

# Opinion



## Free Press Viewpoint

### Got a better plan?

The one thing that is louder than the roar of snowblowers and the roar of front-end loaders and dump trucks have been the complaints of the condition of the streets after last weekend’s 19 inches of snow. It is tough to maneuver down some of the minor streets in town. During the week either a lane wide enough for one car was made by the first person who drove down the street or snow-clearing piece of equipment. It has since warmed up enough to melt and that has caused some Grand Canyon-like ruts.

If all the people who have complained about the street conditions actually show up at the next Colby City Council meeting, they need to do two things: do homework and bring respect.

Being a city council member is a thankless job. Someone has to research and approve tax rates, ordinances and fill positions in city jobs. What makes being a city council member better is when the town’s residents come to meetings with some research, statistics and a related suggestion to make improvements.

Just getting loud and angry at city council members and city employees does not fix problems.

Consider what the Colby City Council is facing. For years, council and the town have gotten spoiled by mild winters. The Thanksgiving Day weekend 2005 blizzard and the March 2006 snow were mild compared to last weekend. Listen to some people who have lived here for a long, long time.

“It has not snowed like this in 20 years .....,” some have said. There is also the expense involved. The city budgets X amount for snow removal every year. The more snow that falls, the quicker that budget is spent. The city of Colby is still doing the math for last weekend’s snow removal because they are still removing snow.

How much more are Colby residents willing to spend through taxes to have all the streets cleared of snow like the major streets are treated?

On top of that, the Colby fire department needs work because a portion of the roof caved in. Insurance should help that expense. But the city has considered building a new fire station because it is needed.

Yes, driving through some streets in town is frustrating or a hassle. Because of remote controls, fast food and drive throughs, we think we need instant results. Sometimes, life is not that way.

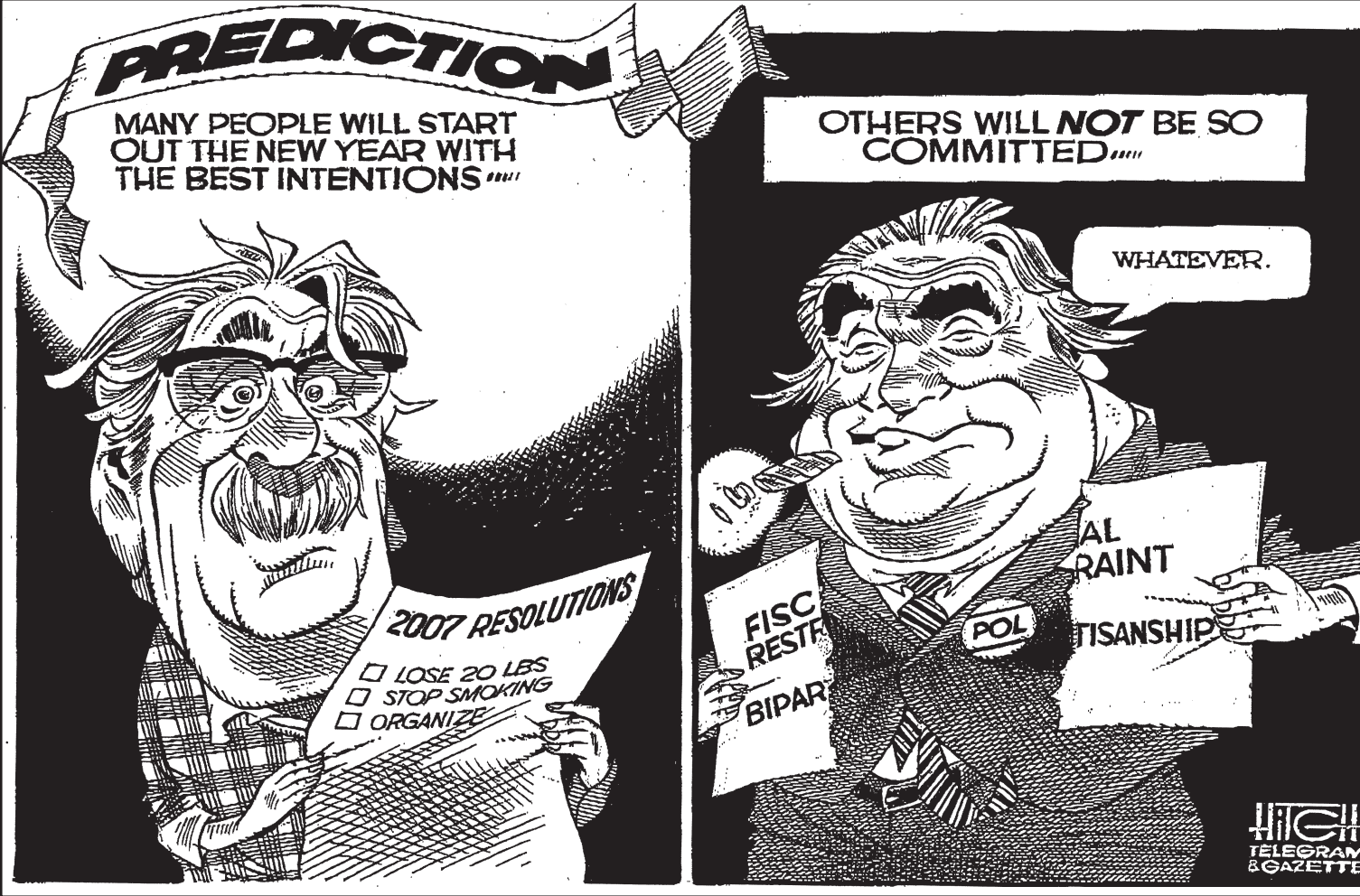
But all a fire truck or an ambulance needs to get to a house is that one lane of traffic. If that is not even there, then there is a problem.

