

from our viewpoint...

Support private advances in space

The last space shuttle has finally come to its resting place. Fittingly, the space shuttle Endeavour was the last of five shuttles to be built. It was constructed as a replacement for the Challenger, which exploded just after takeoff in 1986. Endeavour had its first flight in 1992 and its last in 2011.

On Monday, the shuttle reached its final station at the California Science Center in Los Angeles. The once mighty craft was hauled to a special hangar at a snails pace through the streets of Los Angeles. About 400 trees had to be removed to get it to the science center, and it ended up there 17 hours behind schedule.

In space exploration, it seems Americans have only tragic or disappointing milestones these days. The past year has seen the final shuttle flights, endless footage of the shuttles themselves being sent to their retirement homes, and the death of Neil Armstrong, the first man to walk on the moon.

Still, even with this finality and tragedy, space travel still captures the imagination. One bystander, watching Endeavour head toward the Science Center, remarked "Who cares about two guys running for president. This is America."

They make smaller headlines, but there are some encouraging milestones. Earlier this month, the Dragon, built by a commercial company called SpaceX, completed its first official cargo mission with the International Space Station on Wednesday.

Dragon is an unmanned cargo craft. The company, based in Hawthorne, Calif., has a commercial resupply contract with NASA that calls for at least 12 missions. It made a test-docking with the space station in May, and lifted off for the first of its dozen official mission last week. The mission went flawlessly.

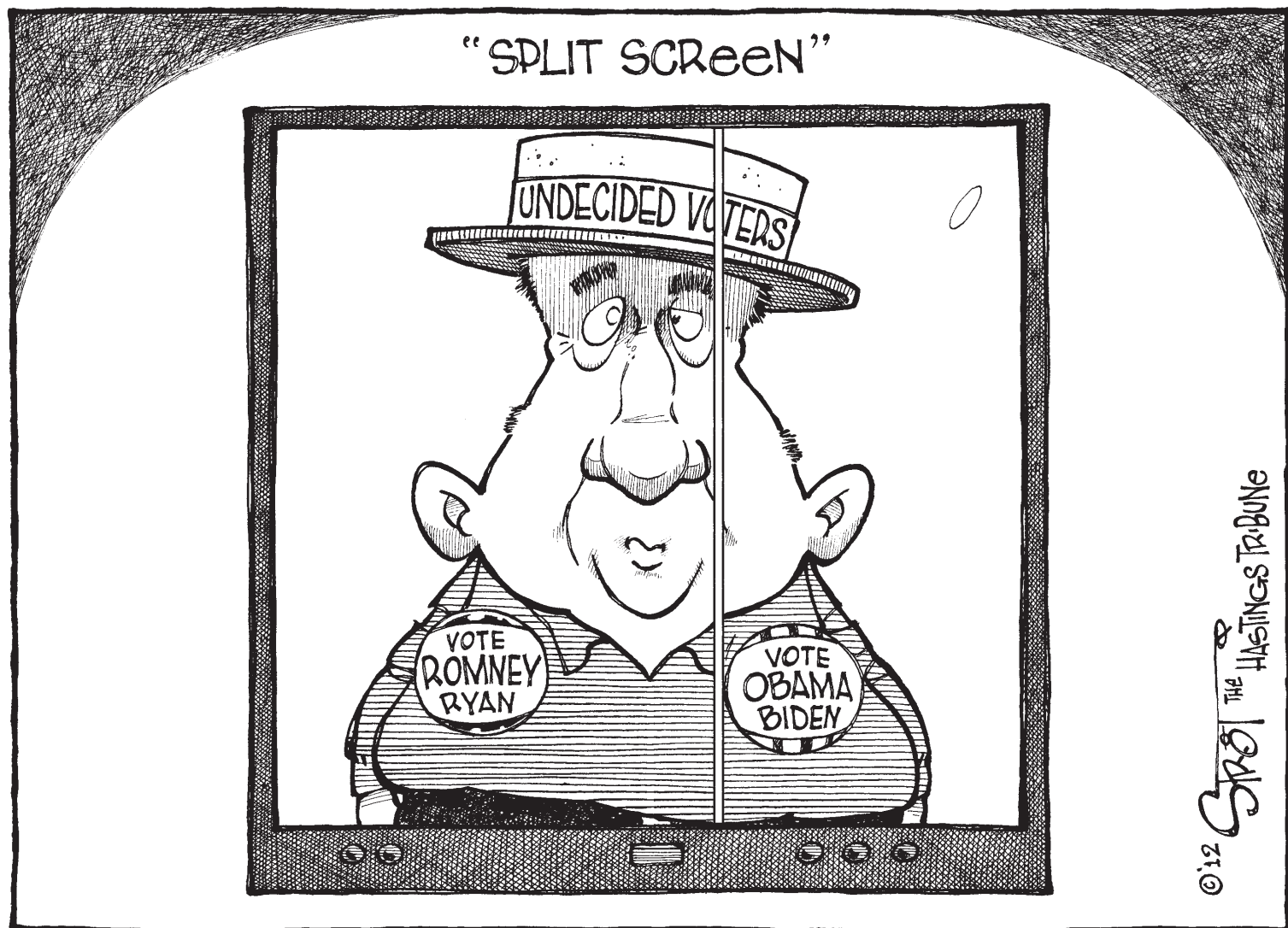
It could even ferry astronauts to and from the station. This is good news, since for the last year or more, American astronauts have had to rely on foreign spacecraft.

