

### Unemployment could skyrocket in Norton

Last week Norton received a visit from two Kansas senators who were in town to tour Norton Correctional Facility. The visit was due to discussion about closing one facility in 2011 due to budget concerns for the Department of Corrections.

The facility is one of Norton County's largest employers with an estimated 267 employees. The possibility of closure leaves one to wonder what the effect on Norton would be if its largest employer closed.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate in Kansas was 6.9 percent in September while the rate in Nebraska was 4.9 percent.

Undoubtedly, the biggest effect would be on the unemployment rate. Over 250 people would be without work in Norton, leaving an increase in traffic to local food banks and an increase in visits to the health department, which offers some medical services at a cheaper rate. Neither would be able to handle an additional 200 people.

Many people would be forced to move, either because they would have to take jobs out of town or because they could no longer afford to live here. This would leave banks with unpaid mortgagees, a decrease in enrollments at schools (affecting their budgets) and a decrease in local retail sales.

The recession is already hurting many small businesses. Several have left downtown, either choosing to move to Highway 36 or out of town. Increased utility rates are also affecting business expansion efforts and even making some owners think about relocating.

The bad economy can be blamed for many of these issues, however, it is important for everyone to remember the recession will likely improve. Hopefully more small businesses won't be lost while the economy is down.

The Department of Corrections is facing a similar situation: closing a facility while waiting for state revenues to pick up. The possibility of losing more downtown businesses is bad enough without considering what the loss of Norton County's biggest employer would mean.

-Erica Bradley

### It had to happen sooner or later

We knew it had to happen sooner or later. Snow. Big, fat, fluffy flakes came down so hard and fast Sunday afternoon that visibility was limited to about 50 feet. I know because we were driving home in it.

That night I talked to my daughter, Kara, who lives in Dallas and told her we were having a blizzard (I tend to exaggerate).

She said, "Adam and I both miss the snow. But, then again, I don't miss scooping it. I get enough snow when we go skiing."

It's the seasons I would miss. Yes, sometimes it's a pain. But, that's why you appreciate spring so much after winter and fall so much after summer.

On the news this morning were two mothers whose sons had been disciplined, at school, for talking out of turn. The boys' punishment?

### Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



The teacher had duct taped their mouths shut.

I'm not as worried about the teacher's bad judgment as I am about the mother's reaction. If a survey of elementary school teachers were taken.

I would venture to guess that most have had thoughts of retribution at one time or another.

Perhaps, if parents were more supportive of a teacher's authority, the need for punishments, appropriate or not, would be eliminated.

It wasn't that many years ago that the

chain of command was: God, parent, teacher.

A parent would never even think of questioning a teacher. And, the child knew his parents would back up the teacher: no matter what.

These days of litigation and "my child would never..." have put an end to that era.

Jim said he was sent to the principal's office several times for running his mouth. My oldest daughter, Halley, still holds the school record for getting her name on the blackboard more times than anyone else for talking out of turn.

But, did Jim's folks go to the school and demand an apology for "their little darling" or did I threaten to sue the school district for damaging my daughter's self-esteem? No. We said, "There are rules and you have to abide by them."

One of life's little lessons.

### Never turn your back

### Open Doors

Dana Paxton



the house or back yard so I know they must be in the garage playing with the kittens.

I go to the door and find it locked, I knock and hear a faint voice "Just a minute." I pound on the door "Let me in NOW!" I am then let in to a disaster of a mess. The night before I had filled my deep freezer with meat and to make room I set out a half full gallon of chocolate and a half full gallon of vanilla ice cream both badly freezer burnt. The two sweet little darlins' thought that dipping toilet paper, from our camping kit, into the melted ice cream would be fun. But even funner would be to throw the chocolate ice cream soaked toilet paper on the

ceiling and everywhere else. There on the floor was the dumped vanilla and the chocolate was all over the floor, my car, and old fridge, my deep freeze, all over the ceiling, tools, the box the kittens were in and all over the kittens bedding.

I wanted to strangle them and after a slight meltdown my weekend of leisure turned into a day of cleaning the garage. I will give them this.

They knew what they did was wrong and both worked very hard to help clean, but neither were much help when it came to the ceiling.

I was so furious, but it has since then turned into a great funny story. Thank God it was only ice cream, no one got hurt and the garage floor and ceiling never looked better. I should have disposed of the ice cream the night before and it never would have happened. As a parent I do know to never turn your back. I guess I just had a blonde moment. It goes to show that in the moment things may seem disastrous, but with time it all gets better.