— John Van Nostrand is publisher of the Colby Free Press

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@nwkansan.com](mailto:jvannostrand@nwkansan.com) or [pdecker@nwkansan.com](mailto:pdecker@nwkansan.com). Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.

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- U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-6521
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- State Rep. Jim Morrison**, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St. Rm. 143-N, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7676 e mail: [jmorrison@ink.org](mailto:jmorrison@ink.org) web: [www.morrisonfamily.com](http://www.morrisonfamily.com)
- 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)



## Taking action on resolutions

It seems like every year, about this time, I am offering either my New Year resolutions or suggestions from others.

This year, though, I have decided to take a slightly different tack and talk about what the “experts” are saying we should all do. Using the “action” resolution approach rather than a couch potato, non-committal approach, here’s what I found.

Hallie Crawford, a certified career coach, suggested that instead of looking at losing weight, quitting smoking or keeping fit, that maybe people should direct their energy by finding a new job. For those wanting to find that “dream” career, Crawford made the following suggestions. First and foremost, it was suggested that a person re-evaluate their life.

Surprisingly, this career coach found a survey that revealed 92 percent of us in the job market would rather find a new boss for the New Year than a new lover.

I would not have guessed that percentage would be so high.

As for tips in getting on the right track for a new career, the suggestions included being patient, getting a plan, setting the goals, and thinking creatively.

If your resolution is that “dream” job, then good luck.

For those of us not looking for a new job, but are resolving to do something different... here’s another suggestion for “action.”

According to Ron Berthel with the Associated Press, there’s lots and lots of new books either recently published or scheduled to be out in the next 90 days.

For example, in January, the following titles are planned for release.

— “The Castle in the Forest” (Random House).



### Patty Decker

#### • Deep Thoughts

In his first novel in 10 years, two-time Pulitzer Prize-winner Norman Mailer imagines the lives of three generations of the family of Adolph Hitler.

