

Other Viewpoints

Ethanol plant taps new power source

Most everyone knows about ethanol plants. Kansas has a handful of them. They take agricultural foodstuffs – primarily corn and milo grown right here – and make a fuel much like gasoline that can power our cars in part if not whole.

Now imagine one of those ethanol plants getting its operating power from yet another renewable energy source. Imagine creating energy by mixing cattle manure from a nearby feedlot, municipal waste from a nearby city, grain dust and animal waste.

That's just what the Western Plains Energy ethanol plant near Oakley in northwest Kansas will do, eliminating nearly 90 percent of fossil fuels currently used to operate the plant and becoming a user and producer of renewable energy.

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced a \$5 million grant for the biogas anaerobic digester to Western Plains Energy while in Kansas on Tuesday. Western Plains already received a \$15.6 million grant last year for a project that is estimated to cost \$28.2 million.

That is pricey, but this technology is fascinating.

Feedlot manure, sewage and municipal wastes in landfills are not usually fascinating subjects. But these are environmentally harmful byproducts of human consumption, and if we can mitigate them while producing a renewable fuel, well, that is fascinating.

The Western Plains biogas anaerobic digester project is another cutting-edge clean energy project for Kansas. Its progress and results are well worth watching.

— *The Hutchinson News, via the Associated Press*

Where to write, call

- U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774 roberts.senate.gov/public/
- U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran**, 354 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510 (202) 228-6966. Fax (202) 225-5124 moran.senate.gov/public/
- U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp**, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124. Web site: huelskamp.house.gov
- State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol Building, 300 SW10th St., Room 225-E., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 ralph.ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us
- State Rep. Rick Billinger**, Docking Building, Room 754, Topeka Kan., 66612, (785) 296-7659 rick.billinger@house.ks.gov

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We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise. Nor do we run form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous from this area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

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155 W. Fifth St. (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
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Sharon Friedlander - Publisher
sfriedlander@nwkansas.com

NEWS

News Editor

colby.editor@nwkansas.com

Kayla Cornett - Sports Reporter

colby.sports@nwkansas.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor

mballard@nwkansas.com

Christina Beringer - Society Reporter

colby.society@nwkansas.com

ADVERTISING

colby.ads@nwkansas.com

Kathryn Ballard

Advertising Representative

kballard@nwkansas.com

Kylee Hunter - Graphic Design

khunter@nwkansas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Ray Schindler - Office Manager

rschindler@nwkansas.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator

support@nwkansas.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Richard Westfahl - General Manager

