

from our viewpoint...

Volunteers at heart of emergency efforts

Less than 24 hours after city commissioners approved a temporary joining of the city fire department chief and the Goodland Rural Fire Department chief the rural firemen responded to two fires.

Questions raised at the city commission meet have yet to be answered, but the remarkable efforts of the firemen reminds everyone these people are volunteers.

The volunteers are in both the city and rural fire departments. The city fire chief is the only full time position, and in the past year even that has become a split position with added duties of being building inspector and code enforcement officer.

Chief Brian James has shown his ability as the city fire chief, and got a quick test on Tuesday with a wind whipped wheat stubble fire that raged across a field engulfing an empty farm house and out buildings, jumping the county road and creating a burned path through a corn field. Winds were at 33 mph gusting to 46 as the firemen and their equipment arrived.

The Goodland rural fire department responded as did the Kanorado rural fire department, and each came in from opposite sides of the raging fire. Unfortunately for Kanorado Chief David Peterson, he was caught with a fellow firemen when trying to attack burning trees and were engulfed in an explosion of fire that resulted in the loss of a fire truck.

Additional volunteer assistance came from Cheyenne County and Kit Carson County as well as water tankers from Sherman County, Frontier Ag and Dorman Brothers.

The Sherman County Rural Fire Board is a volunteer board appointed by the County Commissioners. The fire board is responsible for fire protection for all of Sherman County outside the Goodland City limits. The fire district has a separate property tax of up to 5 mills. The rural fire system includes three separate fire departments, Goodland, Kanorado and Brewster each with their own chief, volunteers and equipment.

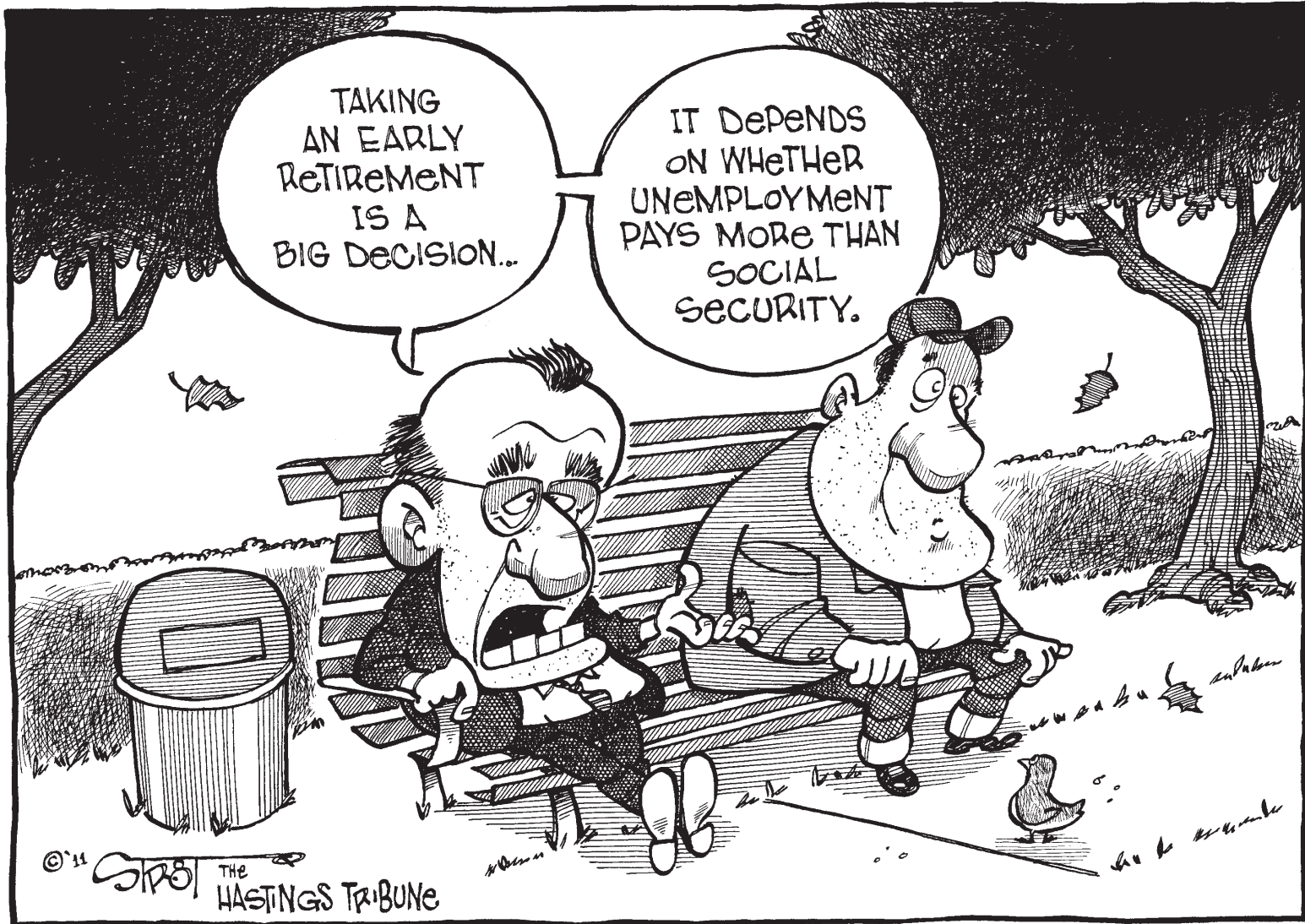
The volunteers for each department do get paid a small amount for responding to fire calls and to attend training events. The fire chiefs are paid \$100 a month to maintain the equipment and keep them ready to respond to fire calls.

