

U.S. 36 group needs county's help

The U.S. Highway 36 Association is coming down to the wire on its plan to have a corridor study done on the economic impact of widening and improving the road from St. Joseph to St. Francis. The group hopes to raise \$50,000 to finance the study, similar to one done a couple of years ago by a group pushing improvements on U.S. 50. They expect to show a positive return to Kansas and to the 13 counties along the route.

The association has asked counties along the highway, from Doniphan to Cheyenne, to ante up \$2,000 each for the study and hopes to get a grant for the rest.

So far, though, only Decatur County and a couple others have actually put up any money. Directors plan to revisit the rest this month as commissioners draw up their new budgets.

It is critical to get the study moving for several reasons.

One, the state already has begun studying a new transportation plan to replace the one that expires in 2010. While the Department of Transportation expects a gap between programs, as happened last time, it won't be long. The plan will be in place within a couple of years.

And any improvements to U.S. 36 need to be in the plan.

Besides, costs are rising and there's no certainty that, if the study doesn't begin next year, the counties or the association can afford it.

The U.S. 50 study showed the benefits of improving that route with four lanes west of Hutchinson. It concluded that economic growth would cease without a better highway.

Along the northern tier of Kansas, most counties have no idea what "economic growth" is. Populations and economies are stagnant or declining. Schools have to merge or close as enrollment dwindles.

Backers see a great opportunity along the road, though. Illinois has improved about half its mileage to a freeway, known as Interstate 72.

Across Missouri, the road now is a four-lane expressway with only a 52-mile gap at the east end.

And four counties there voted to tax themselves to help the state widen the road, with all the work now under contract. Missouri officials expect to have the four-lane road done by 2009, a year ahead of schedule.

Projections show significant truck traffic on the four-lane road within 10 years as drivers seek to bypass the hopelessly snarled highways around St. Louis. Much of that traffic will have to go south through Kansas City, though, unless Kansas takes up the standard and starts building a better road on U.S. 36.

A wider highway could serve as a bypass for both I-70 through Kansas City and I-80 through Omaha, backers believe, drawing traffic and business to a part of rural Kansas that could use both.

If the study is done, and if taxpayers and public officials all across the 13 counties get behind the effort.

It's a big job, one that requires the support of everyone along the road, but no other economic development initiative offers as much potential return to northern Kansas.

We hope the rest of the counties get on board, and soon.

— Steve Haynes

Editor's Note: Steve Haynes also is president of the U.S. Highway 36 Association.

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Scoop of ice cream in blender did it

Jim started getting sick Friday afternoon. By that night, he was one sick puppy. When someone is sick it makes you feel so helpless because there is absolutely nothing you can do except hold their hand and say, "I'm sorry you feel bad." By Saturday morning he was feeling much better. That, of course, meant he tried to do too much and tried to eat.

While I was outside watering flowers, he made himself a hamburger. That was his first mistake. His stomach wasn't quite ready for that and he got sick all over again.

After spending a miserable Saturday afternoon and evening, he had learned his lesson. Sunday, he vowed not to eat anything — and he stuck to his guns.

However, by late Sunday night, he was hungry with a capital "H".

My suggestion of oatmeal was not greeted with any enthusiasm. So, I said, "I know something that will satisfy your hunger and taste good too." Whatever it was, he was all for it. At last, a chance to prove my theory that there was nothing

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



wrong with a SlimFast shake that a scoop of ice cream wouldn't help.

I loaded the blender with a cup of milk, a heaping scoop of strawberry flavored SlimFast powder and two or three scoops of vanilla ice cream. I flipped the switch and "Voila," I soon had a vitamin-packed, filling drink.

He attacked it with the gusto of a hungry hound dog. It wasn't long, however, before he said, "Are you sure you didn't use the calve's milk replacement to make this?"

I assured him I had not and he finished it. But, it was more a sense of duty than of delight. Bottom line — he is feeling much better.

-ob-

We had a beautiful rain Sunday night. Enough that I don't feel compelled to water trees and flowers this morning. If it hits the projected high of 99 degrees again today, we are going to be in a steam bath. I know I say this every year, but it's true. "It's not the heat, it's the humidity."

-ob-

We're starting to wean our two calves. They are only getting a bottle once a day now and we are ready to move them from their little pen to a larger enclosure. They both eat their "calf crumbles" and any weeds we pull and toss into them.

Jim bought a halter for the heifer, since she is the bigger of the two. He figures the little bull calf will follow her. Perhaps, when we move them from one pen to another, it won't be such a rodeo.

I'm not counting on it, though. I prefer moving them using the bottle method. Don't feed them that day until you're ready to move them. Then show them the bottle and they'll follow you anywhere. The only trick is to make sure they don't run out of milk before you get them to the new pen.

