

Youth ranch sale talk needs to cease

Whoa!
What's the rush to put the city's Sappa Valley Youth Ranch up for sale?
It's apparent no one has thought this thing through. There's barely been time since the ranch closed in September, but the City Council held a special meeting and agreed to have an Internet broker come look at the property.
Why the rush? Who's in a hurry to get rid of the ranch, which has provided dozens of jobs and millions in payroll to people here in the last few years?
Let's stop and think.
If the city does sign a real estate listing contract, and a buyer appears, cash in hand, then the council likely will have to sell. This decision is not to be taken lightly. Too much is at stake.
First, the city needs to retain control.
If the price is right, and the buyer might provide more or better jobs than another youth ranch operator, maybe the council should look at it.

That's a lot of ifs.
If, on the other hand, a buyer wants to put in a pig confinement operation with a couple of workers, then the potential damage to Sappa Park might rule out the sale.

The council surely doesn't want to sell the ranch if the city will be worse off after the sale than before.
Money isn't everything.
True, the city will miss the rent King's Achievement Camp has been paying for the ranch, but the lease doesn't run out until the end of the month. Even then, the \$36,000 a year isn't much compared to the size of the city budget. We can afford to wait and decide the best use for the ranch.

The city already has a firm looking at the facility as a drug and alcohol treatment center for teens. While the firm is related to King's Camp, it still might be a serious contender. There might be others out there, too, but only a thorough search will tell.

So why the unseemly haste? No one seems to know.
Surely, the people of Oberlin deserve to know what is going on and why a sale should be considered before the property is listed. Not after. Not after one unpublicized special council meeting.
When the time comes, we might say sell. We might not. Until all the cards are on the table, no one will know.

A sale to the wrong party could be a disaster. The city has to think about protecting the park, which grows in popularity and usefulness each month. A manufacturing plant at the ranch, for instance, might put too much traffic on the park road. A livestock operation could pollute the nearby creek.

For certain, the city needs to retain a right of first refusal should any buyer later decide to dump the ranch, if only to protect the park. Even that might not work out if land values soar.

Slow down, council.
The ranch is valuable as is. Even with the problems it's had, it's been good to the city and to all the people, ranch workers and teachers alike, who drew paychecks while it was running.
The state gave us the ranch years ago for economic development, and that should be the prime goal in any decision to sell or keep the property: what's best for the city and its economy.
There is no rush to get anything done.

