

Opinion



Other Viewpoints

Prison success at risk from cuts

Kansas has been garnering well-deserved national attention for its efforts to reduce its prison population.

But state budget cuts could undermine those reforms – and end up increasing crime and costing the state more money than it saves.

Kansas has had considerable success in recent years at curbing the growth in its inmate population, in large part by reducing the rate at which parolees are re-incarcerated. As a result, Kansas hasn’t had to build new prisons and has been able to close some small correctional facilities.

A USA Today article last month noted how “so far, the cuts in prison admissions have saved about \$80 million in future construction costs.”

But because of the state’s budget shortfall, the Kansas Department of Corrections has cut some of the programs and services that helped achieve the impressive results.

KDOC also is cutting spending on education, work force training and substance-abuse treatment of inmates — programs essential to reducing recidivism rates of parolees.

These aren’t cuts that KDOC wants to make. But to help balance the state’s budget, KDOC has cut its current fiscal-year budget by 6 percent, or about \$16.4 million, from what was originally approved. It’s facing additional cuts in next year’s budget....

The state must make difficult choices to balance its budget. But as lawmakers finish next year’s numbers, they should seek to minimize cuts to correction programs that have both saved the state money and made it safer.

– *The Wichita Eagle, via The Associated Press*

Where to write, call

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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**, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124
- State Rep. Jim Morrison**, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St. Room 143-N, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7676 e-mail: jmorriso@ink.org web: www.morrisonfamily.com
- State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol Building, 300 SW10th St., Room 128-S., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 ralph.ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

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Pink mist strikes again

I must confess that the pink mist has infected me.

Remember the pink mist? If not, let me remind you. Pink mist is invisible and infects students on campus with romantic feelings for each other. It’s extremely contagious. No one knows exactly how the pink mist works, except that the spring weather, the blooming cherry trees and the sunny afternoons have something to do with it.

But first, let’s back up to last fall, since that’s where my infection—or perhaps, affection—started to develop.

I moved to Portland to go to college for three reasons: One, to study the Bible; two, to study journalism; three, to develop strong, lifetime relationships—with females.

My agenda included no dating. Studying, coffee dates with girls and getting involved in church ministries were in the plan. And it worked great. I was happy and excited by all of the new experiences, the change of pace, the friends I was making. Life was a joy.

And then I met him.

I don’t remember our first official meeting, but I do remember taking notice of him at the all-school retreat. He was nice and had a smile that could change the lines of anybody’s frown. And his laugh, his infectiously loud laugh that lets people know he is in the room before anyone can even see him. He has broad shoulders like my brothers, stands at 6 feet, 2 inches, green-blue eyes, brown hair. And that face—I couldn’t help but be attracted to him.

The girls I was hanging out with knew him from last year, since this was the second year for all of them. The girls told me about the time they called him, begging him to come over a kill a spider. He likes rescuing people.

We still didn’t know each other very well after the retreat, but we always seemed to run into each other on campus. We most often saw each other during the evenings in the library where we would talk between studying.

Our first connection came from talking about our families, how much we value and love them, which extended to our relationship with God, our shared passion for music and feelings about human trafficking, and what we want to do after we graduate.

Sometimes we would talk until the library closed. Eventually, he started walking me back to my dorm, and though a friendship was starting to develop, nothing really happened between us.

That is, until a mutual friend started teaching a ballroom dancing class. We both had done swing dancing in the past, but that was the extent of our experience. We were really excited about the ballroom dance class and seemed to always gravitate towards each other when told to choose a partner.

Our friend then started dating another mutual friend, and before long the four of us were hanging out on a regular basis. For the next seven months, life was the four of us going out to coffee, a Friday night Bible study, ballroom dancing and movie nights.

And my friend and I were getting closer. It was only mid-November, but we could no longer ignore what was right in front of us. We finally had a DTR (college lingo for a Define The Relationship) conversation while eating



Michelle Myers

- A Moment with Michelle

an espresso ganache chocolate cake at a trendy coffee shop, though he didn’t seem very hungry (which is unusual for him).

“What are you thinking?” I asked him out of genuine curiosity. There was a long a pause as he set down his glasses and avoided eye contact.

“I’m thinking that I really like you,” he finally said.

“Really?”

“Yes, really.”

As the conversation progressed, I learned that he really really liked me and I let him know that I liked him, as well—but was not ready to date at that point. He said he would wait until I was.

Four months later, my parents and younger brother came to visit me for spring break, which was at the end of March. They also came to meet my friend. We spent a few days at the Oregon coast, relaxing and letting my family get to know him.

On the third day, we decided to drive down to Tillamook, which is about 45 minutes from where we were staying. My friend asked my parents to ride with him in the car. He then asked them if he could date me.

“Yes, we like you,” they said. “tOf course you can date her.”

“YES!” was his reply.

So maybe it wasn’t the pink mist that infected me, but just as the result of friendship and allowing God to orchestrate us coming together. And though dating wasn’t on my agenda, I can still say that life is a joy.

Michelle Myers, a Colby native, is a student at Multnomah University in Portland, Ore., majoring in Bible and journalism. She enjoys the 32 Starbucks found within five miles of her campus.

Carbon credits pay in multiple ways

There’s a relatively new income potential available for Kansas farmers, ranchers and landowners. It’s called carbon credits and can be earned primarily through conservation practices implemented on farms and ranches.

A carbon credit is not something you can taste, smell or see, says Steve Swaffar, Kansas Farm Bureau natural resources director.

“You can’t reach in the grain bin and grab a handful of carbon credits,” he said, “and you can’t feed a carbon credit to a steer to fatten it for market.”

But you can sell carbon credits like any other farm commodity or product. Farmers and ranchers can be paid for storing carbon in the soil through continuous no-till or strip-till farming, planting new grasses, rangeland management practices, forestry and methane capture utilizing ag methane digesters.

It’s done through a process called “soil-carbon sequestration” which increases soil carbon levels and helps reduce carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, Swaffar said. Soil-carbon sequestration – taking carbon from the air and placing it in the soil and keeping it there – is simply exchanging the place where carbon is stored, from the air to the ground.

Carbon sequestration is one of the most cost-effective ways available today for reducing greenhouse gasses. It is estimated agricul-



John Schlageck

- Insights

Kansas Farm Bureau

ate rates and limit the number of grazing days so their grasses have adequate time to recover each year. Ranchers who already implement these conservation practices can sign up and start receiving income from carbon credits.

Last year, the state’s largest agricultural organization partnered with AgraGate Climate Credits Corp. to help enroll Kansas farmers and ranchers in this program.

It only takes a few hours of paperwork and a willingness to sign a five-year contract for a farmer or landowner to get into this program, Swaffar says. He is managing Kansas’ effort.

More than 270,000 acres in 71 Kansas counties have been enrolled in the no-till/strip-till option with AgraGate. In the first rangeland pool enrollment period, more than 30,000 acres in eight Kansas counties were signed up.

Last year, AgraGate paid \$4.2 million to producers enrolled across the United States. This is a fraction of the dollars that could have been earned by farmers.

For details, visit www.kfb.org/naturalresources/carbon resource or www.agragate.com or call Swaffar at (785) 234-4535.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience.

Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

