

# Opinion

## Your turn

### Stem cell: What’s all this fuss about?

**Cathy Gordon**  
**Director of the Max Pickerill Lecture Series**  
At 7 p.m. Tuesday, May 2 at Colby Community College the final speaker of the 2005-06 Max Pickerill Lecture Series will address the topic of ethics and stem cell research.  
All of the speakers in the lecture series this year have been outstanding and Dr. Jason Robert will be no exception. When I asked Dr. Robert for a title and brief description of his lecture he sent me the following, “Cloning and the Stem Cell Circus” Stem cell research is a big deal in this country, and around the world.  
We all heard about stem cell research during the presidential debates. John Kerry tried to make it seem that Democrats understand and support science, and he used stem cell research as an example. George Bush tried to make it seem that Republicans believe that anybody who wants to do stem cell research is immoral.  
Meanwhile, Californians voted for an initiative to pump large amounts of money into this particular area of scientific research, while other states have banned research and development of any technological applications that might result.  
What’s all this fuss about?  
I will discuss the science behind the debates about stem cell research and cloning, outline key ethical questions, and then explore the politics of what happens when an area of science raises tough social questions. If his description is this good I can’t wait to hear the lecture! I hope you will have the opportunity to attend this event. If you have any questions please call me at 462-3984 ext 310.

**About those letters . . .**  
The *Free Press* encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, if at all possible, and should include a telephone number and an address. Most importantly, all letters must include a signature. Unsigned letters cannot be published. We reserve the right to edit for clarity and length, and, likewise, reserve the right to reject letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive or libelous.

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail [jvannostrand@nwkansans.com](mailto:jvannostrand@nwkansans.com) or [pdecker@nwkansans.com](mailto:pdecker@nwkansans.com).

### Where to write, call

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**U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-6521  
**U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 2443 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715 or Fax 202/225-5124  
**State Rep. Jim Morrison**, State Capitol Building, 303 SW 10th St. Rm. 171-W, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7676 e mail: [jmorriso@ink.org](mailto:jmorriso@ink.org) web: [www.ink.org/public/legislators/jmorriso](http://www.ink.org/public/legislators/jmorriso)  
**State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol, 300 SW 10th St., Rm. 128-S., Topeka, Kan. 66612, 785/296-7399 [ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us](mailto:ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us)

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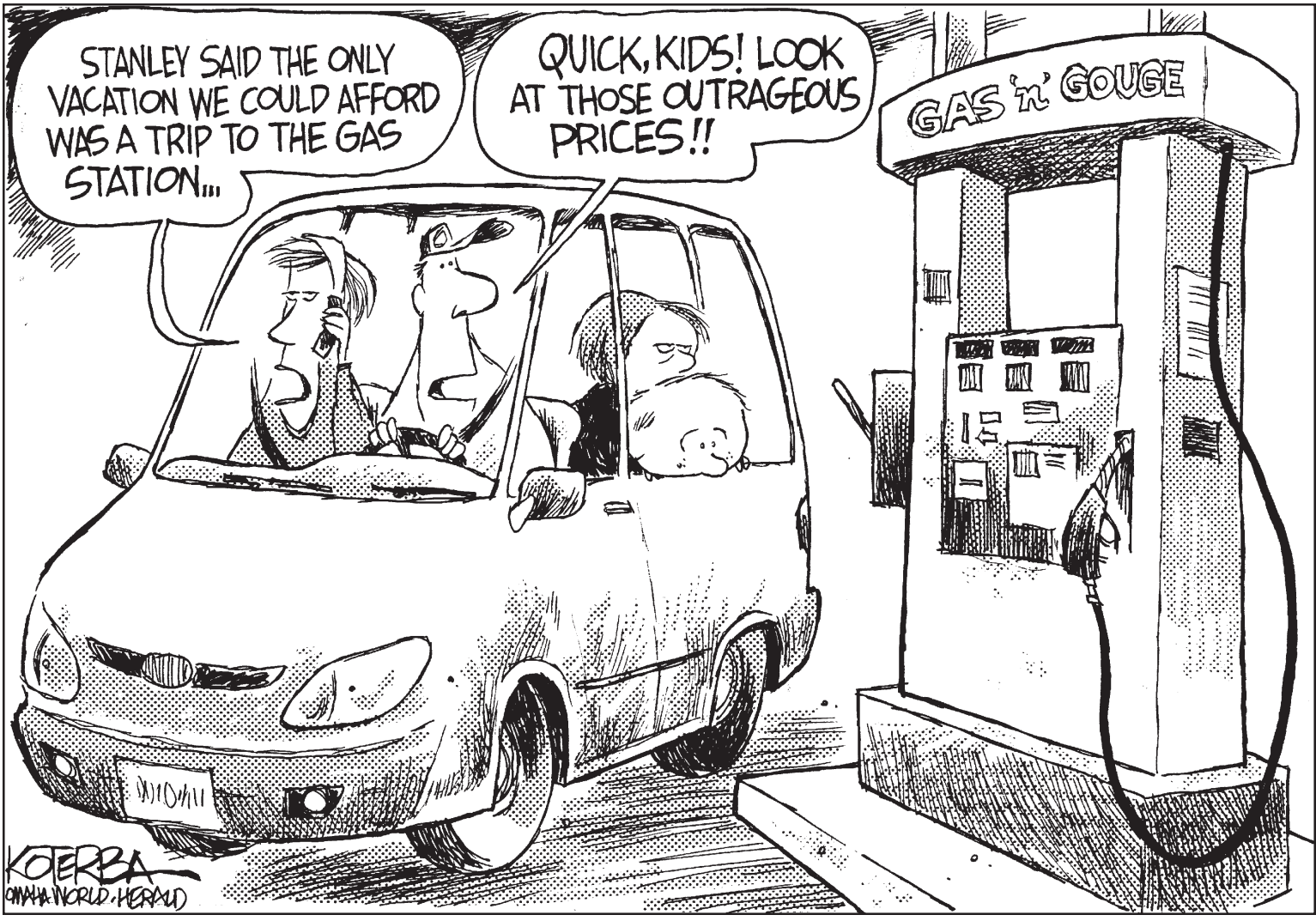
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**Mallard Fillmore**