— Steve Haynes

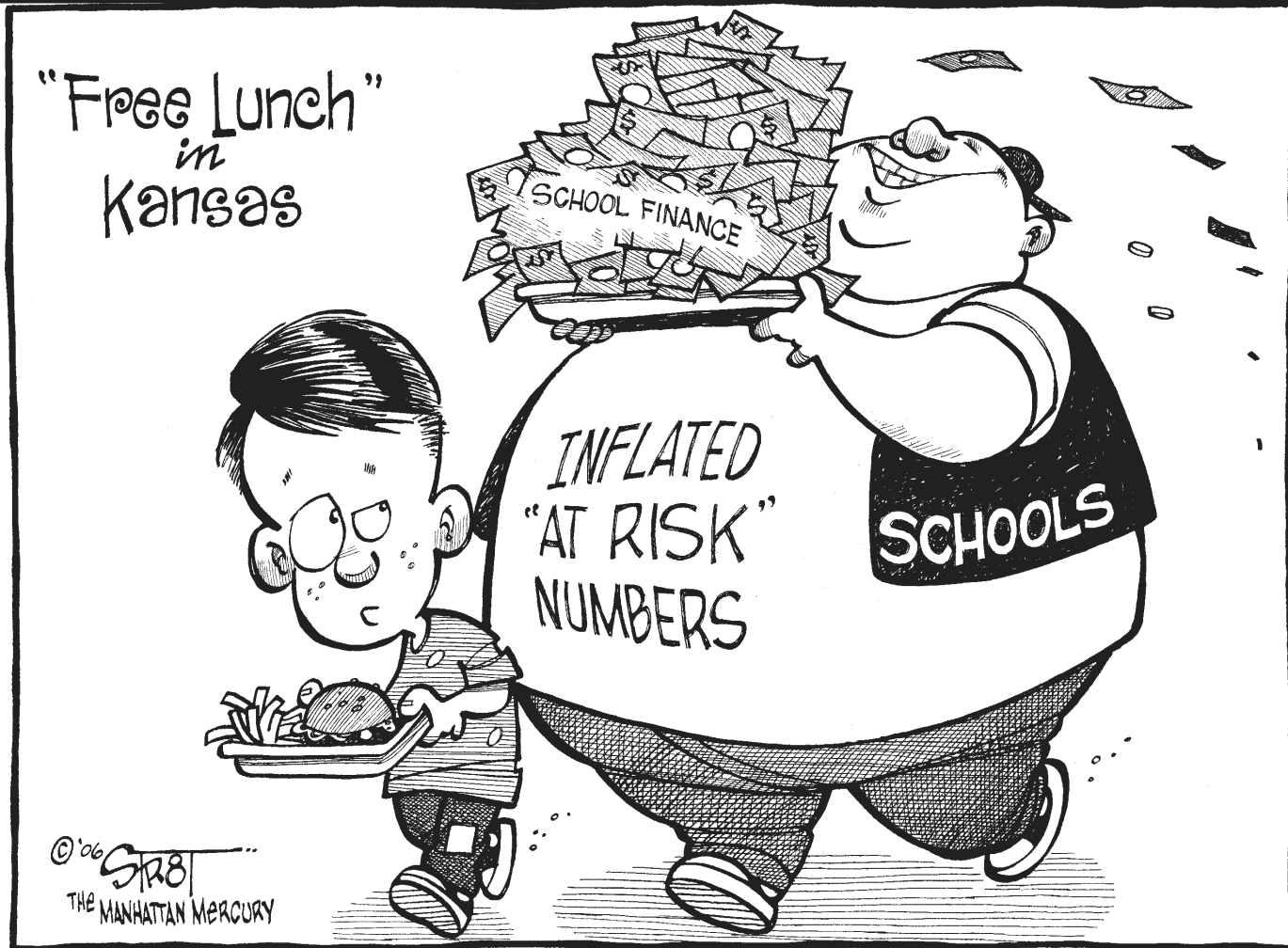
Thumbs Up to . . .

√**Velva McClain**, on your 95th birthday on Thanksgiving Day. You are an inspiration to your family, your friends and your community. We love you! (brought in)

√**Christa Mulder**, on your new position with the Norton County Conservation District. (called in)

√**Ann Becker**, top picker in this season's final *Norton Telegram* Pigskin Pick-Em Contest,

√**Larry Joe Enfield III**, on completion of your Kansas Law Enforcement Training course. Job well done! (e-mail)



Now we get ready for 'Stressmas'

So, are you still full? If so, you did Thanksgiving up right. If not, you denied yourself. Even those who are watching their weight had license to "sneak" just a little bit more on this special holiday. Thanksgiving is all about the 6 F's — Family, Friends, Food, Fellowship, Football, Fun. I hope your day went as you planned. And I also hope you had time to just relax because we now enter the season, experts tell us — they don't need to tell us because we already know — that creates more stress and tension than any other time of the year.

- Christmas decorations need to go up.
 - The gift list needs to be reworked and pursued.
 - Baking the family's favorites goodies needs to begin.
 - Christmas cards need to be purchased and mailed.
 - Social engagements need to be fulfilled.
 - Finding "extra" space in the house to accommodate traveling family members needs attention.
- And those are just for starters!
But you'll get through it, you always do. Let's just call it "Stressmas."

—td—
To me, the thing about the approaching Christmas season, is getting to hear some of the finest music ever written. Frankly, I can never get enough of it. My favorite is "Oh, Holy Night," and I guess the reason is because my late wife Jeanie was organist and vocalist at both the Catholic churches at Colby and Goodland. Midnight Mass, more times than not, featured her presentation of that song. Additionally, my late father was organist and choir director at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Hays and his Midnight Masses — full choir and assorted instruments — always featured "Oh, Holy Night." That song in itself tells the meaning, and puts it all in context.

