

# Opinion

## Free Press Viewpoint



### It takes a special person to do this

Don't like the condition of Colby streets after the snow? Afraid the proposed wellness center for Colby Community College is going to ruin the indoor pool used by the public? Want to help find a football coach for Colby High that will stay longer than one possession, er, season? Now's your chance.

Those interested in running for one of the seats on the Colby City Council, Colby Community College Board of Trustees or the Colby school board can pick up a petition to get your name on this year's ballot.

The ballot for Colby City Council should be as long as Santa Claus' list — based on the growing number of complaints about the condition of the streets. But those wanting to run just to make snow clearing better beware. There is much more to running a city than snow clearing — the bajillion state and federal policies to follow, creating a budget and so on.

The college's proposed wellness center may be the next big story in town. The initial plan had a significant part of the indoor pool eliminated, but that has not been approved. The public apparently likes a place to go swimming for recreation or exercise during the winter. The college wants to help the public's health by creating a new wellness facility. Maybe you can find the balance between the two goals.

Like city council, the Colby school board also has enough policies and rules to follow to take up an entire ream of paper. The school board is looking for a new football coach, building a new football stadium and, more importantly, offering a quality education and trying to stay on top of how to meet No Child Left Behind standards. All of that is in a part of Kansas where enrollments decline every year.

Colby and Thomas County entities have its issues and concerns, all it needs are people willing to take the time to do what is best for the organization and for the people it serves.

Serving the public is a thankless job but those people can do so much good for so many people at the same time.

Being an elected official, or a member of a board exposed to the public, is not for everyone.

You need a thick skin to fend off the people who just love to complain or look for what's wrong. You need a family and spouse that is willing for you to sacrifice some family time and a part of the marriage. You also need a supportive spouse willing to hear the frustrations coming home after a meeting.

You need an employer who understands special meetings may get in the way of the job (A big thanks to those employers who give their employees time to be board members.) You need time to do homework about the issues the board is researching.

You also need to leave your ego at home and only bring teamwork and cooperation to the meetings, no matter how great you think you are.

But first of all, you need to be on the ballot.

— 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@nwkansas.com or pdecker@nwkansas.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the Free Press.

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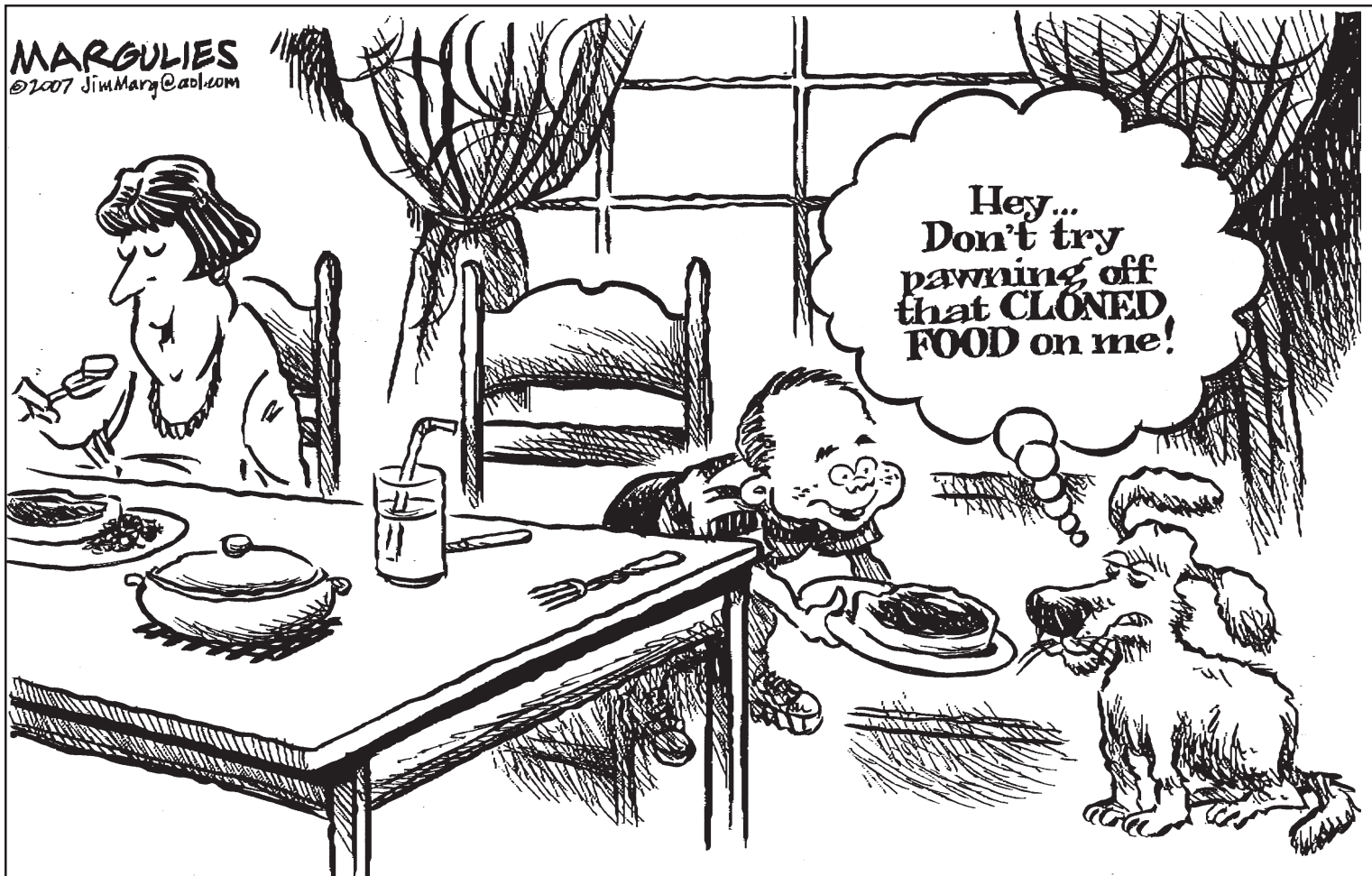
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## Looking back at 2006

Even though it's been almost two weeks since the holidays and snowstorm, I am only now getting back into the groove.

