



JOHN MILLER, Republican Senate candidate, visits with Karen Krien at the Herald office.

Herald staff photo by Tim Burr

Farming has many pitfalls

Successful farmers will tell you that there is no better life than being a farmer. Farmers take good care of the land and water for future generations. Physical work helps farm families stay healthy. Farmers work together with their neighbors to build strong, close knit communities. Farmers feed families, individuals, and communities who may be close by or located throughout the world. But being a farmer or rancher is not simply a job change. It is a life change. This short introduction will alert you to a few of the questions you need to consider before taking on a farm or ranch business.

Some people want to start farming based on a strong sense of mission. For example, they want to protect the environment or help feed the world. Some people simply want to enjoy an entrepreneurial lifestyle that allows them to work out of doors. Whatever your reasons, you should step back and take a practical view of the farming lifestyle.

Are you prepared for a job that requires long hours, including early mornings and late nights?

Have you considered the economics of seasonal earnings?

Are you able to take on the physical rigors of the job?

Can you learn to make do and fix things yourself?

Can you handle setbacks with grace and determination?

Do you have the patience to start a career with a steep learning curve and a long road to finally getting on your feet?

A plan details what you hope to do and maps how you expect to succeed. A well-crafted business plan can be the difference between success and failure. A plan includes a thoughtful list of what you need but also details how things will get

done.

What are you going to plant?

How much will you sell it for and when do you expect to see profit?

What equipment do you need? Who will fix it?

How will you cover costs of insurance premiums? mortgage or rent? Labor?

How will you finance the business?

A plan also considers how things might go wrong and how to prepare for the unexpected.

Do you have a disaster plan?

Can you weather a bad year?

Can you make changes to stay in business?

A good business plan is supplemented by a personal plan. Have you considered your:

non-farm needs? health insurance? retirement? college fund? personal savings?

Who is going to buy it? Be sure you can sell before you plant. Know your cost of production, your market, and your consumers. Compare the price of your product to what others are selling it for. If you want to sell locally, visit your local markets and find out what is selling and what isn't.

Where else can you sell? Are you able to produce something different than what you planned if the market changes?

How will you get your product to consumers? What are the transportation costs and requirements? To grow for local markets it is ideal to find land close to a city, but that may mean leasing rather than owning land.

Do you know the food safety regulations and do you have the proper licensing for your state or municipality? You must know local ordinances dealing with land use and agricultural products for farming and marketing your crop.

Family

You may want to farm but what about your spouse or domestic partner? What about your children? Are they ready to take on this lifestyle change? Will you be moving away from your support network of friends and family? Can you build a support network for farming?

Neighbors and Community

Not everyone understands how important farming is and why you do it. You should expect to do some outreach, to explain what you plan to do and how it will affect others. Who are your neighbors? Are they farmers? Non-farmers? What impact will your farm have on them and what impact will they have on you? Be the first to extend the hand of friendship to your neighbors and the people in your community. Good relations with your community are vital to a successful farming or ranching enterprise.

There are people who can examine your farm business plans and help you make the best decisions for your situation. Start2Farm is here to help you find people with answers and resources to help build your farm business. But remember, it's up to you to make good decisions based on sound advice.

To further explore starting a farm, go to the New to Farming resources to find more in-depth resources.

Alternately, you may feel strongly about supporting farms and access to nutritious food but that being a farmer is not quite for you. In that case, explore our Support Farming Communities page to find ways to support farmers, rural communities, and vibrant, healthy food systems.

Politicians debate for votes in Goodland candidate forum

By Kevin Bottrell

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Four Republican primary candidates for the Kansas Senate and House of Representatives faced off against each other at a candidate forum in Goodland on Tuesday.

The forum included the Republican Senate candidates for the 40th District, John Miller and Ralph Ostmeyer, and the Republican House candidates for the 121st District, Rick Billinger and Ward Cassidy. The event, organized by the Sherman County Republican Committee, also included candidates for sheriff and county commissioner. About 50 members of the public attended.

Sherman County Republican Chairperson Jeanie Schields allowed each candidate to make a three-minute introduction, then asked each set of candidates one or two questions, allowing a 1 minute response.

John Miller, a 16-year Norton County Commissioner, was the first Senate candidate to speak.

The Legislature needs to change, he said. People are paying too much in property taxes, while a lot of blame was handed out and money was spent on the failed redistricting process.

Miller said he would rather communicate than blame. He said that because the various Norton County groups have communicated well, the county has been steadily improving.

"We are going to have to make some sacrifices in the Legislature," he said.

Incumbent Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer spoke next. Ostmeyer has served two terms in the Senate, and before that served two terms in the House of Representatives. Before that he was a school board member, a county commissioner and a KSHSAA official.