### Serious stewardship

### Insight

John Schlageck

ranchers must manage their operations on a timely basis and use all the technology available to improve quality and productivity. If they don't, they will not be able to stay in business for long.

Today's farmer has cut chemical usage by approximately 40 percent in many cases during the last couple of decades. Many no longer apply chemicals before planting.

Instead, as the crop matures, farmers gauge potential weed pressure and apply herbicides only if needed.

Throughout the growing season, farmers do their best to provide nutritious healthy food. From planting through harvest, they battle weather, weeds, insects and disease.

Efficiency is their best defense against change including unstable world markets, political barriers and fringe groups who may attack their farming methods, yet know little about this vital profession.

Mike and Patty Hipp operate a dryland farming and cow-calf business in Barton County. This family-based operation has emphasized conservation practices for three generations.

100-percent, no-till farming practices are employed with crop rotation. The Hipps use wheat, milo, soybeans, alfalfa, sunflowers, corn and feed in their rotation and have recently begun to use cover crops to minimize soil loss, add nutrients

and increase soil structure. The cow-calf operation employs rotational grazing to ensure sufficient annual grass recovery and good calving environment.

Conservation range management techniques like tree and brush treatment and broadleaf weed control are also used to ensure pasture health. Feeding areas are located away from creeks and ponds to prevent drainage of wastes into these areas. The Hipps were honored as the Natural Resources award winners at the recent Kansas Farm Bureau annual meeting.

Yes, farmers and ranchers like the Hipps and their counterparts across Kansas must live in the environment they create.

They can and will do more to improve their environment. They can continue to rely less on herbicides, insecticides and fertilizers.

Agricultural producers can also conserve more water, plug abandoned wells, monitor grassland grazing and continue to implement environmentally sound techniques that will ensure preservation of the land.

In the meantime, farmers and ranchers will continue to take their stewardship seriously. They've devoted their lives to safeguarding their farms and families, while providing us with the safest food in the world.

John Schlageck is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. Born and raised on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas, his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.



To...all the Eisenhower Elementary students who wrote letters to the Veterans. They were thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated. (Called in).

In case you have forgotten, the addresses for this column are:

- ebradley@nwkansas.com
- nortontelegram@nwkansas.com
- 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton 67654
- 877-3361 or 877-6908
- (fax) 877-3732
- drop by the office, 215 S. Kansas Ave.

There is no charge to render a thumbs up; names of those providing the information are not used, only the method of transmission

• Most reasons for thumbs up include recognition to someone for an act of kindness, a group for something special they have undertaken, Grandma's or Grandpa's birthday, wedding anniversaries, happy birthdays in general. And you can probably think of some other reasons not listed here.

### Your political connection

★ **Governor Mark Parkinson**, 300 SW 10th Ave., Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-3232

★ **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

★ **State Rep. John Faber**, 181 W. Capitol Building, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7500

OpinionLine: (785) 877-6908

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Office hours:  
8 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.  
Phone: (785) 877-3361  
Fax: (785) 877-3732  
E-mail:  
nortontelegram@nwkansas.com

### STAFF

- Dana Paxton.....general manager  
advertising director
- Dick Boyd.....Blue Jay sports
- Erica Bradley.....managing editor
- Christie Anderson.....society editor
- Sherry Hickman.....bookkeeping/circulation
- Vicki Henderson.....computer production

Some people have the mistaken idea that farmers and ranchers are harming our environment. You hear it everywhere: at the coffee shop, church, public forums, even in the grocery store where people buy the food farmers and ranchers produce for us to eat.

Children arrive home from school and tell parents about harmful practices farmers are using on the land. It's easy to understand why folks think the way they do about today's agriculture.

Few businesses are as open to public scrutiny as a farm or ranch in the United States today. While farming and ranching practices occur in the open where anyone can see, the only picture many have of agriculture is what they read in newspapers or see on television. Even fewer people have set foot on a modern farm.

The fondest wish of most farmers and ranchers is to pass their land on to their children. They work years to leave a legacy of good land stewardship. Most farmers learned about conservation and respect for the land from their parents.

Today's farmers and ranchers are doing their part to protect and improve the environment. They use such agricultural practices as early planting, pest control, good soil fertility, conservation tillage and many other innovations that help grow more food while protecting the environment.

Farmers adjust practices to meet individual cropping conditions. Such practices can vary from farm to farm - even from field to field.

As in any other business, farmers and

Letters to the Editor:  
e-mail ebradley@nwkansas.com  
or write 215 S. Kansas Ave.  
Norton, Kan. 67654

