

## Other Viewpoints

# Poverty more basic than reading scores

The old saying about actions speaking louder than words can find its truth in Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback's new program to improve elementary students' reading proficiency.

Brownback announced his Reading Roadmap plan, which will move \$9 million from reserve funds in Temporary Aid for Needy Families to pay for after-school reading programs to help high-risk children improve reading scores. The governor said the state's reading measures need to improve and that reading is a gateway to a world of employment, success and a life free of poverty.

Those statements are completely true. Yet when it comes to his actions, the governor has shown time and time again that his message about the poor and his measures to "help" them stand in direct opposition to each other.

Temporary Aid for Needy Families money is used to offer "employment services and support services to low-income families," according to the Kansas Department of Children and Families. Recipients must meet income guidelines, be working or looking for work and have at least one child under the age of 18 in the home. It is capped at 48 months of lifetime benefits, and the most a family of four can receive is \$471 a month.

Yet, as childhood poverty in the state continues to rise, hitting 19 percent in the latest estimate, shifting money from direct support for families to several national companies – including the relief organization Save the Children, which will run some of the after-school reading programs and whose former vice president serves as a consultant on the initiative – will satisfy neither a child's hunger for knowledge nor his hunger for food.

Brownback and his legislators could have taken a number of steps to align their actions with the nice words they offer about the plight of the poor and how best to help them.

They could have abandoned a reckless tax cut plan and fully financed the state's public education system. They could accept a federal expansion of Medicaid, so more of the state's impoverished children could be healthier – allowing them to focus less on the expense of their health and more on the progress of their education.

They could have rejected plans to increase the tax burden for the state's poorest families and left unharmed programs that encourage families to work by offering enough support to keep them afloat while they gradually increase their income.

Time and time again, the state's leadership has presented a plan that claims to help the poor reach self-sufficiency but does little more than actively erode their stability and create roadblocks to independence.

Proficient reading is an important element to a successful adult life, and it is an important tool to combat poverty. Yet knowledge and growth do not thrive in a household overwhelmed with the chaos of daily survival, and chaos reigns for nearly one in five Kansas children. The higher aspirations of education and self-actualization are only achieved upon a stable foundation that includes adequate shelter and food. And those needs aren't met by being a better reader.

– *The Hutchinson News, via the Associated Press*

We encourage comments on opinions expressed on this page. Mail them to the *Colby Free Press*, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701, or e-mail [colby.editor@nwkansas.com](mailto:colby.editor@nwkansas.com). Opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the *Free Press*, its staff or the owners.

### COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth St. (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963  
Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

Send news to: [colby.editor@nwkansas.com](mailto:colby.editor@nwkansas.com)

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout, Columns, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography. Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

