family.

Happy Birthday to Debbie Newman, Gloria Culver and Scott Montgomery. Celebrate your day and remember, eat the cake.

Happy Anniversaries to Bobby & Cleo Suttles and Van & Kathy Rudolph. Celebrate.

Stay safe, stay well and as always, stay in touch.

## The Lake News

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