

# Opinion



## Monday's Salute

Thumbs



to...

✓**Jennifer Koel and Laura Krejci** — on a fine job as managers of last Thursday's state "Large Group Music Festival" at Colby High School.

✓**Kenton and Sheila Krehbiel** — on your selection as this year's recipients of the Colby Community College "Honorary Associate Degree."

✓**JoAnne Sunderman** — you will be missed, and thanks for all you have done to make Pioneer Memorial Library's the territory's best.

✓**All Communications Officers** — for your service to all of Thomas County.

✓**D'Ette Scholtz** — good luck back in Huskerland.

✓**Future Teachers Organization** — at Colby Community College...the awards keep coming in. Keep it going!

✓**Paul Steele, Julie Saddler, Jim Oliver, Martha Brewer, Jim Brown, Sue Taylor, Jennifer Woofter, Phil DeYoung, Sharon Steele and Donnie Hughes** — on your mayoral reappointments. Your service to the community is appreciated.

✓**Colby Chamber Staffers** — for a really outstanding annual awards banquet.

✓**Jim Oliver** — Colby's own Globetrotter.

*This column is prepared each Monday morning by the newspaper's publisher. Comments, questions or submissions can be e-mailed to [td@nwkansas.com](mailto:td@nwkansas.com), fax to (785) 462-7749, call 462-3963 or mail to 155 W. 5th, Colby 67701. Thanks in advance for your help.*

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155 W. Fifth (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963  
Colby, Kan. 67701

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State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout Excellence, Column Writing, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography.

Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the day observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Haynes Publishing Co., 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE is paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday.

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby by carrier: 4 months \$32, 8 months \$47, 12 months \$64. By mail with in Colby and the nine-county region of Thomas, Sheridan, Decatur, Rawlins, Cheyenne, Sherman, Wallace, Logan and Gove counties: 4 months \$44, 8 months \$56, 12 months \$72. Other Kansas counties and surrounding states: 4 months \$51, 8 months \$61, 12 months \$75. All other states, \$75, 12 months.

## Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company



## The Twinkie tax

Tisha Cox

### • Off The Beaten Path



No, men aren't going to be taxed for the twinkies hanging off their arms.

According to an article on [cnn.com](http://cnn.com) a couple of months back, some states are trying to put a tax on junk food to raise some money for their cash-strapped budgets.

That's a nice idea and all, but would it really work?

The Twinkie is one of the finest foods on the face of the planet, in moderation of course. There's nothing wrong with a Twinkie or two now and then.

There is a Web site out there that has an "Ode to Twinkie" and "Midnight Twinkie Run" is one of the funniest stories I've ever read.

But singling out the Twinkie to name the tax is just wrong.

Why not the McDonald's Tax? With all the money they make on Big Macs and supersized fries, that could help out state budgets.

Or the treat tariff? Popcorn penalty?

That 60 cents to large-size or supersize a combo could have another 10 or 20 cents attached.

Not only would it help grow state budgets, it might also help cut down on obesity. Think of it as a penalty for overindulging.

Incentive to not get that extra-large helping of fries. Make it cost more and that could be a huge deterrent, a major victory in the battle of the bulge.

If the concept is put in a way people can quickly and easily understand, one that hits home, I think most individuals will wise up.

I'm not saying it will solve the problem but if you paint a graphic enough picture, people will understand.

People who don't supersize could get the satisfaction of knowing they're holding onto a little more of their hard-earned cash, padding their wallet instead of their waistline.

McDonald's is going to stop offering supersizing but I don't think that will stop people from ordering a large size or more food in general.

Take away one thing and people will find another avenue.

The Atkins Diet is another current fad. It supposedly works well if you believe the headlines.

Burger joints are offering burgers without the bun. Excuse me, but when I think about a burger, it's on a bun with all the fixing. As I learned in my animal science classes back in college, most people don't eat a burger for just the beef.

They eat it because of all the other things you usually eat with a hamburger — the fixings and fries.

