

# Opinion



## Letter Drop

- Our Readers Sound Off

## What makes Kansas special?

To the Colby Free Press:

We are learning about Kansas and the Kansas state symbols in first grade. Here are some of the answers Mrs. Ross' students gave when asked, "What makes Kansas special?"

Kansas is special because:

- it is my home and I can play in the snow sometimes. — Ryan Bates
- our state reptile is the turtle. — Madison Nichol
- it is fun to play with my friends. — Jaycie Blackhart
- we have tiger salamanders. — Logan Black
- it is a cool state. — Tatym Rundel
- the meadowlark is our special bird. — Kaili Guy
- we are living in Kansas. — Alison Hall
- Kansas has a lot of land. — Andrew Anderson
- it is my home. — Hannah Diercks
- there are a lot of parks in Kansas. — Morgan Ohrman
- it is a good home and I like my friends here. — Chelsie Calliham
- we have pretty sunflowers. — Paige Armbruster
- the buffalo is our special animal and I like buffaloes. — Chase Eggert
- it has the meadowlark for the state bird. — Mac Small
- we are free in Kansas. — Maura Hansen
- we have fun in the fall. — Cheyenne Miller
- all the symbols are great. — David Mainus
- it is fun in Kansas. — Brady Colson
- I can play with my friends. — Asia Kurth

Thank you for printing our letter about Kansas. We hope you are proud to be a Kansan, too.

**Mrs. Ross and her First Grade Class**  
**Colby**  
**(Letter #8)**

About those letters . . .

The *Free Press* encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, if at all possible, and should include a telephone number and an address. Most importantly, all letters must include a signature. Unsigned letters cannot be published. We reserve the right to edit for clarity and length, and, likewise, reserve the right to reject letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive or libelous.

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**U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-6521

**U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 1519 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715

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## It's called 'taking responsibility'

It was gratifying to hear the lawsuit against McDonald's for serving high fat foods and thereby "causing" obesity was dismissed, although I might be missing the point.

After all, I have always had a tendency to be "well-rounded," but it never occurred to me that it might not be my fault for eating too much. Maybe I should jump on the appeal bandwagon (with the amount of money involved, there will be an appeal!)

Please understand, it isn't my point to poke fun at folks who are struggling with very real addictions; not simply to food, but to alcohol, drugs and tobacco.

Nor is it my intent to dismiss the power of the sometimes insidious advertising slants that pander to our basest desires.

I do, however, agree with the judge in the McDonald's case when he said our excesses are our own responsibilities. There must be a point where we become culpable and responsible for our own stupidity.

I know that sounds harsh, but it is true. Much of the heart of our litigious society lies in our own refusal to take responsibility for our actions.

Instead, we demand that someone else fix the problem. One prominent automotive magazine bought a used sport utility vehicle that had been particularly vilified for its poor handling in emergencies.

In spite of their best efforts, including instigating a catastrophic tire failure at extremely extralegal speed with the driver's hands off the wheel (on a closed course) they couldn't get the vehicle



Jay Kelley  
●Speaking My Mind

to get out of control anywhere near the claims of a class action lawsuit brought against the manufacturer, which was paid off by the way.

We may look upon this as a frivolous extreme of society, but is it that, or is it a symptom of a society that is increasingly irresponsible?

We often decry the entitlement mentality, but have we not embraced it in many ways we do not even understand?

When we are in trouble with the law, was it really an overzealous police officer, or did we actually break the law?

When our favorite team loses, was it really poor officiating? If so, why is it that our team never wins because of a bad call?

Is our weight problem the fault of our parents who made us eat everything on our plate, or is it because we simply eat too much of the wrong things?

Are our money problems the result of a bad economy, or simply because we want too much, too soon.

There is the true story of a church elder who called a couple about some financial help they had asked about. The wife answered the phone

and, in the course of the conversation, asked the elder to wait while her husband came to the phone, because he was on the Internet.

They did not have the money to pay the rent and feed their kids, but had the money for two phone lines for uninterrupted Internet service!

Each of us could probably add an anecdote about irresponsibility, including a few of our own, for no one is perfect, but I think we have the point.