— “Skylight Confessions” (Little, Brown). Alice Hoffman’s novel charts the ups and downs in the marriage and parenthood of a couple who are “perfectly unsuited for each other.”

— “Killing Johnny Fry” (Bloomsbury). Novelist Walter Mosley introduces readers to a man who reacts to his longtime girlfriend’s infidelity by seeking revenge and immersing himself in pornography.

— “The Ravenscar Dynasty” (St. Martin’s Press). Barbara Taylor Bradford, author of “A Woman of Substance,” offers this first volume in a planned series about a powerful business family in Edwardian England.

— “Exile” (Henry Holt). Richard North Patterson’s latest legal thriller features a San Francisco attorney who becomes involved in a case in which his former lover, a Palestinian, is accused of conspiring to assassinate the Israeli prime minister.

— “Beatrix Potter: A Life in Nature” (St. Martin’s Press) by Linda Lear. A biography of the author and illustrator of children’s books and creator of Peter Rabbit.

— “Web of Evil” (Touchstone) by J.A. Jance. In this whodunit, a TV anchor who was recently

fired has a more serious problem when she becomes a suspect in her estranged husband’s murder.

— “The Birthday Party” (Putnam). Stanley N. Alpert, a former federal prosecutor, describes his ordeal of being kidnapped from a New York sidewalk in 1998.

#### February books

— “Sisters” (Delacorte) by Danielle Steel. A family tragedy confronts four diverse sisters during a Fourth of July weekend reunion.

— “High Profile” (Putnam) by Robert B. Parker. In this sixth novel in the series, Jesse Stone, chief of police in Paradise, Mass., investigates the hanging death of the notorious host of a TV talk show.

— “Past Perfect” (Scribner) by Susan Isaacs. Years after a CIA agent was inexplicably fired, she is contacted by a former colleague who seeks her help in exchange for answers about her dismissal.

— “This Mighty Scourge” (Oxford University Press). James M. McPherson, Pulitzer Prize-winner and Civil War scholar, offers a collection of essays about various aspects, issues and personalities of the conflict.

— “Adopted Son” (Bantam) by David A. Clary. This dual biography of George Washington and the Marquis de Lafayette focuses on their friendship and its effect on the American Revolution.

— “Winterwood” (Bloomsbury) by Patrick McCabe. In Ireland, the charmed life of a newspaper reporter unravels after he meets a local character while on assignment in his boyhood village.

Happy New Year and happy reading!

Decker is editor of the Free Press. Her column appears on Fridays.

## Small farms save soil, cows and farmers

By John Kinsman

Why are over 30 million people in the United States going to bed hungry each night? Why are food reserves now measured in hours and days, not in years as in the past?

When farmers grow food to feed the world’s expanding population, efficiency is often associated with economies of scale and large-scale industrial farms. But if the present industrial system of farming is so efficient and so good for our economy, why is the United States a food-deficit nation?

The Dec. 19, 2006, Wisconsin State Journal article “Fewer Farmers Grow More” by Dinesh Ramde paints a distorted picture of Wisconsin farming that leads the reader to believe that high-production industrial monoculture corn and soybean yields, along with dairy cow confinement farming, is efficient.

But simplification and standardization do not necessarily equate to efficiency.

Efficiency, by definition, is the ratio of the work done to the energy supplied to it. But in regards to the spinach in your salad or the milk on your cereal, does that definition of “efficiency” include the nutritional content of the final product or the health of the soil? When many experts at land-grant universities examine industrial agriculture, they measure it by how much a farmer can produce in a given acre without including any externalized costs such as environmental and social damage.

Higher productivity by itself has nothing to do with being more efficient. It does not make economic sense to burn out cows in less than 1 1/2 years of their milking life, which also means they

can only give birth to less than half enough calves to replace themselves. According to the University of Wisconsin Center for Dairy Profitability, the dairy farmers with the highest net income are those who graze fewer than 100 cows. Similarly, it does not make economic sense to maximize corn yields if it leads to runaway soil erosion.

