

from our viewpoint...

Kudos to volunteers for great fair week

Another Northwest Kansas District Free Fair is in the books, and people will be talking about it for days and weeks.

Each year the fair brings out crowds of people to enjoy the shows, carnival and the livestock and open and 4-H entries in many creative classes displayed in the Agriculture Building.

This year's fair will be remembered for the nights of rain and the loss of the games tent on Thursday morning. People responded in western fashion as they stepped up to help get the games relocated and the tent cleaned up as the rain continued to pour down.

Again the flexibility of the carnival building was put to a test as the games were crowded into the work area to be able to continue operating. It was bit cramped, but the kids and adults playing the games didn't seem to notice or mind the close quarters.

Overall the fair seemed to be on an upswing this year with an increase in the number of Kiwanis demo derby cars and a good crowd for the opening night.

The dog show on Saturday morning did well with the expanded area for the agility course and using the Ag Building for the showmanship and obedience portions of the show.

The rains on Monday shut down the carnival rides, but the Shores steel drum band simply moved inside the Agriculture Building where they performed for those who wanted to sit or stroll around and look at the exhibits and booths.

The Doo Wop group Streetside entertained a nice crowd on Tuesday. Our thanks to the Sherman County Farm Bureau for helping sponsor this great singing group. The carnival had great crowds for their wrist band night.

The Pro Bull Riders show for the Northwest Kansas Chute-Out on Wednesday was every bit of what the Thunder on the Plains committee could have hoped for with a crowd of about 2,000 filling the special bleachers and grandstand to watch the 40 bull riders try to ride some national finals level bulls.

Muddy conditions from the rains and winds that wiped out the games tent postponed and then cancelled the Howdy Rowdy Rodeo and Family Fun Night, but the clouds parted in the afternoon to allow some sun to shine on the carnival area so the rides and relocated games could continue.

The Modified Tractor Pull on Friday was another example of the can do effort as members of Curt Way's Sherman County road and bridge crew and Commissioner Mitch Tiede stepped in to transform the muddy race track area into a usable track for the tractor pullers.

The 4-H livestock shows had good attendance and a few tears were shed for those cute goats and other animals when they were sold on Friday afternoon. Dana Belshe, Sunflower Extension Agent, said he thought the numbers were about the same and the sale had good prices for the kids.

The food vendors in the 4-H building and the Kiwanis Shack did a great business plus there were good lines at the funnel cake booth and sno shack plus other local businesses and teams from the Relay for Life who had food and wares for sale.

Grand and Reserve ribbons were on display on the many exhibits all around the Ag Building and people were scurrying around Saturday morning to pick up their prizes and to clean up the buildings.

The fairgrounds looked great, and the members of the fair board all the volunteers deserve kudos for another great fair. A young man who deserves a lot of credit is Aaron Duell who with his father and mother, Steve and Colleen, worked hard to make the whole week a success. — Tom Betz



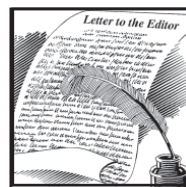
Example of what is 'good' in Goodland

To the Editor:
Early Thursday morning Mother Nature threw our Home Owned Carnival a curve ball. Upon arrival at the fair grounds, the game area looked to be a total disaster.

Within 30 minutes, many volunteers including community members, fair board members, and carnival board members started to arrive as we worked to evaluate the situation and develop a plan. In addition, Rich Simon, public works director, offered city manpower and equipment. A short time later there were about 20 city employees working to help clear the debris and relocate to the Sherman County Community Services building.

The response to this disaster was overwhelming. By noon, the mess was cleared and we had relocated the games to the carnival building. Work was done by numerous volunteers the rest of the afternoon to repair some of damaged games.

The response from the community, fair board, city, and carnival committee was terrific. Without such support, our carnival may not have recovered so quickly from this. Undoubtedly, we still have numerous items that will have to be repaired or replaced before the



from our readers

to the editor

next fair.

I personally want to thank everyone in the community for their support of the home owned carnival! Thousands of hours are spent each year to make this a safe and fun environment.

This is a perfect example of what is "GOOD" in Goodland.

Brad Schick
President, Sherman County Community Services

To the Editor:

I apologize to my friends Scott Showalter and Kevin Berens for having chosen to endorse a Republican candidate in the recently completed Republican primary of Aug. 5.

The party has a rule that we elected officials should not endorse anyone in a contested primary race. I chose to ignore that and deeply

regret the stress it created to Scott, Kevin and the citizens of the 15th Judicial District.

I apologize for doing so. I look forward to working with everyone in the district and with the judicial branch of our government, and again apologize for my behavior. I behaved badly and deeply regret doing so. I did not mean to offend anyone.

On a side note, we will be undergoing an important new census in 2010 that will create a redrawing of political districts by the Kansas Legislature. That is one time in which seniority really counts in politics.

My current term expires at the end of 2010. There will be another election in 2010 for state Representative and some other offices. Unless I hear strong support for me to continue as your elected representative, this term (2009-2010) will be my last.

Again I apologize for my bad behavior in breaking the rule "do not endorse" and offending my friends.

My phone number is (785) 462-3264 and email jmorriso@ink.org.
State Rep. Jim Morrison
Colby

Belated birthday to the drug agency

The DEA, which our great moral leader Richard Nixon created in 1973 and charged with the impossible but politically useful mission of winning the "all-out global war on the drug menace," turned 35 on July 1.

So, how's its track record after 35 years of difficult, often dangerous drug-war-making? If the DEA were a heroin addict, it would have overdosed on its own incompetence by age 6.