We can't control everything that happens to us and everything isn't our fault. A good number of the things we deal with, however, are the natural reactions to our decisions and actions.

Not all negative reactions are avoidable, either. Sometimes when we stand for the right, the consequences are not as favorable as we would have hoped. We're in good company when that happens. After all, they crucified Jesus.

Ultimately, many of our problems could be resolved by taking responsibility for the situation in which we find ourselves. When we take responsibility for our actions, however, we become responsible for correcting the situation as well.

When we are responsible, it is no longer someone else's problem to make sure we are happy, safe and comfortable.

Responsibility also means there isn't anyone else to blame for our failures and we have to face our worst critic, ourselves. That's the hardest part.

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A. Jay Kelley, of Colby, speaks his mind from time to time on a variety of subjects. His e-mail is jkelley@nwkansans.com.

## Where beauty abounds

Rosie Stockton

● Rosie's Route

When looking at an atlas and you see the little dashes next to a highway designating a scenic drive, have you ever wondered who decides which roads get that designation? Scenic beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder, but if a person keeps an open mind, every area you drive through has beauty. You just can't compare locations.

A few years ago, the highway going east out of my hometown was designated as a scenic highway and my mother just thought that was hilarious. The point is, when you live in an area you don't think of it as having beauty. To mom, this was just the road we always took to town, from the farm I grew up on, it wasn't a scenic drive.

I would have probably agreed with her until about ten years ago when we moved away from western Oklahoma and the farm, when my husband started graduate school. Our family traveled quite a bit during my childhood and during the early years of marriage. In moving away from the farm, we left our home territory and our comfort zone.

I really learned to "look" and "see" the beauty of the countryside where ever we were driving, after we moved to Lincoln, Neb. Prior to that time, I had always thought of Kansas as a boring place to drive through. It was just a long state to drive across, it was in the way of getting back home. However, living in Lincoln was only the second time in my life I had ever lived in town, and after living there for a year or two it was amazing how differently I began to look at "Kansas" on our drives home to Oklahoma. Now, I enjoyed the drive, it gave me the opportunity to

see for long distances, to enjoy the open country. I was seeing it with a new perspective.

So now when I get the opportunity to leave town, whether it is to Denver or Salina to shop, or Oklahoma and Nebraska to visit family and friends, or Missouri on vacation, I try to look at the countryside through eyes of appreciation. I say "what is beautiful about this area?" Is it the ranching country between here and Denver where there might not be a tree for miles, but that is part of the beauty, the vastness, the expanse. Then on a clear day, when you get close enough, there are the Rocky Mountains rising up as giant behemoths guarding the western edge of the prairies.

Or you might be driving through the Texas Panhandle and take a winding tour through the mesas and canyons after coming off the cap rock in the Oklahoma Panhandle. The panoramic views to me are spectacular, I just want to head out across the countryside with my arms outstretched and absorb the vastness of the land.

However, I know of other areas that we have traveled to where there are mountains and trees and winding roads. There are vibrant colors and

plants to discover and hidden valleys and mountain top vistas. There are rock formations and trails to climb. There are lakes and rivers, that actually have water in them, and springs that seep water from cracks in stone walls. This too is beauty, but it is different.

A big factor in what you might consider to be beautiful is where you grew up. This is where you feel most comfortable. I enjoyed the years we lived in Lincoln, Neb., where there are steep rolling hills that were carved into the landscape by the glaciers in the last ice age, but yet when we were able to move back to an area more in the heart of the High Plains, I felt I was moving to home territory.

Some people I know enjoy the intensely wooded areas of the eastern U.S.. To them, they are more comfortable in the woods surrounded, protected, hidden.

Look at the landscape where you are driving, whether it is on the interstate, a two lane highway or a paved farm to market road and whether it is marked as a scenic route or not. Also "look" at what is out there through the eyes of history. Ask yourself what did this look like 100 years ago? What was life like then?"

As you can tell, I really like and appreciate the beauty of the Plains, but no matter what road you travel on, try to find things to enjoy and appreciate, making every road a scenic route, whether it has that designation or not.

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Rosie Stockton is a Colby resident who enjoys writing. You will be reading more from her.

## Doonesbury

● Gary Trudeau