Jim Jackson, Jim Bowker, Gary Meyer, Pressmen

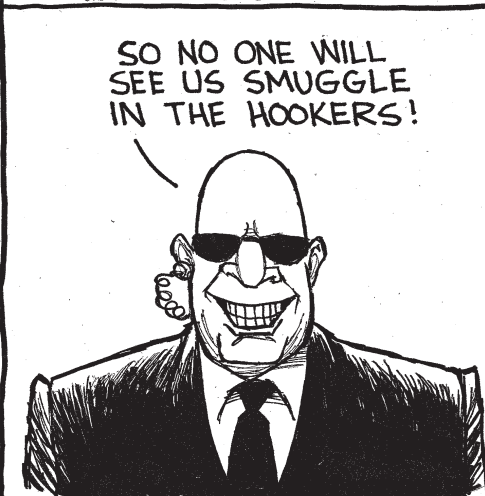
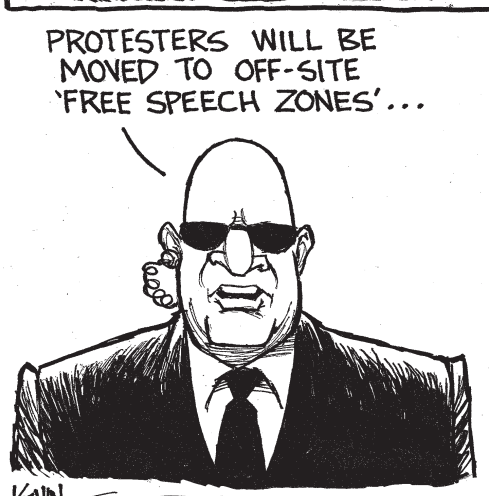
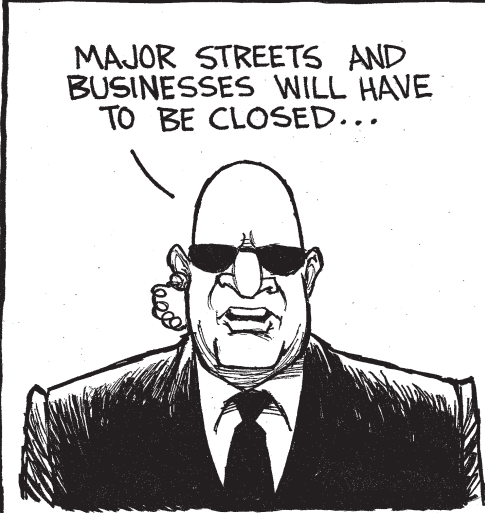
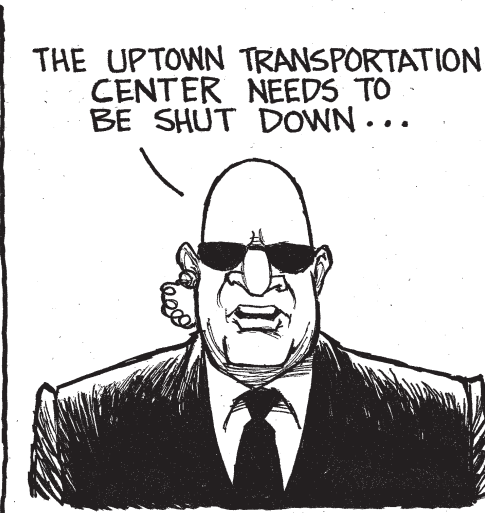
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KEVIN SHERS CHARLOTTE OBSERVER 2012

To relax, turn thoughts to Colby sports

I confess that I haven't been keeping up with politics as of late, partly because I'm moving to Iowa in about a week.

That, however, isn't the only reason. To be honest, I just needed a break from the polarizing world of politics. It does my heart good to focus on more light-hearted subjects every once in a while. So I planned to fill up some of my newfound free time watching Kansas City Royals baseball.

Unfortunately, the Royals have not been living up to the hype that surrounded the team before the season. Their rocky start should teach the team's upper management a valuable lesson: it's hard to win games when you can't get anyone out.

While touting the young and talented hitters on this year's team, the Royals management forgot – or simply refused – to pay for an adequate pitching staff. So despite the hullabaloo about it being their time, my beloved Royals appear to be headed for another disappointing year. I hope the boys in blue prove me wrong.

Since watching the Royals often seems like an exercise in self-punishment, I have turned my attention to the dull task of getting ready to move. While necessary, the process is about as exciting as watching paint dry. And at least watching paint dry doesn't involve any plan-



Andy Heintz

• Wildcat Ramblings

ning or physical labor.

Yet, the whole moving ordeal has allowed me to reminisce about my time in Colby. Lord knows what I would be doing now if I hadn't been hired by the *Free Press* – probably not moving to Iowa to write about high school sports. I have to thank my former boss, Steve Haynes, for helping me become a better writer despite my at-times cantankerous attitude.

Colby is a great little town, brimming with good-hearted people who were nice enough to accept an opinionated liberal from Johnson County with open arms. When I started writing for *The Ottawa Herald* more than a year ago, I really missed kibitzing with Colby's fans and coaches.

I made some good friends in the more than 2 1/2 years I spent covering sports at Colby High School and Colby Community College. And by the time I left the *Free Press*, I really

felt like I had carved out my own niche in the sports community.

My love affair with Colby sports has proven to be more than just a tryst; I remain a life-long fan of the Eagles and Trojans athletic programs. It was a privilege to watch so many high school students go from being green athletes with raw talent to technically sound veterans who set the tone for their teams. It was equally exciting to follow the college squads through the inevitable ups and downs that characterize every season.

While the coaches I interviewed were always fair and approachable, I would be lying if I said I didn't have my favorites. So I always had to be aware of my own biases while watching Chris Gardner, Dustin Pfeifer and Parker McKee's teams play to make sure I didn't show any favoritism.