**Sharon Friedlander - Publisher**  
[sfriedlander@nwkansas.com](mailto:sfriedlander@nwkansas.com)

#### NEWS

**R.B. Headley - Sports Editor**  
[colby.sports@nwkansas.com](mailto:colby.sports@nwkansas.com)

**Marian Ballard - Copy Editor**  
[mballard@nwkansas.com](mailto:mballard@nwkansas.com)

**Sam Dieter - News Reporter**  
[colby.editor@nwkansas.com](mailto:colby.editor@nwkansas.com)

**Heather Alwin - Society Editor**  
[colby.society@nwkansas.com](mailto:colby.society@nwkansas.com)

#### ADVERTISING

**Kathryn Ballard - Advertising Representative**  
[kb Ballard@nwkansas.com](mailto:kb Ballard@nwkansas.com)

**Sharon Funk - Advertising Representative**  
[snfunk@nwkansas.com](mailto:snfunk@nwkansas.com)

**Kylee Hunter - Graphic Design**  
[khunter@nwkansas.com](mailto:khunter@nwkansas.com)

#### BUSINESS OFFICE

Office Manager

**Melissa Edmondson - Office Manager**  
[medmondson@nwkansas.com](mailto:medmondson@nwkansas.com)

**Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator**  
[support@nwkansas.com](mailto:support@nwkansas.com)

#### NOR'WEST PRESS

**Richard Westfahl - General Manager**  
Gary Stewart, Foreman

Jim Jackson, Jim Bowker, Pressmen

Kris McCool, Judy McKnight, Tracy Traxel,  
Sheri Arroyo, Mailing

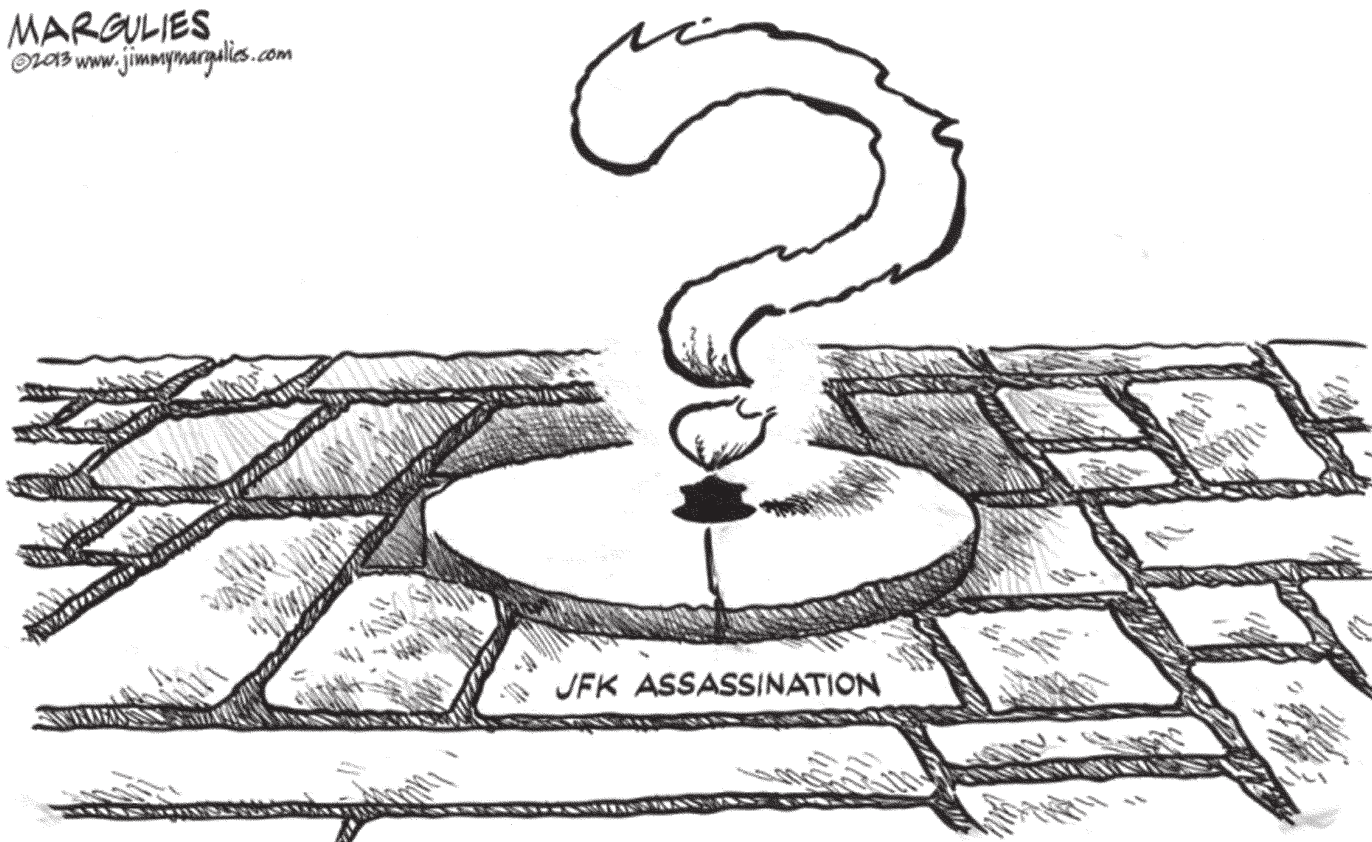
THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

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

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72.

MARGULIES  
©2013 www.jimmymargulies.com



The Eternal Flame

# Genetics will feed the future

The challenge for farmers and ranchers will be to double food production by 2050 to help feed an estimated 9 billion people.

GMOs – or genetically modified organisms – have the potential to dramatically increase the world's output in coming decades without causing significant environmental hazards. This new technology is affording us ways to improve plant characteristics to lower production costs and increase yields on existing farmland.

Today a wide variety of plants are products of genetically modified science. Some are being developed with the ability to withstand certain herbicides while yielding higher productivity with lower costs and less environmental impact.

Contrary to what you may have read or heard, the use of genetically modified organisms can be a win-win situation for everyone. Farmers can realize higher yields producing a more economical crop and consumers wind up with a safer, better tasting and healthier food.

In spite of these advances, some environmental groups in this country and some members of the European Union have resisted the use of genetically modified organisms because they fear genetic manipulation is unnatural.



**John Schlageck**

• Insights  
Kansas Farm Bureau

They believe the food it produces is dangerous and this technology is bad for the environment.

Genetically modified organisms have already been tested, and field trials are being conducted. All indications are that genetically modified organisms present no danger, but this will need to continue to be proven in tests with sound science.

The future of agriculture will remain bright as long as technology is allowed to progress without being hampered by unfounded fears. Genetically modified organisms are an important production tool for the American farmer and rancher. We must continue to talk openly with the public about this safe scientific procedure to promote complete understanding of the issue.