Consolidating the Goodland city and rural departments have a long way to go, and we hope the officials of both the city and fire board remember the importance of those volunteers who respond to the emergency calls whether they be fires or accidents and in all kinds of weather and at any hour of the day or night.

The city and county fire board have taken the first step to have a combined chief for the two Goodland departments. Questions about money, responsibilities and coordination of the volunteers have to be answered.

The rural fire board has the right idea when they told the city commissioners on Monday they want the result to be the best fire protection available for the entire county from Kanorado to Brewster.

The volunteers need to know their efforts are appreciated, and everyone needs to remember it is on everyones shoulders to maintain great fire protection both for the rural departments and the city. — Tom Betz



‘The Help’ worth seeing at theatre

If you haven't seen the movie "The Help," now showing at area movie theaters, do yourself a favor and do it when you get a chance.

It may well be the best movie to play Goodland in the last two decades. It's not perfect, but it's good enough to move you.

It's the story of a young woman just out of the University of Mississippi in 1963. Skeeter wants to be a writer. She knows she can't live the same life as the women she grew up with, now up-and-coming Junior Leaguers in Jackson, Miss.

She needs experience to get a job in publishing, and she settles on writing the stories of the colored maids she knows. It's not easy to get anyone to trust her, or to take the project seriously. But, of course, it happens.

Along the way, you'll laugh, cry and feel the pain and the fear of the women in the film, white and black. The acting ranges from so-so to brilliant. At times, these young southern matrons appear to be nothing more than caricatures, vacuous, bubbly Barbies with Mississippi accents, nasty attitudes and empty brains.

Real life is a lot more complex, of course. I know some of these southern women, the ones who grew up in the '60s and their daughters. There's a lot more to them than the film shows.

But the fear, the prejudice — a central theme of the movie is one Junior Leaguer's drive to require separate, outside bathrooms for all



steve haynes

• along the sappa

black maids — were and are real.

But of course, we know how things turn out. The country changes, all that is left behind. The lives of those involved were complex, involving many good and courageous actions by those of both races.

For those who lived through those times, the attitudes are all too real. Talking later, Cynthia and I turned to our experience in 1980, when our house in Kansas City, Kansas, sold to blacks. Neighbors we thought of as friends, we learned later, led a boycott of our going-away party. (The ringleader was a prominent Junior Leaguer, as well.)

Others we barely know came to make a statement of support. We found out, as they say, who our friends were. It was a lesson for a couple of small-town Kansas kids who hadn't grown up with much of an idea of segregation.