If the United States government remains unwilling to retake the lead in space exploration – the Constellation program was cancelled and its Orion orbiter is still in the prototype phase – than we must do everything we can to encourage private advances.

It's an exciting time in the world of private spaceflight, and the Dragon is just the tip of the iceberg. There were 18 commercial orbital launches in 2011 out of a total of 74. There were 23 in 2010. There is even a commercial space station being planned by Bigelow Aerospace. The first launch is planned for 2014.

Space tourism is also booming industry, albeit one only the rich can afford currently.

It hasn't all gone perfectly. The other company that had a NASA commercial resupply contract went bankrupt, and a satellite that had been a secondary payload on the SpaceX rocket was left in the wrong orbit, after which the satellite fell back to earth. There have been plenty of other failures, as happens in any new endeavor. However, private spaceflight seems the best alternative to the disappointing turns in government-sponsored space exploration and for now, at least, the sky is the limit. —Kevin Bottrell



Respect high school football coach

To the Editor:

We all have opinions. We all should exercise our rights to express our opinion. We should, however, use discretion and socially acceptable manners to do so.

Winning is fun. Winning is important in Goodland because that means a coach has a better chance of renewing a contract and keeping a job. Winning games can do a lot for a team. But winning isn't everything. Teams can learn as much from losing as from winning and can grow stronger as a team. No one wants to win more than Coach Kent Teeter. He didn't come here years ago with a plan to ruin the program and have a losing season. He has, in fact, done a lot to turn our high school football program around for the better. Some may not see that, as they only look at the win and loss record of the team. Coach Teeter cares about each and every one of his players. He is concerned about their academic success and their athletic success. He cares about what happens to them in their outside of football activities. He cares about them as individuals. He is a caring, Christian man who is interested in the character, morals, and values of his players and has tried hard to build positive character traits in the boys both on and off the field. The majority of the time he does this by his own example. He is a man who is leading our football players to be excellent individuals.

Coach Teeter loves football. Coach Teeter loves winning. But Coach Teeter understands the importance of young men being well rounded and more than just quality football players. This should be evident to those in our community. Recently several young men on the team made a choice to violate team rules – Coach Teeter handled this infraction with disciplinary action which took those boys off the field for a game and put them on the sideline. Some people say this was wrong for him to do this a few days before a big game – how



from our readers

to the editor

could Goodland High win a football game with key players unable to step on the field? Coach Teeter, his staff, and the team members proved they could play well under these circumstances when other players stepped up to fill the necessary positions. A total team concept.

While Coach Teeter would be proud to have any of his players leave Goodland High and go on to play college football, he is very realistic in his thinking about their life after high school and is helping to build men of noble character and prepare them for life experiences off the playing field. Parents should be thankful to have Kent Teeter at the helm leading their son on to "victory".

Coaching is a rewarding, yet complicated job. It's not just the game time in the Friday night lights. It is planning, practice, games and a whole lot more. For Coach Teeter it is 24/7... in season and off season. He spends a lot of time thinking football and sinks his heart and soul into the game. Win or lose, he is the coach and deserves to be treated with respect. We don't all have to agree with a coach, but we need to allow them to do their job. Should anyone feel they have better ideas, skills, or abilities to lead a team, they should go to the Administration Building and fill out an application. If anyone has something to say about Coach Teeter's decisions or abilities, speak with him about it. He is human, just as you are, and knows that he makes mistakes. He is willing to change whatever it takes to make a positive impact upon the football players at Goodland High School. He will listen to you, but it is not fair to attack him and his family. That is a very self-centered,

weak approach to solving a problem.

While placing real estate "for sale" signs in Coach Teeter's yard may have only been in fun, it doesn't come across very funny to many people. It is also an unlawful act – unless it was done by a realtor who owns those signs, you are stealing another's property.