It would be a major blow to production agriculture if genetically modified organism

research were slowed or stopped. Scientific information must be readily available to all consumers so they too can understand this vital issue.

Biotechnology has the ability to revolutionize medicine as well as agriculture. Already there have been significant medical breakthroughs.

Examples include gene therapy to build blood vessels that bypass clogged arteries; destruction of cancerous tumors by cutting off their blood supply; vaccines for AIDS, malaria and ear infections; an anticancer booster shot that could stimulate immune systems; tissue engineering that helps the body regenerate itself; lab-grown bone, cartilage and skin or even organs such as the heart are in the works.

Our future can be enhanced with genetically modified organisms and biotechnology if these advances are allowed to progress. It's important we learn and inform others as much as possible about these upcoming advances.

*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.*

# Coping with disasters a varied ability

Typhoon "Haiyan" (translated: "ocean swallow [the little bird]") may have been the most devastating typhoon on record. But nations vary in their ability to cope with disasters.

When I left central China in the summer of 1998, it began raining for the proverbial 40 days and 40 nights. Soon more than 233 million people were temporarily dislocated along the Yangtze River. Five million houses were destroyed (double the houses in Kansas). Their army – operating similar to our National Guard – evacuated people. But the rain kept falling.

They could lose their huge industrial city of Wuhan. They needed to blow more dikes upstream to spread the water out. Their Army pulled in with trucks and told the citizens of a city of a half million that they would have to load up immediately. The dikes would be blown the next day at noon. Everyone cooperated. They "swallowed their bitterness" and left most of their possessions behind.

I visited Wuhan in 2001 and they showed me how close the rains had come to breaching their dikes. They were thankful for the sacrifice of that upstream city. It was rebuilt – newer, higher, better.

In May of 2008, I stepped off the plane in Beijing and into a China where 1.3 billion people had come to a dead stop and total silence to honor the victims of the Wenchuan earthquake. Rescue was still underway. I lectured at universities by day and watched the rescue efforts by television at night.

Within four hours after the massive 8.0 earthquake, paratroopers had loaded up. Premier Wen Jiabao was in charge of the rescue effort, not just because he was Premier, but because he was trained in geomechanical engineering at the Beijing Geological Institute. The Chinese had confidence that his decisions would be the right technical decisions, made with the head, not with the heart. He cleared the roads and put land-moving equipment first, then ambulances.



**John Richard Schrock**

• Education Frontlines

But for immediate relief, parachuting in or jumping from hovering helicopters was their only option – there was no flat land. All army engineers were sent in with a week's rations. Those rations were gone in two days because they shared their food with the people they rescued. More food was dropped.

President Hu and Premier Wen visited tent-making factories to stress that quality would not be forfeited for speed. Army trucks brought raw materials and took away tents around the clock.

It was still a month before the final school exams. Schools were "Job One." Blue tents for families. Solid blue pre-fabs for schools. They went up in days.

The whole country watched tensely on television and saw that schoolchildren had no books, paper or pencils. A massive movement was launched to provide school backpacks with these supplies. Trucks laden with backpacks filed in behind the military supply trucks. Within days the surviving children were walking to pre-fab schools with new backpacks. Where schools could not be built, children were put on trains and sent across China to finish school in more crowded classrooms.

The devastation was astounding: 69,197 confirmed dead; 374,176 injured; 18,222 missing. 4.8 million people – equal to the whole populations of Kansas and Nebraska – were homeless. But there was no rioting. No one lacked water or food. And no one froze for lack of housing that winter.

The Philippines will need to spend 6 billion

U.S. dollars to rebuild after Haiyan. China spent over 166 billion U.S. dollars to rebuild cities and universities.

Japanese pre-planning for earthquakes, and their handling of tsunamis is no less impressive.

By comparison, America's disaster response has been pitiful. Katrina was an American disgrace. Haiti remains an international debacle. We knew beforehand the New Orleans dikes were inadequate. Today we refuse to reinforce the San Francisco schools when we know another big earthquake is overdue. But in China, the Three Gorges Dam ensures that Wuhan will not face another threat from floods.

In times of emergencies, we cling to civilian bureaucracies, with unclear lines of command, that require hours and days for consensus building – that time costs lives. Only a military operation can make the minute-by-minute decisions that save lives in a natural disaster.

Asians also have a respect for scientists and engineers that simply is missing in Western culture. We could never evacuate all of Wichita and Topeka in one day in order to save Kansas City.

Societal values and planning ahead are just as important as governmental structure in times of disaster. Unless Western culture changes, the safest place for you to be in the next major disaster – is in China or Japan.

*John Richard Schrock, a professor of biology and department chair at a leading teacher's college, lives in Emporia. He emphasizes that his opinions are strictly his own.*

## 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/](http://roberts.senate.gov/public/)

## Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley



©2013 by King Features Syndicate, Inc. All rights reserved.