

### Good example of health care mess

For a long time now, people have been looking for an alternative to pretty much anything. During the summer months, some people drive a motorcycle rather than a car to save on gas. People hang their clothes outside to dry rather than run the dryer.

Health care is no different. Earlier this week, Thomas County Health Department Administrator Lisa Molstad informed county commissioners just how busy her department was. She said they could easily see a patient for every 15 minutes for the next three weeks. Molstad is needing more help.

Having that much work is not necessarily a bad thing. The health department's purposes include giving children vaccinations and others flu shots to a list of other minor, medical services. In seven years, the department's budget has more than doubled.

But the question is why is the department becoming so popular? Across the country other hospitals, more so in big cities, know their emergency rooms are used as primary care physicians because people don't have health insurance or they don't have enough insurance. Some of those hospitals financially suffer because of those people.

Those with adequate health insurance usually are victim of that process. As a way to make up the losses, hospitals increase their fees for services, which health-insurance companies notice, and then increase the premiums to policy holders.

The health department can't deny anyone services based on ability to pay. That's tempting, and too good of an offer, to pass up.

Molstad said the health department is not trying to take away service from other health care providers. Molstad and the health department can't help it. They are just following the rules given to them. This is just another example of how crazy health care has become in this country.

Commissioner Paul Steele said if the county somehow can't contain the expenses at the health department, taxes may need to be raised.

And should that happen, many people in Thomas County will pay for it, not just the ones with adequate health insurance.

— John Van Nostrand is publisher of the Colby Free Press



### A few tips for our newest graduates

It's graduation time again. When I read the future plans of these high school graduates I see their dreams of a bright future. Little do they know how dramatically those plans will change.

Life will begin to happen to them. Decisions will be made. Career paths will be determined. Some, who no one thought would ever amount to anything, will become preachers, law enforcement officers and lawyers. Conversely, those who had every opportunity and advantage, might stumble along the way.

When I graduated from high school I didn't have a clue what I would do. Hadn't even given it any thought, really. High school had been so much fun I had not looked any further.

I hadn't been scholarship material so there was no financial help. And, my folks couldn't afford college. About mid-August that summer, a girl friend called. She lived across the state in a junior college town and said, "Hey, Kelley! Why don't you come on down. The tuition is cheap and the boys are cute!" Sounded

#### Out Back Carolyn Plotts



like a deal to me and that was all the thought I gave to planning for the future.

If I had stayed home how different my life would have been. Probably would have married a nice home-town boy; had a passel of kids; and gone to the in-laws every Sunday for dinner. It would have been a good life — but not the one I was destined for. I've lived lots of different places, known lots of interesting people and had fun, challenging jobs.

So, for those graduates who didn't always know what they wanted to be when they grow up — I say, "Hang in there. Try everything, once. Don't be afraid to step out. Find your faith. Know what you

believe. Dare to be different. And, keep learning, whether in college or not."

-ob-

It might sound weird, but, I've been out talking to the iris. I said, "Come on, bloom. Bloom. You can do it. Just a few more days until it's time to decorate graves." Earlier this month I was afraid all the flowers would be bloomed and gone before Memorial Day. Now, I'm afraid they won't be bloomed at all.

My brother, Jim, and his wife, Linda, are coming for Alumni Banquet this weekend. It's Jim's 50th anniversary year and one of the few times he has been back for a class reunion.

After all the reunion festivities, we'll want to go visit the cemeteries together. I sure would like to have some fresh flowers to take along.

-ob-

Jim is working up our garden spot. We had such good luck with our tomatoes, squash and zucchini last year, he is considering enlarging it. I hope his eyes aren't bigger than my ability to can it.

### Correction...

Same on me. My item in last Friday's column on gas savings at the pump — if the federal tax of 18.4 was eliminated for 12 weeks — was somewhat in error. Granted, I was dealing with an in-house unnerving situation on Thursday evening when we were putting the paper together, and consequently failed to import onto this page the edited version of that item. Smack me a good one!

It all hinges around the fact I was pumping in \$30 worth of gas at \$3.69 per gallon, which comes out to slightly more than 8 gallons, not 30 gallons.

So...  
8 gallons X \$3.69 per gallon (rounded off) = \$30  
8 gallons X 18 cents per gallon federal tax (rounded off) = \$1.44  
\$1.44 per week for 12 weeks (rounded off) = \$17

I would be investing \$354 in 96 gallons of gas to save \$17 over that period of time.