Also, fast food restaurants are offering "Atkins-friendly" choices.

Dillons and other retailers are offering carb-less everything. Walk into a store these days and look on the shelves and you'll see carb-free or reduced carb salad dressing, drinks, desserts and just about anything else you can imagine.

It's everything in moderation, not just one or two things.

Occasional indulgences are OK, it's just that people shouldn't eat a whole box of non-fat cookies at one sitting.

I'm no nutrition expert but what happened to will power and saying no to that last Cheeto?

Admittedly, some people need help when it comes to losing weight but no wonder pill is doing to miraculously melt off the pounds in a matter of mere days.

I'm sure they're out there but is that really healthy?

Diets can work but if I understand what the experts have been trying to pound into the heads of the American public for years, just trying a specific diet isn't what people should do.

It's not just a diet that they should try. It takes as little as getting off one's bum and watching what they eat to lose weight.

Obesity is quickly becoming the big new healthcare scare.

In the past, it's been smoking, AIDS and cancer.

Now, something that's perfectly preventable is coming under the radar screen.

The bottom line is as a country, we've become fat and lazy, content to eat and not do anything about it.

Maybe it's time to change that. The government can't tell people what to do because we're a democracy but people need to make the choice for themselves.

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*Tisha Cox is a general assignment reporter/photographer for the Free Press. Her column appears on Mondays. [tcx@nwkansas.com](mailto:tcx@nwkansas.com).*

## Protecting Mother Earth

John Schlageck

### • Weekly Insight

As caretakers of the land, farmers and ranchers remain committed to protecting the environment. They do so by using the most innovative conservation and tillage practices. Doing so has resulted in a reduction in the loss of soil through erosion, while increasing protection of this nation's water resources.

New technology including biotechnology, conservation tillage and global positioning satellites allow today's farmer and rancher to produce more food on fewer acres with fewer inputs.

Another program that helps save soil, the conservation reserve program (CRP), now has approximately 35 million acres enrolled. CRP also provides habitat for wildlife. More than 50 percent of this country's producers intentionally provide land for wildlife, significantly increasing numbers.

Each year hundreds of thousands of trees are planted on farmland. Renewable fuels such as ethanol and biodiesel - made from corn, soybeans and other crops — are not only beneficial to the environment but help reduce our dependence on imported oil.

Today's consumer and our environment benefit from biotechnology. Biotechnology produces crops that protect themselves against insects and disease; require less tillage, thus pro-

tecting topsoil; and lessen the frequency of chemical weed control.

During the past decade, farmers have dramatically increased use of conservation tillage that keeps crop residue such as leaves and stalks in the field. Conservation tillage was used on 103.1 million acres and reduced tillage on 64.1 million acres in 2002. Nearly 60 percent of the acres planted to crops in the United States used some form of crop residue management practice.

Soil erosion on 23.5 million acres of highly erodible land enrolled in CRP has been decreased by 90 percent - less than one ton per acre per year. Most soils regenerate at rates of two to 12 tons per acre per year, according to the Soil and Water Conservation Society.

Water erosion on U.S. cropland dropped by 24 percent between 1982 and 2001, according

to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. In '82, 4.1 tons of soil per acre were lost to erosion. Today, that figure has dropped to less than three tons per acre.

Today farmers and ranchers use precise plant nutrition management plans to increase food production while producing less waste. This translates to cleaner rivers, lakes, ponds and streams across the United States.

This country's farmers and ranchers have a stake in the future of America's natural resources. With more than 90 percent of the farms and ranches in private hands, maintaining and improving our nation's vital resources is vital to keeping these businesses in families for generations.

On this day of celebration of Mother Earth, think about, thank and be proud of the dedication and hard work farmers and ranchers exhibit in caring for our planet while producing the world's safest, most abundant and most affordable food supply.

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*John Schlageck has been writing about farming and ranching in Kansas for 25 years. He is the managing editor of "Kansas Living," a quarterly magazine dedicated to agriculture and rural life in Kansas.*

## Doonesbury

• Gary Trudeau