• Bruce Tinsley



## Plenty of food for thought

I woke up feeling like I’m living inside a dream which has me standing in the middle of a tornado. It seems like life is whirling past me at break neck speed.  
It feels like if I’d shut my eyes I’d seen things like gas pump numbers going so fast the attendants couldn’t get them posted before they’d need to change.  
Hey wait, that’s not a dream, that’s reality.  
A couple months ago my brother moved from just outside Tampa, Fla., to Houston for a new job, leaving his wife behind to sell their home. I talked to my sister-in-law Tuesday and gas was over \$3 a gallon.  
I’m an avid supporter of the United States Constitution and our form of government, but what the heck is going on with our nation?  
Gas prices are out of control, we are at war with no signs of it letting up and we have some of the smartest people leading our nation yet it seems we are going down the tubes.  
I’m a little bit miffed at the fact we live in a nation where many folks are one paycheck away from bankruptcy and we can’t even constrain fuel costs.  
Aren’t we supposed to be one of the most industrialized nations in the world?  
Instead, it looks like we are one step away from being a third-world country.  
Bringing it closer to home, look at the Kansas Supreme Court.  
Chief Justice Kay McFarland is asking for an investigation as to whether Justice Lawton Nuss’ conversation over dinner with two senators amounts to judicial misconduct.  
Did talk during a March 1 meal at a Topeka restaurant between Nuss and Senate President Steve Morris, R-Hugoton, and Sen. Pete



**Jan Katz Ackerman**  
• From Where I stand

Brungardt, R-Salina, cross the line?  
The three men are alleged to have talked about a case before the Supreme Court Monday et al v. State of Kansas, et al, No. 92,032 in which school finance is at issue. It’s the case involving the lawsuit filed by parents and administrators in Dodge City and Salina against the state.  
McFarland’s asking the Commission on Judicial Qualifications, a 14-member panel which investigates such allegations, to find out if Nuss’ conduct was wrong.  
Nuss removed himself from further proceedings in the case a week ago and now we wait.  
As if Kansas doesn’t have a black enough eye about school issues, for instance the controversy over intelligent design and evolution, now we have a Supreme Court Justice who should have known better than to put himself in the hot seat during a Mexican dinner.  
I’m not saying a judge shouldn’t be allowed to go out to dinner with friends, as Nuss is reportedly calling himself of Brungardt, but there’s got to be some common sense used while in office. If a judge has a friend who is a lawmaker it would seem to me he or she wouldn’t create a situation where actions are questioned.  
I’m not advocating our state and local officials sneak around to socialize, but come on, let’s at

