

It all started with a text message



Tina Payne

My iPhone storage is full. Pictures and text messages comprise two-thirds of the 31.7 Gigabytes of used space. It even cries out for help occasionally, with pop-up messages giving me advice on how to create room for more.

I have considered deleting all the old text messages to save 6.32 GB, but I am admittedly the nostalgic type. Deleting old conversations is akin to wiping away history with my family and friends.

Yesterday, all my sentimental tendencies were validated when I went on a hunt for the origin of KidFEST by Harvey County United Way. Scrolling back through five years of text messages between HCUW board member Chad Frey and myself, I found what I was looking for right at the beginning.

On Sept. 4, 2014, at 12:36 pm, Chad wrote, "Is this something UW should maybe take a lead? Understand that I am not asking if Tina should. Maybe a couple of board members. Just a thought."

If memory serves, Chad sent that text message during a meeting of the Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC). The ICC had hosted KidFEST for many years, and knew it was popular with the families of young children. Unfortunately, a multitude of issues converged and the ICC was considering discontinuing it altogether.

As any faithful Kansan reader knows, Chad wears many hats — editor, juvenile intake worker, baseball announcer, board member and runner. In my personal opinion, though, the most important hats to Chad are those of husband and father. Wearing those hats, he understood the impact of KidFEST to local families first-hand, having attended with his wife and three children.

He could see the fit with the

Community Impact initiatives of United Way and wanted to explore them more in 2015, his year as board chairman. The board and ICC agreed, and thus began KidFEST by Harvey County United Way.

For an organization inexperienced at hosting community events, the last five years has certainly been a learning curve for us. Lessons abound in target marketing, exhibitor recruitment and location logistics. Each year we learn more, refining as we go.

None of this would be possible without the dedicated committee of volunteers, led by committee chair Natise Vogt. Other members are Jim Brown, Brittany Denson, Chad Frey, Loni Jensen, Sherri Rawlins and Rick Toews.

As a result of their collective efforts, KidFEST keeps getting bigger and better. On April 6, 253 children ages birth to 8 years old brought their families to Slate Creek Elementary for a morning of free family fun. Families came from every community in Harvey County, including two children from Burrton, six from Halstead, 24 from Hesston, eight from North Newton, 13 from Sedgwick, 10 from Walton and 11 from Bentley.

The purpose of the event is to promote literacy, so each child received a book to take home thanks to Jason High Farm Bureau Financial Services. The first 50 children through the door received a prize from Moore's Collision Repair. Other event expenses were covered by Edward Jones Emily Stewart Financial Advisor, First Bank, Hendrickson Chiropractic, Kiwanis Club of Newton, Midway Motors, Newton Rotary Club, and Waddell & Reed Kukula Martens & Associates. In-kind support was provided by Guerrilla Marketing and USD 373.

New this year, drawings were held for prizes provided by Newton Rebels Baseball, Newton Recreation Commission, Sand Creek Summer Daze and YMCA Newton. Norm's Coffee Bar provided coffee for the volunteers.

The event concluded with a Treasure Egg Hunt

sponsored by Newton Young Professionals, where eager children quickly scooped up 3,000 eggs from the playground.

Activities were provided by 38 exhibitors: Aetna Better Health, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Caring Hands Humane Society, Carriage Factory Art Gallery, CASA, Community Playschool, Cooper Early Education Center, Doodlebug Daycare, Family First Child Care, First Bank, Harvey County Elections Office and Informed Women of Harvey County, Harvey County Health Department, Harvey County Sheriff's Office, Health Ministries Clinic, Heart to Heart CAC, Heartland Research Associates, Hendrickson Chiropractic, Integrity Medicine, KSCL Healthy Families, Kansas Health Foundation, Kansas Learning Center for Health, K-State Research & Extension, Kiwanis Club of Newton, Newton Convention Visitors Bureau, Newton Fire/EMS, Newton Lions Club, Newton Medical Center, Newton Police Department, Newton Public Library, Newton Recreation Commission, Newton Rotary Club, Parents as Teachers, Peace Connections, Prairie View, The Resiliency Center, Safehope, Trinity Heights Respite Care and YMCA Newton.

Event volunteers included Clark Baldwin, Tyler Evans, Kyle Fiedler, Tara Goering, Chris McKellip, Rhonda Roux, Anthony Wedel, Renee Ybarra and Chisholm Middle School JAG-Kansas students. USD 373 is a strong partner in the event, offering space, tables and cleanup. Thanks to Superintendent Deborah Hamm, principal Tenae Alfaro, Sherry Unruh, Becky Hawks and maintenance staff.

The committee is already planning for next year. So please spread the word near and far to save the date for KidFEST 2020 on April 4, 2020, at Slate Creek Elementary.

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