You do with what you can afford

We Asked, You Answered Survey Responses Part 2

We thank all who have responded to our survey and want to remind those who didn't that there is still time left. No signature required on your response, and no length limit.

I think too many people look at larger newspapers and wonder why their small hometown paper can't be like that. Why do some people drive the most expensive cars made, while others settle for something cheaper maybe even used? Finances! Before your criticize the paper, give thought to what our community would be like without it. I complain just like others I know, but in the end I'm glad we have something that's recording history for those yet to be born. Only a newspaper can do that. Improvement? I would like to see more color pictures. Carry on.

So very glad you asked Tom! I've been waiting. I'm hoping Norton folks will chime in their valued opinions on this subject. These are the things I like about the paper.

First, I'm glad there is a Norton paper. It has seen several changes over the past three years. I'm very glad that ownership wasn't dropped, or stalled. It continued to remain in operation through all the changes.

I am thankful for the very wonderful staff. Every person I've worked with, either through contributing letters to the editor or concerns about our children's routes, the staff has been very supportive, encouraging and amiable. Our children also thank the staff, especially Sherry for her patience working with the children's errors through the years. This has brought about good, considerate and caring relationships between our family and the Norton staff. And I personally thank Editor Tom Dreiling for his encouragement to keep writing. Thank-you all.

Small townfolk talk. Over the past two years I've heard two over-riding complaints, both of which I concur. The first is to go back to being a DAILY paper. Fluidity is lost with the two days off. This has been especially difficult with funeral notices. The second, which exacerbates the first, is the *Country Advocate* in Tuesday's paper. There are many duplicate advertisements between the Monday free paper and the Tuesday paper's *Advocate*. The combination of the two less papers per

week, plus the additional advertisements makes us feel like we're paying for a whole lot of advertising and lot less real news. Not to mention, we all receive the free *Shopping Mart.*, which is an area-wide advertisement as well.

That's my only real complaint. The rest are suggestions for improving the paper.

1) In-depth personal stories. The one on Working Women, as well as others, allows us to get to know other folks in the community. I'd like to see more of these series. Here are several suggestions:

Norton immigrants: I'm aware of several "foreigners" that have come to Norton to live. Getting to know them and their stories through the Norton paper makes me feel good. As the immigration issue is a hot topic these days, getting a personal glimpse from real people close to home who have had to go through the process would give us all a much more compassionate and balanced view.

An, "Over eighties biographies." So many of our elderly and their stories are vanishing daily as they leave this world for the next. They have such rich, beautiful stories of life lived a half century ago. Their lives are filled with lessons learned, traditional values, and many times a faith that is rock solid in God. For those who are willing (as well as their families), I'd like to listen in on their joys, trials, triumphs and day to day wisdom gleaned from living a lifetime here on God's good earth. I'd like to read it in the Norton paper.

A, "Faith Views" section for folks to discuss their faith; whether that be Christianity, Atheism or otherwise. I was quite taken aback by many of the comments from folks that wrote in when Mr. Dreiling asked a faith based question of the community. Given anonymity, folks disclosed their angst and hurt on religious matters. That caused me to reconsider how I present my faith through my own life and

that of my families. It was compelling and humbling. These are discussions that can change views and lives, bring hope and bring healing. I'd like to see this happen in my local paper.

2) How about a seasonal section on community gardening where folks can write in describing their gardens, along with helpful suggestions, etc. I'm starting a 'square foot garden' this year. How about you?

3) Speaking of 'writing in'...folks just aren't writing in enough. I'd like to see more participation from the community in the Opinion section. The regular columnists aren't experts, they're just folks with an opinion. Chime in and make your views known. Why? Because we are a community of diverse people whose thoughts all matter and should have an equal opportunity to be heard. I gain a greater perspective on all issues and life in general when I can read folks opinions that differ from my own. That helps me grow as a human being and as a Christian. Perhaps the editor can rethink allowing anonymity for folks that are a bit gun-shy writing in with their name.

4) I understand that business minutes are needed in the paper. I read them. It's informative. But I want more — especially from our health care professionals. As the 'general' health practitioner in this family, it would benefit me much to know the health of this community at large. Couldn't the Norton Clinic regularly gather a set criteria of information on the general population that comes to them for services? Does this data even exist?

For instance, could a data sheet be put together of all the common ailments that are diagnosed in a given month? Are their commonalities within the community? Quite often, we do find out that this type of cold or that type of cold is going around as we shop and get about in the community. But I would like to see actual statistical data on a regular basis be gathered and printed in the Norton paper. Yes, I ask much and reach high. Why not. Doesn't hurt to ask.

5) Question 15. Of course, my favorite page is the Opinion section.

6) Give the staff a raise, they deserve it.

7) Give the paper carriers a raise too. They also deserve it.

Have a good day. And again, thanks for asking.