As much as anything, the movie is a measure of how much the country has changed since 1963. It's marked by two pivotal events, the shooting of civil rights leader Medgar Evers in Jackson that year and the shooting of President John F. Kennedy. Both seem so far in the past, given the changes since, but we know

the prejudice and hatred that killed both men remains somewhere under the surface.

We live in a better world, but not a perfect one.

"The Help" includes some fine performances, including Viola Davis as Aibileen, the maid who first agrees to tell her tales. She pretty much carries the film. Emma Stone is understated as Skeeter, and Bryce Dallas Howard arch as the segregationist Junior Leaguer Hilly.

Two fine performances in minor roles reminded me that we're all getting older: Cicely Tyson as a frail older maid who raised Skeeter and her siblings, and Sissy Spacek as Hilly's forgetful but insightful mom. Both are way beyond playing the ingenue, I guess.

As a period piece, it's nearly flawless, the buses and cars properly 1950s, the hairdos and dress early '60s to a "T." The Mississippi accents are a little light, perhaps, and now and then a figure of speech is off: If you've been to the South, you know no one would offer you a "cola" or a "Coca-Cola," but a Coke. In the South, that's the same as saying a "soda" or a "pop" would be here.

I know, we don't often cater to movie reviews, but it's not often we get a movie of this calibre. "The Help" should be up for Picture of the Year, but that's not the point: You'll be entertained, and you'll be moved.

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Safe at home or play

Kids connect to it. They download from it. They watch on it. They listen to it. They play on it. They surf on it. They converse with it.

Do you know how to monitor it?

It is the Internet and it can be hard to keep up with. We want our children to be safe online, and with the amount of time kids spend online, it's crucial we do what we can to keep them safe.

Kids are turning to the internet for everything from hanging out with friends to shopping. They use and rely on the Internet daily. Studies reveal 93 percent of teens (ages 12-17) are online on a regular basis.

Youngsters may believe they're anonymous online, because they're interacting only with a screen and not directly with a person. They forget what they post becomes public.

One of the biggest dangers is risky content. Despite efforts to regulate content, some of the most popular sites, including YouTube and Google Video, host disrespectful and inappropriate content. There are plenty of sites off the beaten path where anything goes.

You don't want your child stumbling into adult movies or attending virtual wild parties. Nor do you want them connecting with online predators.

As adults, our childhood experience was



Insight this week

• john schlageck

much different than our "digital" children. They may experience harsh and mature content at their fingertips at a young age. It is our duty as teachers of this generation to start the education process early.

Here are a few guidelines you should explain to your child to ensure their safety online. Inform your child if they come across subject matter that makes them feel uncomfortable, they should talk to a trusted adult about it immediately.

Don't let your children be bullied or bully others online. One in three children have experienced harassment online. If your child is the target of this behavior, encourage them to not respond and seek help from a trusted adult.

Know and understand the privacy settings for sites your children may visit frequently. It's best for parents and children to review these settings together and decide what's best.

Have your child strive to be a leader when using the Internet. Encourage them to follow the golden rule and avoid dangerous, hurtful,

embarrassing or degrading situations online.

Content blockers and filters are great tools to use with younger kids. They allow you more control over where they go and what they do online. They block sites with explicit material or limit a child's search to a predetermined set of sites. A content filter scans sites and images and blocks those that contain certain words, key phrases, or content.

Consider tracking software for older teenagers. This software enables you to view sites your children have visited. This tool gives young people more freedom to explore the Internet, and allows you to verify they are using the Internet responsibly.

Let your teenagers know you trust them, but you will be periodically verify they are visiting appropriate sites online.

Even if you use content blockers, filters and trackers, know plenty of kids figure out ways around these. It's important to remain vigilant.

Remember, not all adult sites post an industry rating that can be identified by blocker, filter or tracker software. Talk to your kids about what to do when something inappropriate or scary pops up.

Nothing can replace involvement and supervision by adults. Keep monitoring how your kids use the Internet on a regular basis without becoming an Internet cop.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau has been writing about farming and ranching in Kansas for more than 25 years. He is the managing editor of "Kansas Living," a quarterly magazine dedicated to agriculture and rural life in Kansas.

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