Despite its failures and the harm it's done to American society, however, the DEA has done more than merely survive. It's become a typically bloated, self-preserving federal bureaucracy whose power, budget and continuing existence bear no relation to its performance.

In 1974 the DEA had 1,470 special agents, a budget of less than \$75 million (\$346 million in 2007 money) and 43 offices in 31 countries.

Today, it has 5,235 special agents, a \$2.3 billion budget and 87 offices in 63 countries.

If you consider wasting umpteen billions each year to lock up mostly pot smokers and other perpetrators of victimless crimes a valid measure of success in the war on (some) drugs, the DEA and its fellow state and local drug warriors deserve high praise.

Annual drug arrests have tripled in the last 25 years to 1.8 million in 2005 (when 43 percent of all drug arrests were for marijuana offenses). And we had about 500,000 drug criminals in various federal, state and local slammer in 2005, compared with 41,000 in 1980.

The DEA touts its latest alleged successes in cutting demand for drugs on its Web page (usdoj.gov/dea/pubs/cngrest/ct031208_successes08.pdf). If you can believe the DEA's current statistics or those annual pronouncements of tough-talking White House drug czars, we're winning the drug war — again and again.



bill steigerwald

newsmakers

Yet today illegal drugs are as plentiful and cheap as ever. And rates of drug use are essentially the same as they were when the DEA was born, according to Monitoring the Future, which each year since 1975 has studied the behaviors, attitudes and values of 50,000 American high schoolers.

Based on Monitoring the Future's latest study, the DEA's most significant career victory over drugs is that the percentage of 12th-graders who reported using marijuana dropped from 40 percent in 1975 to 31.7 percent in 2007.

Otherwise, despite untold billions blown on the war on drugs, the percentage of kids in 1975 who reported using cocaine (5.6 percent) and heroin (1 percent) has dropped insignificantly to 5.2 percent and 0.9 percent, respectively, in 2007.

Meanwhile, a new study of drug use by the World Health Organization casts further doubt

on the long-term efficacy of our war on drugs.

Of 17 countries surveyed, China and Japan had the lowest rates of drug use and the United States had the highest rate — by far.

Obviously, culture, economics and politics play important roles, but WHO's researchers found that there's no relationship between a country's strict anti-drug policies and its levels of drug use.

Maybe it's unfair to dump on the DEA, especially on its birthday. It may be the most un-American federal agency this side of the IRS, but it's only following orders.

It's not the DEA's fault that for 35 years Congress and seven presidents haven't had the brains or the political courage to decriminalize marijuana or at least work to humanize America's drug policy. Or that neither McCain nor Obama has promised to scale back a dirty war on the individual liberties of Americans that the Taliban would support.

So happy birthday, DEA. But not many happy returns.

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THE SHERMAN COUNTY STAR

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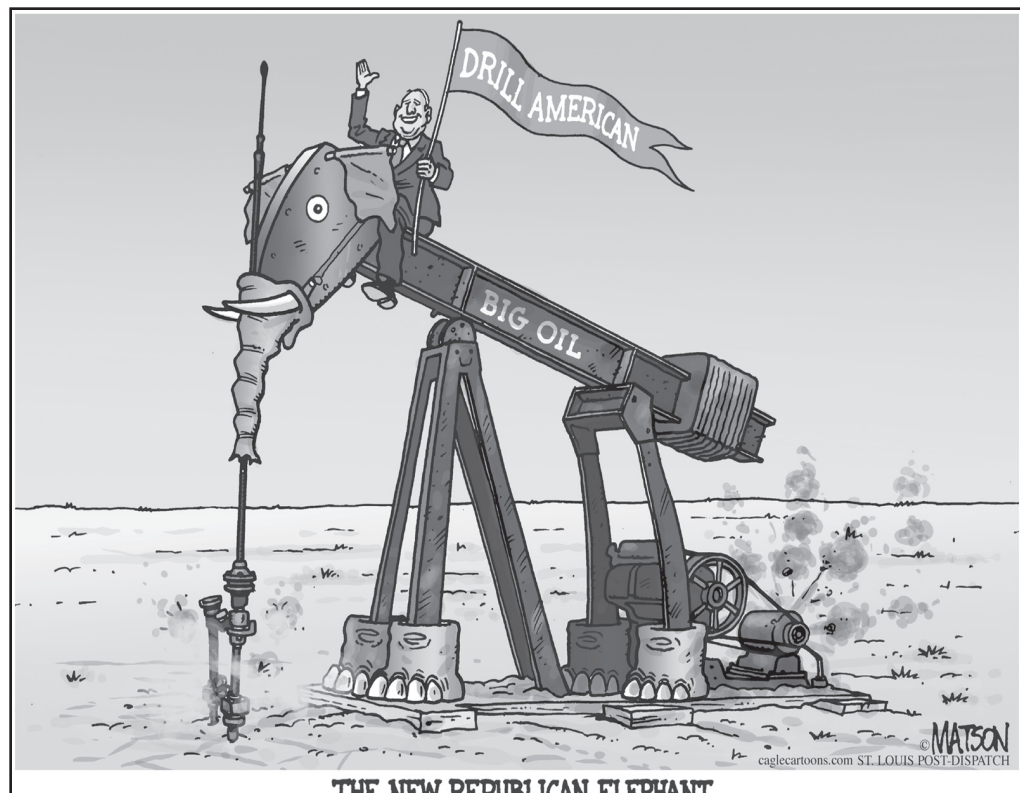
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