

Other Viewpoints

Cancer center elite drawing card

The University of Kansas Cancer Center is officially among the elite of the nation's cancer research and treatment facilities.

The National Cancer Institute designation, formally announced last Thursday by U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, is a signature achievement.

As U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran said at a ceremony, "It changes the character of who we are as a state and creates opportunities that otherwise would never have occurred."

The assertion isn't a politician's hyperbole. The decision means that the brightest and most ambitious cancer researchers and doctors will be attracted by the expanded opportunities available.

Millions of federal and philanthropic dollars can be expected to flow in for research and clinical trials.

Most important, many cancer patients in this area won't have to travel to other cities to seek the best advice and latest protocols.

The designation was a long time in the making. Perhaps the most significant event was the 2004 hiring of Roy A. Jensen, a nationally known cancer researcher from the Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center. A \$20 million grant from the Kansas Masonic Foundation got the effort started.

Jensen turned out to be as talented a politician as he is a physician. He set about turning rivalries into alliances, impressing donors and cajoling public officials.

In 2007, Jensen and others formed the Midwest Cancer Alliance, a network of hospitals, clinics and research entities that build the region's capacity for performing clinical trials and caring for cancer patients. That proved to be a turning point in the drive for NCI designation.

The University of Kansas Cancer Center also benefited from a research partnership with the Stowers Institute for Medical Research, from Johnson County voters' approval of a sales tax increase to boost higher education and research, from the assistance of the Kansas Bioscience Authority and from multiple philanthropic gifts.

Research grants and clinical trial opportunities have also arrived. As Jensen said, the Cancer Center has been functioning as a top research and care facility for some time.

The NCI designation, awarded to 67 facilities around the nation, simply makes it official.

The next step is to compete for an even more selective designation — that of an NCI comprehensive cancer center.

Earning laurels is satisfying. Moving beyond is even better.

— *The Kansas City Star, via the Associated Press*

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Narrow-minded protest carries risk

Ken Kesey, of "One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest" fame, once said the reason to resist evil is that such resistance is dependent on evil. This dependence, therefore, makes you dependent on evil.

While I don't entirely cotton to this belief, I think the eccentric Kesey was on to something. Since so many human beings are creatures of habit, it makes sense that the idealistic souls who spend their whole lives protesting this or that injustice — whether that injustice be real or a figment of an overactive imagination — become, paradoxically, dependent on the very "evils" they protest against.

It's not hard to see how this extremely human condition applies to politics or, more specifically, the antipathy so many politically inclined folks have toward objectivity. The Tea Party is a textbook example.

Whatever qualms I have about the Tea Party, one thing is for sure: this group is living the dream. From their grandiose proclamations about liberty to their self-righteous "I will keep my guns, religion and freedom" bumper stickers, the Tea Party is a juggernaut of enthusiasm, activism and, at times, rage.

While watching this group proudly boast about plans to save the country from our allegedly tyrannical government — sometimes while decked out in Revolutionary War-era clothes (there are Thomas Jeffersons among us) — I can't help but feel kind of happy for these people. They have found something to believe in and they are giddy as all get out to share their convictions with the world — preferably as often as possible.



Andy Heintz

• Wildcat Ramblings

I confess there is a part of me that doesn't want to rain on their parade. I mean, sure, it can be a little disconcerting to watch senior citizens rant about how the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act is socialism, when the highly popular Medicare program they benefit from is more socialistically inclined than what critics scornfully refer to as Obamacare. Still, is it worth getting on a soapbox about? After all, who among us doesn't have blind spots?

Yet, alas, I can't stay quiet. Though I fear the Tea Partiers will react to my criticism by tapping into their inner Mick Jagger and saying, "Hey, man, get off of my Cloud," I will still give it my best shot.

After perusing a few conservative websites and reading some of the bizarre belief's Tea Party types have about President Obama — he's a communist, he's illegal, he's evil — I fear this group is afflicted with the condition Kesey presciently described. They are so passionate about saving the country from our allegedly anti-American president, that many — although I'm sure not all — of them are ideologically incapable of scrutinizing Obama's policies objectively.

Such a dispassionate analysis might cast

doubt on the knee-jerk beliefs that have given the Tea Party so much energy and vigor. Of course, it's more exciting to battle a Marxist president than to disagree with a centrist Democrat whose health-care plan drew much of its inspiration from the conservative Heritage Foundation.

Yet, if Obama's health-care bill was indeed moderate — which it is — that would make protesting it a lot less sexy. So, therefore, it must be interpreted as the most hideous example of big government in American history.