If you have something positive or negative to say to Coach Teeter you should be strong enough to face him directly to do so. Otherwise, you should keep your opinion to yourself. Jumping on another's bandwagon of destruction isn't a very good idea either. Trying to tar and feather a coach and get him shipped out of town only shows your immaturity. People should stop for a moment and get all the facts surrounding the issue before throwing stones. What are you showing your children when you are not supportive of a coach or teacher?

The actions of those who put signs in Coach Teeter's yard affected more than just him as a coach. He has a family who lives there, too, and winning and losing football games is not their responsibility. It has a direct impact upon the players on the team who respect Coach Teeter and play their hearts out for the Goodland Cowboys week after week, win or lose. It is hurtful to those of us who are fans of our hometown team. I hope you take time to think about your actions and know that innocent people have been hurt by your decision to try and damage Coach Teeter. You must not know Kent Teeter very well if you think you can defeat him by this childish action. Coach Teeter doesn't give up easily. I know him as a man of character and integrity and know he will choose to forgive those who offend him. He is a winner in my books and Goodland would be losing more than just a game if he were not our high school football coach.

Cris Wilson
Goodland

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Let them eat digital

"Let them eat cake," is the classical statement by Marie Antoinette, wife of French King Louis XVI. In the French Revolution, she was the example of the rich and arrogant. Isolated in her palaces, she asked why the citizens were rioting. When told that it was because they had no bread, she famously replied that the masses should simply do what she would do if she ran out of bread: eat cake.

This phrase reflects how the rich can be blind to the conditions of the poor.

Today's "Marie Antoinettes" include some Kansas school administrators and Education Secretary Arne Duncan. His proclamation last week that American schools should convert to 100 percent digital textbooks reveals again how he is isolated from the American public classroom and economically poor students.

One Presidential candidate apologized for his "47 percent" problem. This is Duncan's "40 percent" problem.

Four-out-of-ten American households are not connected to broadband internet. Access is not spread evenly. Households and schools in the affluent suburbs of Johnson County may be close to 100 percent connected. That means that many western rural school districts may have fewer than half of households connected. And six percent of the most remote households, rich-or-not, are beyond the reach of any broadband internet.

The cost of buying a computer to keep up with new software and internet speed and memory demands requires an affluent income in a recession economy.

But forget the Education Secretary who is sheltered in FantasyLand, DC. I am now talking about a number of Kansas school administrators who have this Marie Antoinette attitude. Since 2008, a flood of data has shown the



education frontlines

John Schrock

growing number of school children who live in poverty. A substantial number do not have enough to eat. It should be evident to school administrators who work outside of the rich suburbs that large numbers of households lack computers and internet connections.

At the end of August, I wrote the column "Only 60 Percent Have Internet Access." The response I received from Kansas teachers and parents was shocking. Across Kansas, they told me that some school administrators had already moved teaching materials online, in some cases to cover their shortfall in textbooks. When I ask how they are providing for the students who lack internet at home, the response was that these students would have to work online during a study period or after school in the school computer lab.

Consider just how unfair it would be if a richer student got to take his or her books and study materials home after school but a poor student could not? Yet this switch to electronics does exactly that. The rich kid gets the advantage of homework and help from parents 24/7 while the poor kid is restricted to gaps in school time.

What really bites is that Kansas parents pay a book rental fee but now their child is not getting what they paid for. Such educational malpractice begs for a lawsuit; yet poor people are the least likely to complain.

Secretary Duncan wants electronic textbooks because Korea and Finland have decid-

ed to move that direction. But neither country has the poverty found in the U.S.; and both are committed to put the electronics into every student's hands and at home. And they have zero proof that this will benefit students.

But some Kansas administrators adopted their electronic textbook policy well before Duncan's proclamation last week. They live in a world that substitutes the images of progress for the substance. Many have been spending big bucks for electronic "whiteboards" for every classroom whether the teacher asked for it or not.

Unfortunately, internet access is not equal to printed texts and does not improve test scores. In a June 18, 2010 study of 150,000 5th-to-8th-grade students by researchers at Duke University's Sanford School of Public Policy, home computer use was linked with lower student test scores and the problem was worse for low-income students.

In many Kansas communities, citizens have organized to provide "backpack food" to send home with poor students who do not get enough to eat.

They should not have to also raise funds to send students home with a real textbook.

That is the school's responsibility.

Letter Policy

The Goodland Star-News encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, and must include a telephone number and a signature. Unsigned letters will not be published. Form letters and letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive will be rejected. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and good taste. We encourage letters, with address and phone numbers, by e-mail to: star.news@nwkansas.com.