least expect them to hold themselves out as professional and not talk business over dinner.  
Suffice it to say both parties need to make sure their friendship (A) isn’t intentionally stained and (B) holds up to public scrutiny.  
To me the incident in Topeka is no different than what officials in any size town in Kansas, or America for that matter, face.  
I can’t tell you how many times I’ve reminded members of commission boards, councils or hospitals that if a majority of a quorum is seen socializing together that John Q. Public wonders if they are talking city, county or hospital business.  
Sure, it’s OK to sit and chat over coffee about what’s going on day-to-day, but state law, known as the Kansas Open Meetings Law, says otherwise about bringing up business.  
Any time a majority of a quorum of a board gathers and talks about business it’s technically an open meeting and one of the people needs to be taking minutes and file them with their clerk or secretary.  
I get real cranky about this topic and the boards which I work with it know it. I’m fortunate that the boards I report about understand the public’s right to know and, to my knowledge, don’t intentionally abuse it.  
While Nuss’ situation isn’t quite the same as three of five board members getting together for coffee, it’s important public officials don’t create problems for themselves. On the other hand, we must remember that our constitutions, state and federal, provide that Nuss is innocent until proven guilty.  
Gotta go now, Toto’s scratching at the door and wants out.  
*Ackerman is a reporter with the Free Press.*

## Program’s success depends on parents

I have been telling myself since Jan. 1, 2006, that I need to sit down and summarize 2005 for you, the people of Thomas County, as far as information relating to my office.  
Unfortunately, 2006 has been off to a busy start so the time has flown by.  
For those of you who care to know what my office has been doing in 2005:  
Total number of criminal cases filed: 440  
Total number of DUI (traffic) filed: 33  
Total number of juvenile cases filed: 26  
Total number of CINC cases filed: 8  
Total number of care and treatment cases filed: 22  
Total number of civil forfeiture cases filed: 14  
Total number of adult convictions (convicted in 2005 of 2005 cases filed): 292  
Total number of criminal diversions for first-time offenders: 19  
Total number of criminal cases dismissed: 92  
Data that is nearly impossible to keep track of is the overwhelming amount of traffic calls requesting diversions or trials our office receives on a daily basis. Also not included in the numbers are juveniles sent through the “informal diversion” program and any juvenile or CINC case adjudications (outcomes). If you have any questions about these statistics I would be happy to answer them.  
As we work through yet another year together, I want to address any questions you might have in future articles so that the community in general might benefit from the answers. Along those



**Andrea Wyrick**  
• Keeping In Touch

lines, one question I have been asked to share is my policy on minors and drinking.  
Recently the Regional Prevention Center presented a panel of people involved in trying to prevent underage drinking at a community forum event held here in Colby. The attendance was good, but not as many people as I would have liked to have seen, largely reflecting what my office encounters all the time—we as parents are in denial that underage drinking is anything more than “kids being kids.” However, underage drinking should be taken seriously.  
When a report comes from law enforcement that a kid is caught drinking (for the first time), my first course of action is to send a letter to both the parent and child requesting that they follow the “first-time offender” program which includes attending Prime for Life (an alcohol/drug education class). After successful completion of this program the report is filed away and nothing is done with it further.  
My goal in offering this program is to keep kids from having a record and also educate them

on hopefully making wiser choices in the future. The success rate of kids who complete the program is remarkable—I rarely have “repeat offenders.”  
But the success of this program highly depends on the response of the parents of the offender. If you are a parent, please realize that I am not trying to “pick” on your child or single him/her out for ridicule. I am doing the only thing I can do to prevent future tragedies in our community. The most beneficial prevention, though, must come from you, the parents, and how you handle your child’s choices at home. Hopefully, together, we can make an impact on our young people’s decisions.  
If you are a parent and would like the information that was presented at the forum, please don’t hesitate to contact Diane Stithem at the Regional Prevention Center. For repeat offenders, they will be charged in juvenile court, served with criminal summons and made to appear before a judge and continue through the criminal justice process. That is how I handle underage drinking reports.  
Please send your future questions to 140 W. 4th St., Colby, KS, 67701, or call my office at 785-460-4580.  
I will try to address the issue in my next article, or if you would prefer to have it remain private, I can respond directly to you. As always, my family, staff, and I thank you for the opportunity to serve.

**Mallard Fillmore**

• Bruce Tinsley

**Mallard's more-relevant School Bumper sticker #30**

**My Daughter WAS SUSPENDED for wearing a Patriotic Tee-SHIRT to School...**

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TABLEY 4-27