

# Opinion

## Free Press Viewpoint

### Windy days don't have to be all bad

The strong winds that blew April 15 in Colby were strong enough to damage a convenience store's awning over diesel pumps. That same energy must be used for something productive in Colby. And it can.

Earlier that week, people behind a proposal to bring wind generators to Colby were in town. If approved, eight wind generators will be installed later this year about a mile south of town.

The wind will turn turbines that will create electricity that flows into houses and buildings powered by Midwest Energy. The city of Colby is interested in purchasing some of that electricity.

(Don't get your hopes up. That does not necessarily mean city electric rates will go down.)

But this project still needs support. Energy, and where it comes from, is a hot topic. The president mentioned this week the importance of alternative energy sources, like the corn-based ethanol gasoline and soybean-based biodiesel. Our area farmers who grow corn and soybeans know those fuels are yet another market, another reason to continue to farm and a way America can rely upon itself for its needs.

Wind energy will show the rest of Kansas, and the rest of the country, that Colby and northwest Kansas care about energy sources and are willing to do something about it.

Critics of wind generators claim turbines are ugly, ruin the view and take the lives of birds, let alone don't create the amount of electricity as planned. Don't believe them. Cell phone towers have been picked on for aesthetic value. Vehicles kill animals and you don't see people wanting to ban driving because of that.

Studies show the cost of wind-based electricity is competitive with coal-fired generators. Besides, oil and coal can't last forever. But the wind in western Kansas will.

*John Van Nostrand, publisher*

#### 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. These are used for verification of the writer only. If, however, you want your address and telephone number to appear with your letter, please ask us to do so when you submit your letter, or include a note with your letter. 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. You can expect your letter to appear in print within 24-48 hours of receipt. Letters to the *Free Press* allow readers to become engaged in public debate on topics they deem important. Please consider sharing your thoughts with the family of Colby Free Press readers. Thank you.

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### COLBY FREE PRESS

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Colby, Kan. 67701

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout Excellence, Column Writing, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography.

Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

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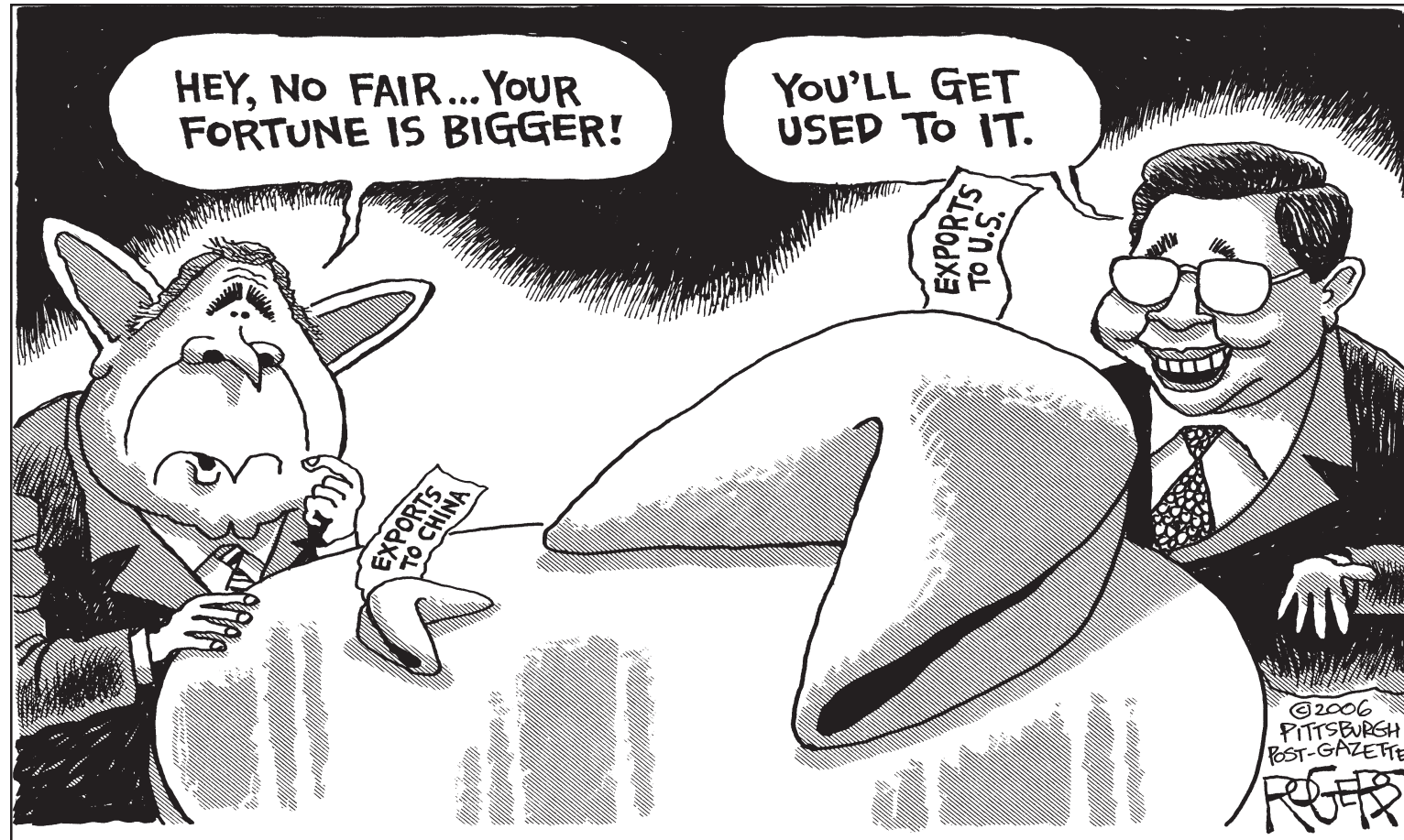
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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the day observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Haynes Publishing Co., 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE is paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to The Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701. THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news credited to it or not otherwise herein. Member Kansas Press Association, Inland Press Association and National Newspaper Association. **SUBSCRIPTION RATES:** In Colby by carrier: 4 months \$38, 8 months \$53, 12 months \$70. By mail with in Colby and the nine-county region of Thomas, Sheridan, Decatur, Rawlins, Cheyenne, Sherman, Wallace, Logan and Gove counties: 4 months \$50, 8 months \$62, 12 months \$78. Other Kansas counties: 4 months \$57, 8 months \$67, 12 months \$81. All other states, \$81, 12 months.

### Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company



## It's always Earth Day



**Patty Decker**

### Deep Thoughts

Even though Earth Day has come and gone, I believe it's still worth taking a moment to think about what recycling means to all of us.

Not surprisingly, the first Earth Day was launched on April 22, 1970 for the purpose of raising awareness about the environment. As a child, I can remember how many motorists thought nothing about throwing a bag of litter out the car window.

Today, and through awareness, most travelers wouldn't think about tossing garbage onto highways or in their communities.

While most Americans have embraced the idea of "no littering," there's still a lot to be said for convincing everyone to recycle.

In Colby and Thomas County, a lot of people are doing their part every day to help "save the Earth," but still there's some who are still skeptics when it comes to recycling. Maybe skeptics wouldn't be the right word — it's possible some of us are just lazy.

Regardless of what the reason, maybe a few facts might help change your mind or offer food for thought.

We use enough cardboard each year to make a bale as big as a football field.

As for garbage, some recent statistics provided by local recyclers included that Americans produce an average of over a half a ton of garbage per person every year or about 3.5 pounds a day.

In a lifetime, the average American will throw away 600 times his or her adult weight in garbage and if added up, this means that a 150-pound adult will leave a legacy of 90,000 pounds or 46 tons of trash for their children.

#### Why recycle?

For one thing, it saves money — when there's less garbage, we all pay less to dump it. It also saves natural resources and energy and with our country importing 50 percent of its oil, saving energy by recycling means we depend less on foreign supplies.

#### How can we save energy?

When it comes to glass, most bottles and jars contain at least 25 percent recycled glass because glass never wears out and can be recycled forever.

We save over a ton of resources for every ton of glass recycled and a ton of glass produced from

raw materials creates 384 pounds of mining waste. Using 50 percent recycled glass cuts it by about 75 percent. In addition, we get 27.8 pounds of air pollution for every ton of new glass produced. Recycling the glass reduces that pollution by 14 to 20 percent and saves 25 to 32 percent of energy used to make it.

However, don't include windows, drinking glasses, mirrors, or other such types of glass when recycling. The reason is that these items don't melt at the same temperature as bottles and jars do and they can ruin an entire batch of glass if they slip through at recycling factories.

While most of us hear a lot about recycling newspaper, it actually isn't the most valuable paper to recycle. Anyone want to guess? If you said it's office paper, you are correct.

As Americans, we throw out about 85 percent of the office paper we use, but for recycling centers that paper is prized for its strong fibers that hold up well the second time around.

White paper is worth twice as much, or even more, than colored paper and because it's already bleached, there's not much ink on it that has to be removed (compared to newspapers). Again, as with glass, there are some items that are not good for recycling purposes. For instance, anything with adhesives should be avoided such as "post-it" notes and mailing address labels, along with fax paper, carbonless paper or blueprints, since these have chemical coatings.

Along with white paper being valuable to recycling centers, corrugated cardboard is a prized catch as well. Believe it or not, corrugated cardboard boxes can be recycled many times and if each household in this country were to recycle just one box per month, we'd save more than a billion boxes a year!