Of course, it would be unfair to single out the Tea Party as the only group that blocks out key information that doesn't support its worldview. They are far from the only case. Many liberals, for example, have supported, or at least kept quiet about, Obama's more controversial policies — drone strikes in Muslim countries, for instance. Many of these same folks would have been protesting in the streets if these policies were carried out by the Bush administration.

The major problem with this willful blindness is, when practiced on a large scale, it can have terrible consequences for those who get caught in its wake. A genuine effort to not be controlled by our predetermined biases would go a long way towards preventing such consequences from unfolding.

Andy Heintz, a K-State journalism graduate and former Colby Free Press sports editor now living in Ottumwa, Iowa, loves K-State athletics and fishing, sports and opinion writing. You can find his blog at www.orble.com/just-one-mans-vision.

Dry, blistering heat devastates crops

"You just can't drink enough water," Steve Tuttle said, draining a tall cup of cold water he poured out of a one-gallon cooler tucked in the back of his farm truck.

Like so many other farmer-stockmen across much of this country, the Wyandotte/Leavenworth County producer battles the continuing lack of rain and 100-degree days that are scorching the land where he grows crops and forage for his momma cow herd.

This spring was the warmest on record for many parts in Kansas. As of July 15, this summer ranks fifth with the most 100-degree days — 14. In 1980, the state had 22 days of 100-degree weather by this date.

Blistering heat and lack of rainfall have devastated this year's corn, milo and soybean crops. Ranchers are facing hardship due to a lack of available feed caused by the drought. Nearly every county has been affected.

Tuttle says much of the dry-land corn in his region has burned up. Pastures are in dire condition.

"The brome and mixed grasses we grow — timothy and some fescue — are yielding about half of what we usually bale," Tuttle says. "During a normal year, our hay fields produce approximately 6,500 pounds per acre. This year we're averaging about 3,700 pounds."

Demand for hay is tremendous because of the drought. Tuttle gets calls all day long and late into the night from people hoping to buy food for their livestock. The northeastern Kansas producer has stored plenty of hay for his own 80-head cow herd, so he's selling the rest.

"We have a niche market for what we call 'pleasure horses' in the Kansas City area,"



John Schlageck

• Insights
Kansas Farm Bureau

Tuttle says. "We sell a lot of small square bales to these local customers."

While he's trying to accommodate his long-time buyers, Tuttle only has so much hay. And with the price nearly doubled from last year, he could sell his crop for more.

Large round bales sold for \$40 to \$50 last year and small square bales brought \$4 to \$5. This year, the large bales are bringing \$80 and up to \$100. Small square bales are selling for \$8 or more.

"We'd like to help them out, but we've got to make sure our own cattle have enough forage for the rest of the summer, fall and winter," he says. "There just doesn't appear to be any relief in sight."

On this day of July 18, the temperature topped out at 106 with 25 mph winds out of the south. Tuttle began hauling water to cattle in one pasture a month ago because the pond dried up. He's feeding the cows in another pasture where there's no grass left. This all takes more time, manpower and cost, not to mention the toll on his herd.

While Tuttle believes he'll have enough hay, his biggest concern is the health of his herd. He knows the dry heat impacts the cows' conception rate, so his next calf crop will be smaller. "We're weaning the calves off the momma

cows early to help reduce stress," Tuttle says. "We need some rain soon and we need temperatures to drop below the century mark."

Some of his corn in the Kansas River bottom is already cooked, he said. The 35-year veteran farmer tries to remain optimistic and hopes some of his crop will make 50 bushels per acre. He says yields are dropping every day on land that has the potential to make 200 bushel.

His soybean crop is also in danger of failure. Tuttle says that without rain, his beans could hang on for another 10 days to two weeks. The soybeans are loaded with blooms but they fall apart like burnt paper when picked from the plant.

With a little help from Mother Nature, though, soybeans in this region of Kansas have the potential to yield 60 bushels per acre.

"If we harvest 30 bushels per acre, we'll be jumping up and down," Tuttle says. In his heart he knows the yield will probably be closer to 15, and some fields may not be harvested.

All across Kansas, farmers and stockmen tell similar stories. Some include accounts of range fires with the tinderbox conditions. Dry clouds full of thunder and lightning but little rain can start big fires.

These are indeed trouble times. Still, farmers and stockmen have experienced them before.

"We're hoping and praying for better times," Tuttle says. "You just take each day as it comes and do what you've got to do."

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

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