As they say, bring it on!
—td—
Christmas lights (I prefer to use Christmas vs. holiday, that's just the way I am)

Good Evening Norton Tom Dreiling



look good and a big thanks to those who installed them on the utility poles. Once the city's decorations are in place, the spirit of the community seems to change. And as more and more residents take to the front of their homes to string lights, erect displays, install sound systems and all else, the spirit becomes more contagious. Christmas06, anticipation chills all the way to the bone.

—td—
I am amused at all of the presidential wannabes who are putting together *exploratory committees* to see whether they should run. If they need a committee to tell them if they should run, then they shouldn't. That's the first test they flunk — not being able to make a decision. All they need to do is get off their million dollar couches, climb into their million dollar limos, head out to their airports and climb aboard their million dollar jets and...well, campaign!

I often wonder how these candidates can find the millions of dollars necessary to seek this particular office, but can't seem to find funds necessary to keep our government afloat?

—td—
Here is something I found fascinating, thanks to Don McClelland. You will be amazed at the result. Please follow instructions closely.

- 1) Pick the number of times a week that you would like to go out to eat (more than once but less than 10).
- 2) Multiply this number by 2.
- 3) Add 5.
- 4) Multiply by 50.
- 5) If you have already celebrated your

birthday this year, add 1756. If you haven't, add 1755.

6) Subtract the four digit year that you were born.

You should have a three digit number. The first number is the number of times you would like to go out to eat. The next two numbers are your age.

How about that?!
They say the year 2006 is the only year this will ever work. That's what they say.

—td—
A report on Monday of this week said 112 of 853 public college presidents rake in \$500,000 or more annually, including benefits. No comment, just a bit of information to pass along, just in case your kid is wondering what educational route to follow. Tell him the path paved with green.

—td—
Well, the media is all abuzz about Kramer, the character on "Seinfeld," who, at a comedy club in Los Angeles a couple of nights ago, lost his cool on stage — thanks to a heckler — and let go with a racial barrage that stunned the crowd. If the networks are so against what this guy said, why in the heck are they playing what he said at every opportunity? Shame on them. Kramer (Michael Richards) apologized in a televised interview on the Dave Letterman Show Monday night. He struggled, but he managed to get his point across. News 24/7 creates this kind of coverage. I question the news value. Perhaps a mention due to Kramer's status as a comedian would have sufficed. But to carry it to the point they have?

Also, FOX has pulled out of its plans to air an O.J. Simpson series, "If I Did It," as well as publishing his book. Public outcry was more than anticipated forcing the cancellations. That should have been a no-brainer.

—td—
Shopping tip: SHOP NORTON!

—td—
Have a good evening and a good weekend. And church should be one of your goals.

Disorder linked to tobacco, lead

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a brain disorder, which various estimates say affect between four percent and 12 percent of school-age children, or as many as 3.8 million kids. Children with this disorder often have trouble sitting still and paying attention and act impulsively at home, school and in social settings.

Often these children have a low frustration tolerance and may engage in frequent temper outbursts. This disorder is seen much more frequently in males than in females. Recent research has established a possible link between smoking while pregnant and the development of the disease.

According to the on-line journal "Environmental Health Perspectives" approximately one third of attention deficit cases among U.S. children may be linked with tobacco use by the mother while

Health Perspectives by Ken Loos

pregnant, or to lead exposure during infancy and childhood. The researchers analyzed data on nearly 4,000 U.S. children ages 4 to 15 who were part of a 1999 to 2002 government health survey.

They asked whether mothers had smoked during pregnancy, but used blood tests to determine lead exposure. Children whose mothers smoked during pregnancy were 2.5 times more likely to have ADHD than children who were not prenatally exposed to tobacco.

These findings build on previous re-

search linking attention problems with childhood lead exposure and smoking during pregnancy. The findings are consistent with a National Academy of Sciences report in 2000 that said about three percent of all developmental and neurological disorders in American children are caused by toxic chemicals and other environmental factors, and 25 percent are due to a combination of environmental factors and genetics. In other words, the environment children are exposed to before and after birth has significant long-term health implications.

Although there are still many questions regarding the causes of ADHD, these studies clearly demonstrate the importance of good prenatal health and maintaining a home environment free of dangerous substances.

This information is provided by the High Plains Mental Health Center, Hays.

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Best way to say it is with a Letter to the Editor