#### Recycling cuts down on pollution

Most cardboard boxes contain between 20 and 40 percent of recycled material and making the paper pulp used in cardboard boxes creates sulfur dioxide, which is a gas that causes acid rain. By recycling cardboard boxes, we can cut pollution in half and save nearly 25 percent of the energy used to manufacture it.

Ever wonder how much "junk mail" Americans get every year? Estimations put the amount at about four million tons every year. That's about 248 pieces a year for every man, woman and child.

While there are a lot of contaminants in mixed paper, making recycling extremely messy, it can be recycled into boxboard, commonly used for cereal-type boxes or made into roofing paper, tar paper and asphalt shingles.

The list of recyclable items goes on and on. Aluminum, plastics, steel and tin cans, magazines, brown paper bags, plastic bags, vinyl and polypropylene and Styrofoam.

#### Recycling at home

There are a lot of ways to set up a home for recycling. For example, figure out how you're going to dispose of a product and/or its packaging before you buy it.

We can also reduce waste by simply making correct buying choices.

Even though Earth Day is over, we don't need to wait until next year to get started and actually the sooner the better since it takes some things a long time to break down. For instance, tin takes 100 years, aluminum takes 500 years and glass takes a million years.

If we lined up our 3.5 pounds of garbage bumper to bumper, a string of garbage trucks hauling the nation's daily waste could reach halfway to the moon.

Earth Day may be over for this year, but recycling is never over and it's worth taking a little action to preserve our environment — even if the only start we make is to recycle one item. In Colby, the recycling center is located on East College Drive under the big blue water tower.

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*Decker is editor of the Free Press.*

## More than the cell phones distract drivers

#### From The Hutchinson News

Dial a cell phone while you're behind the wheel driving and you run a threefold chance of a collision.

Continue on down the road while you feel a bit drowsy and you increase the risk of a crash or near-crash by four to six times.

Reach for a moving object in the vehicle and you raise the potential for a smash-up by nine times.

Those exacting conclusions come from an exhaustive research project by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the

Virginia Tech Transportation Institute.

For more than a year, researchers studied the behavior of the drivers of 100 vehicles in metropolitan Washington, D.C. They tracked 241 drivers, who were involved in 82 crashes of various degrees of seriousness — 15 were reported to police — and 761 near-crashes. Air bags deployed in three instances.

The project analyzed nearly 2 million miles driven and more than 43,300 hours of data.

Researchers reviewed thousands of hours of video and data from sensor monitors linked to the drivers. Video footage showed four differ-

ent angles of the driver — the face, a view of the steering wheel and instrument panel, and front and rear views of the vehicle — and offered a look at the moments before a crash.

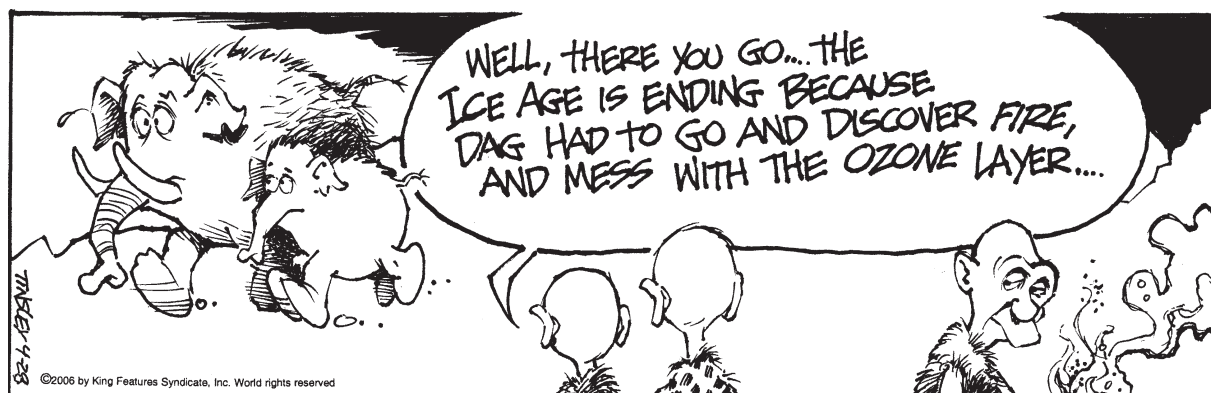
The mass of information helped pinpoint what distracts drivers from paying close attention to the road.

In all, the researchers determined that nearly eight out of 10 collisions or near-crashes involved distracted drivers.

Drivers should pay attention to the primary task at hand — driving — to arrive safely at their destination.

### Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley



### Doonesbury

• Gary Trudeau