Ostmeyer said he chaired the Senate Natural Resources Committee during this year's session, a committee which had some prominence because of Gov. Sam Brownback's focus on water legislation. He said he is proud of the eight or nine water policy initiatives developed by his committee.

Ostmeyer was also on the redistricting committee. He said he is willing to take the blame for the Senate's failure to pass a map.

"We weren't able to pull it off," he said. "I wasn't able to convince my colleagues."

Ostmeyer said he also helped work out a compromise on home-owned carnivals, which had been facing stricter safety requirements.

Schields' question for the Senate candidates was "What is the proper role of state government and what should its top priority be?"

Ostmeyer said the budget should be the first priority. The Legislature was able to put a surplus in the budget this year, he said.

"With the governor's tax plan I feel that we're on the right direction," he said.

The other priority should be education, Ostmeyer said. Many of the counties in the 40th District are down to one school per county, he said, and they can't get cut any further.

Miller said the first priority of the Legislature should be to make to the state succeed. Miller cited the Kansas Legislative Research Committee, who said that the state could have as much as a \$2 million budget deficit. Miller said the Legislature's role is to fix that budget.

Fixing the budget may take either serious cuts or raising taxes, he said.

Schields then introduced the House candidates. Both Rick Billinger of Goodland and Ward Cassidy from St. Francis are incumbents, each having served one term in the House.

Billinger spoke first. He is originally from Park and moved to Goodland in the 1970s. He was elected by the 121st District's Republican Committee to fill Rep. Jim Morrison's post after his death in December, 2010.

Billinger said the Legislature needs to stick behind schools, agriculture and hospitals. It has been doing a good job with the budget, he said. There was a deficit in 2010, and the Legislature was able to get to a surplus this year. However, he said, the state can't afford to keep spending money and expect future generations to pick up the debt. Billinger said he did not vote in favor of the governor's tax plan, because it was projected to result in a budget deficit down the road. He favors property tax relief over income tax relief.

With many new legislators Billinger said there will be a lot opportunity for people with only one term under their belts to get

choice committee assignments.

Cassidy, a former principal and current school counselor, beat a 14-year incumbent for the old 120th District in 2010. He said his first priority was to get on the appropriations committee, which at the time had no members from west of Salina. He was able to get on the committee during this year's session, and said before long he had people listening to his western Kansas perspective.

With all of the incumbents running against each other, Cassidy said he might be the only one next year who has any background in school finance.

Schields asked the House candidates the same question, "What is the proper role of state government and what should its top priority be?"

Cassidy said his priority is western Kansas. He said he likes to get involved in issues that affect people in western Kansas. For instance he has been talking to the Board of Cosmetology about the length of time it takes to get board certified. Currently it can take up to six months, he said, which can hurt people's chances of getting jobs.

"That's what I like to do: get involved," he said.

Billinger agreed that the priority should be western Kansas, and other than that, legislators should focus on the budget.

"You can't spend what you don't have," he said. "And with 60 or more new legislators, we'll have a lot more say."

After the forum, the candidates stuck around to speak to members of the public one-on-one.

Hospital employee gets grant for school

The Kansas Hospital Education and Research Foundation is pleased to announce the successful completion of the eleventh annual Health Care Scholarship Program. KHERF partnered with the Kansas Hospital Human Resources Association, the Kansas Association of Health Care Executives and the Kansas Foundation for Medical Care, to provide thirty scholarships totaling \$18,600. Twenty-five honorable mentions were also named to serve as alternates.

KHERF received 179 applications from 128 individuals. Each application was considered by KHERF's Scholarship Review Committee according to established criterion. This year's scholarships were awarded in the following categories: administration; faculty; health information technology; human resources; master/doctorate; nursing; and other health care.

The following 30 individuals have been awarded a scholarship to assist in pursuing excellence in their health care career: Vicki Coates, Medical Coding Certification, HIT Category, Cheyenne County Hospital;

Established in 1969, by the Kansas Hospital Association, the Kansas Hospital Education and Research Foundation administers projects addressing critical needs in the areas of health care workforce, rural health, emergency preparedness and health professional education. Through these programs, KHERF has leveraged over \$20 million in grants and other funding for community hospitals in Kansas. For projects and initiatives, KHERF serves in a leadership role, is a partner in developing projects or simply serves as an administrator for grants and sub-contracts that are consistent with KHERF's vision and values.

I would appreciate your votes for District 3 County Commissioner. Vote Brett T. Poling, D.C. on Aug. 7th

Pol. Adv. pd. for by Cynthia Poling, Treasurer

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