The article does not mention that this kind of fossil fuel dependent farming requires high use of pesticides, herbicides, and chemical fertilizers, which consequently are polluting our soil, our water, and our air. In addition, the nitrogen fertilizer ages our soil by hundreds of years. Not surprisingly, then, the fastest growing and most profitable sector for family farmers in Wisconsin is in organic and sustainable production-NOT commodity cropping or factory farming.

Most importantly, the article in question does not address the human social costs or the environmental costs of the farming system they describe. Driving people out of agriculture is not good for the economy—just look what subsidized corn dumping has done to Mexico, forcing millions of peasants off their land and over the border into the United States.

These state-taxpayer-subsidized factory farms along with subsidized ethanol production benefit the agribusiness giants such as ADM and Cargill, which control both the corn and biofuel markets. This industrial food system is dependent on cheap labor to function, mostly from migrants.

From the late 1930s through the 1970s, Wisconsin, like the rest of the United States, had

many small farms operated by families who never worked on Sunday or more than an average of 8 to 10 hours per day. They lived a lifestyle of dignity with quality time for their families. A high percentage of their children graduated from college and the farm’s income made it affordable.

Today, many farmers are working 18 to 20 hours a day, often with both husband and wife working an additional job. They are babysitting their small children on the tractor and in the barn. Overwork, with resulting higher rates of suicide and violence, lowers the expectations of the young people. It’s time to respect our farmers and bring back the dignity in food and farming.

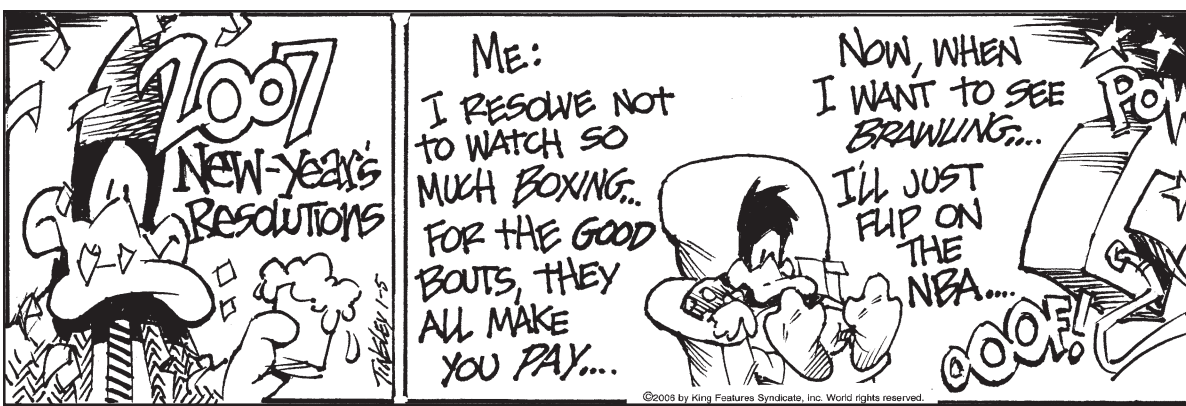
Smaller family farmers are efficient. We rotate our crops: Breaking disease, pest, and weed cycles eliminates the need for costly antibiotics and pesticides. We rotationally graze our cattle. Most of our fertilizer comes from wise use of animal manure. Pollution and erosion are minimal while we are enhancing and rebuilding our natural resources for future generations. On top of all of that, most of us produce more per given unit or acre than the industrial farming systems.

After 70 years of farming, take it from a farmer who knows.

— — —  
John Kinsman, Wisconsin organic dairy farmer, is the secretary of the National Family Farm Coalition and the president of Family Farm Defenders. The National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC) was founded in 1986 to serve as a national link for grassroots organizations working on family farm issues. [www.nffc.net](http://www.nffc.net). Distributed by MinutemanMedia.org

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