

Officials should keep exploring school options

Community schools, as the name implies, is a concept integrating K-12 education with communities, using school buildings as public services centers.

Last week, Knox County Schools officials and others committed to improving education toured schools in Cincinnati, where the community schools program has led to academic improvement and serves as a national model.

Knox County already uses some features of community schools at Pond Gap and Inskip elementary schools, as well as in programs at other schools, and should explore expanding the programs to schools throughout the system.

Community schools are more than just educational centers. They foster parental involvement, and in Cincinnati test scores have dramatically improved.

The concept opens schools to the public, with offerings of adult education courses, medical and dental services, skills training and other programs. Each school can tailor its program to serve its community, and according to advocates the model works in urban and rural settings.

In order to work, community schools must be partnerships between local school officials and community organizations. Local governments, corporations and universities play key roles.

The Coalition for

gram there. Lake Middle School in Denver offers after-hours classes in leadership and job skills, and students gain experience running or assisting program functions.

But Knox Countians can find examples of community schools right here. A \$212,000 federal grant is allowing the expansion of the Vine School Health Center to provide services to students at eight additional schools. Staffed by University of Tennessee faculty nurse practitioners, as well as graduate and undergraduate students, the program aims to triple the number of patients it serves in some of Knoxville's poorest neighborhoods.

A program at Pond Gap Elementary School, run by UT faculty member Robert Kronick and funded by businessman and philanthropist Randy Boyd, provides after-hours programs for students and adults.

Funding to develop a systemwide community schools program will be a barrier, especially when the core educational mission of the schools remains underfunded. Parents, the school system, government officials, corporations, higher educational institutions and individual patrons — in other words, the entire community — would have to work together.

Schools don't exist in a vacuum. They are products of the communities in which they're located, and communities that use



✉ LETTERS

Tom Chervenak, Knoxville

US a republic, not a democracy

This is in response to the Aug. 18 editorial "Debt agreement needed to avoid 'doomsday cut,'" which said, "Failure will mean they put party above country, an unacceptable situation unworthy of our democracy."

Our country is not a democracy. It is a republic, and Webster and I agree on this.

If they'd like, I will loan the editorial board a copy of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution (including the amendments).

With our recent rush to socialism, we may soon both be wrong. What will the new word be? Try nostalgia.

Michael Williams, Knoxville

Congress added to USPS woes

The U.S. Postal Service has been in the news lately because of its financial situation, but here is the rest of the story. The Postal Service collected, processed and delivered 170 billion pieces of mail last year, is regularly rated No. 1 or No. 2 in customer satisfaction and is annually voted the most trusted government agency in America. It operates with no taxpayer funding and relies sole-

A THOUGHT

“It is difficult to stand sometimes depends upon his r

proposed to end the unreasonable billion-dollar payments and restore financial health, and ensure that Americans benefit from the Postal Service for many years to come.

Ray Morgan, Lenoir City

Churches should provide welfare

Is government responsible for taking care of all aspects of our lives such as health care and retirement? If you think so, then you have bought into the socialist agenda, have lost your freedom, and are opposed to founding principles of our nation which were based on biblical principles.

Our entitlement programs are not only unconstitutional but are also opposed to the principles of scripture. Private property rights are emphasized throughout the Bible. How could you have a command against stealing and covetousness if there were not private property?