They say every little bit counts. Something tells me the stimulus checks will probably be spent at the gas pump.

#### Good Evening Norton Tom Dreiling



### This challenge deserves your attention

As graduates filed across the stage during the weekend, how many of them have been encouraged to learn and study and return to Norton, or even to some part of rural Kansas, to help make this a better place?

Graduates collected thousands of dollars in scholarships from colleges, civic groups, businesses and the like. Most of that money was earned here, by people who spent their lives building a business, a farming operation, a life on the plains.

Early on, we knew we wanted the best for our children. We wanted them to have the best education possible before they went on to whatever they would do in life.

At first, a great many of them did come back. In the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, it was expected that children would continue a family business or farm.

All that changed with the end of World War II. The so-called Greatest Generation came home from war wanting other things — a better life in the city being first among those.

And since then, fewer and fewer of our graduates have come home to run businesses, to keep farms going, to make life better for rural America.

And we raise money each year to pay them to go. We send our own children off to a university with little hope they

#### On the Prairie Dog Steve Haynes



will come back, even though this is a good life.

We help raise money for other people's children to do the same. At the twilight of our lives, those who have made some money often leave a chunk of it for scholarships. It's a wonderful thing, a noble cause.

But in the end, we are financing the flight of our youth to life in the city. We're paying them to flee the plains and the life our grandfathers built.

To some extent, that's just life in America today. Rural areas have been losing population. Opportunities are fewer and farther between.

But it doesn't have to be that way. The culture of small-town life changed before, and it could change again.

Why do we have to give kids scholarships so they can get a good job in the city?

Why not encourage them, with our money, to learn how to make a living

and grow a business or a professional practice here, at home, where life is safe and relatively simple?

We are not talking about coercing anyone. Youths should be free to make their own decisions, and some always have — and always will — chose city life. There are things you can only do in New York or Los Angeles or Washington, after all.

But we could encourage them to value small-town life and we could give them money to study for a career in rural America.

It's our money, after all. We can give it however we like.

The day should come when every scholarship raised here, or in any rural town, encourages somehow not just a good education, but a desire to contribute to a better life in Norton, in rural Kansas, in small-town America.

No law, no rule of life, no moral imperative forces us to keep spending as we always have spent, with no thought for where these kids will end up.

If we continue as we are, we are pounding nails in the coffin of rural life. We can change that. We should change that.

We should encourage our lifestyle, cherish its values and pass them on. Not pay kids to make a life in the crowded, crime-ridden cities and sprawling suburbs.

So why don't we?

### Your political connection

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★ **U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774; fax (202) 224-3514

★ **U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521

★ **U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 2443 Rayburn HOB, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715; fax (202) 225-5124

★ **State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol Building, Room 262-E, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7399

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### Anxiety may be inherited; help available

Are you from an anxious family? Mental health issues usually bring up the question as to whether a person's behavior is due to "nature" (the genetics of what is inherited from parents) or "nurture" (the learning environment in which a person was raised). The answer to this question is important because it has implications regarding the most likely course of the illness and the most effective treatment options.

In regard to anxiety, the National Institute of Health recently reported that people inherit the ability to produce certain amounts of an anxiety reducing molecule called "neuropeptide Y."

This indicates the presence of a genetic factor in regards to a person's level of anxiety. Scientists led by David Goldman, MD, at the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism identified gene variants that affect the release

#### Plain Sense Ken Loos

of neuropeptide Y, a molecule that is induced by stress and subsequently reduces anxiety.

This discovery could help to explain why some people can withstand stress better than others, based on their inherited level of the ability to produce neuropeptide Y, which also helps to regulate appetite and weight responses, both of which are influenced by how a person reacts to stress, and how they behave when feeling anxious.

In two different brain imaging experiments, low levels of neuropeptide Y were

associated with heightened emotional responses to threatening images and a diminished ability to tolerate moderate levels of muscular pain. According to Dr. Goldman, this latter study shows the "close tie between emotionality and resilience to pain."

In other words, an anxious person is more sensitive to pain, and chronic pain may increase strong emotional responses in people who are less able to cope.

Scientific findings like these are very important because how a person responds to stress will affect not only their vulnerability to anxiety, but to other psychiatric disorders and drug or alcohol addictions. It also helps us to understand that anxiety does not happen to someone because they are weak or flawed.

They may have simply inherited a vulnerability that proper treatment can help to correct.