This will be my last column for a while, so I want to wish all my friends in Colby the best. To borrow a phrase from the Grateful Dead, sometimes I look back at my life and think "what a long, strange trip it's been."

And my time in Colby was certainly an enjoyable part of that.

Andy Heintz, a K-State journalism graduate, loves K-State athletics and fishing, sports and opinion writing.

Community bankers work, serve locally

To the Editor:

Community bankers throughout the nation will celebrate April as Community Bank Month. In Kansas, Gov. Sam Brownback has proclaimed April 23 to 28 as Kansas Community Bank Week.

Farmers and Merchants Bank will join other members of the Community Bankers Association of Kansas in celebrations designed to show appreciation for our customers. These events increase awareness of the crucial role true community banks play in the nation's economy.

This year's celebration centers around the theme "Get Hooked on Community Banking." Farmers and Merchants has been owned and operated locally since 1887. Rather than shifting our money away from the local economy as megabanks do, we channel most of our money into loans here, where our depositors live and work.

People's deposits are put to work here to develop businesses, buy and repair homes and finance college educations.

Farmers and Merchants officers and employees live in the same neighborhoods as our customers, shop in the same stores, attend the same churches and send their children to the same schools. We take an active role in making our community a better place. Local reinvestment remains our main focus in guiding bank decisions, policies and our employees who serve customers every day.

Main Street investing in Main Street, not Wall Street – it's just the way we do business. We want to be a partner in building this community's success.

As we celebrate Kansas Community Bank Week, we invite all our friends and neighbors to stop at either of our locations and let us thank them in person for their partnership and trust in Farmers and Merchants Bank.

Brent M Wiedeman, president
Farmers and Merchants Bank of Colby



Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

Tell landowner's side, too

To the Editor:

In reference to the story, "County discusses employee complaint," on Page 1 of the Colby Free Press on Friday, April 13:

I don't know John Schroeder well, but he is a nice guy and a good farmer. The very fact that he planted brome grass to stabilize a shoulder shows that he is a responsible, concerned taxpayer working to improve the roads of Thomas County.

Why did he have to open the door of the county grader? Why didn't the employee jump down and visit with him?

There's always two sides to every story. This may be a good employee. I don't have time to check out all the facts. Your reporter should have done that, complete with pictures. But it sounds to me like the blade operator did this mischievously. Why didn't he call his supervisor instead of the sheriff?

The roads in Thomas County are a mess because of the mix of county roads and township roads. Much ado is made about farmers farming rights of way when all they are doing is trying to control weeds. A little common sense needs to be used.

Most roads in Thomas County are corridors for noxious weeds contaminating farmers' fields. The county or townships should mow or spray the entire right of way. Otherwise, they should cooperate with the taxpaying farmers in controlling the weeds.

Later in the article, mention is made of peo-

ple sliding off a road. And, then it is alleged that we don't know how to drive on muddy roads. If these roads were bladed correctly, they won't be crowned excessively and there would be a "bumper" on the edge of the road to prevent sliding off.

Instead of insulting drivers, train your blade operators how to grade a road.

Gary Davis, Rexford

Ferrets' future tied to prey

To the Editor:

Last month, I participated in the effort to count the black-footed ferrets in Logan County, joining some 30 volunteers from across Kansas and the United States. One biology student even drove from New Jersey to participate in this unique opportunity to see one of the rarest animals on earth.

Because of drought and predation, the prairie dog population has declined in the areas where the black-footed ferrets live. Likewise, the ferret population is down. There is no reason not to anticipate a decline in the number of ferrets; a mother black-footed ferret needs to kill a prairie dog each night to feed her babies. Obviously this is more difficult when there are fewer prairie dogs to be found.

During the days of Buffalo Bill, prairie dog colonies were huge. Today, this unique ecosystem has been reduced to tiny clusters. The remaining colonies are essentially large outdoor zoos. All of the animals such as the black-footed ferret that depend on the habitat and food provided by prairie dogs will cease to exist unless we find a way to preserve a place where they can live.

The expansive prairie dog ecosystem has been lost to history. There is too much pressure to feed a hungry and crowded world. However, we should preserve a small remnant and give budding biologists and other tourists a glimpse at the prairie as it once was.

Tim Peterson, Monument

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