Each year I enjoy reviewing the top stories of the year in the Colby area, across the state and nationally, but this year the format is a bit different. Initially, we had planned to publish the year in review at the start of 2007 on the front page, but when we were clobbered with the snowstorm, we changed gears.

The following is a condensed version of 2006 highlights locally, statewide and nationally using references from the Associated Press, Fox News, MSNBC and other media outlets. After reviewing the year in the newsroom, we came up with the following local highlights.

Starting with the Colby-Thomas County area, headlines that stood out, but in no particular order, included the ongoing hearings, court proceedings and lawsuits involving Dr. Victor H. Hildyard, M.D., a family practitioner in Colby, and the Kansas State Board of Healing Arts.

Since April 2002, the doctor has been embroiled in one battle after another with the Colby hospital and state board in efforts to clear his name. The most recent news happened in December when Judge Jack Burr upheld the state board's decision in revoking the doctor's medical license and toward the latter part of December when the judge made no ruling on a motion by Citizens Medical Center to dismiss Hildyard's lawsuit alleging breach of contract when the facility suspended his privileges in April 2003.

Other local headlines in 2006 included the August tornado that damaged businesses in Southwind Plaza and Comfort Inn; the Colby High School football team winning its first game and breaking a 20-game losing streak; the Colby College women's basketball team going to nationals; welcoming Dr. Lynn Kreider as the new Colby College president; and Mitch Beims, Colby High School wrestling coach, being turned down by the school board for the assistant principal/athletic director's position, replacing Jeff Quenzer.

Other notable headlines included the infestation of prairie dogs in Logan County; the Sheridan County election debacle and request for



**Patty Decker**

• Deep Thoughts

recount; the death of Sheridan County Sheriff Jim Johnson in October; and local business owners Dave Jennings, who died in December and Jay Donelan in August. Pete Morrison, the father of Republican Rep. Jim Morrison, also died in 2006.

### Statewide headlines

Attorney General Phill Kline not only grabbed state headlines in 2006, but he also made national news. Leading up to the November election and his loss to Johnson County District Attorney Paul Morrison, Kline drew the country's attention with George Tiller, a Wichita physician and abortion provider.

Elsewhere in the state, 2006 saw the Legislature approving a plan to phase in a \$541 million increase in aid to public schools over three years.

Another big story happened in June when the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the state's 1994 death penalty law, reversing a Kansas Supreme Court ruling that could have blocked the execution of some of the state's most notorious convicted murderers, including serial killer John E. Robinson Sr.

Weather-related stories in 2006 were the drought which continued to permeate agricultural stories. Farmers struggled to balance their books in the wake of a dismal wheat harvest in summer, followed by poor harvests of corn, sorghum and soybeans in the fall.

Wheat production in the state, known as the nation's breadbasket, according to Associated Press sources, was down 23 percent from last year, with just 291.2 million bushels cut this year. Harvest of sorghum, another major Kansas crop, was down 32 percent. Related to the drought, cattle producers scrambled to find green pasture for their cattle and spent months hauling water to livestock as ponds and streams

dried up.

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius made headlines when she vetoed a bill allowing qualified Kansans to carry concealed guns, but legislators overrode that action. Kansas became the 46th state to allow hidden firearms, but the first permits weren't issued until Jan. 1.

### National headlines in 2006

Fox News rated the Sago Mine disaster in West Virginia as the top story nationally. The disaster claimed 12 of the 13 miners after a methane gas explosion trapped them Jan. 2. The sole survivor was Randal McCloy, Jr.

Taking the second spot was the two Duke University lacrosse players, Collin Finnerty and Reade Seligmann, arrested on charges of raping a stripper hired at an off-campus party.

Third on the list was John Mark Karr, arrested in Thailand and called a suspect in the JonBenet Ramsey death. Others, rounding out the top 10 included Charles Roberts, who killed three girls and critically wounded eight at an Amish schoolhouse in Lancaster County, Pa.; the sentence of Zacarias Moussaoui to life in prison for his role in the Sept. 11 attacks; a plane carrying pitcher Cory Lidle and an instructor that crashed into a high-rise apartment in New York City, killing both men; the capture of fugitive leader, Warren Jeffs, a polygamist in southern California; Andrea Yates found not guilty by reason of insanity in the drowning deaths of her children in a bathtub and the commuter crash killing all but one of 50 people aboard in Kentucky.

### Best and worst movies of 2006

For moviegoers, many sources rated "Date Movie", "Basic Instinct 2", "When a Stranger Calls", "Saw III", "Let's Go to Prison" and "Black Christmas" as the worst movies in 2006. Among the best movies, thumbs up went to "Casino Royale", "The Queen", "Cars", "The Departed" and "Borat". Suffice to say, 2006 had a lot of breaking news, and many things were left out, but only due to space limitations. Here's wishing everyone good health and prosperity in 2007.

Decker is editor of the Free Press.

## My New Year's resolutions

The new year and the start of the 110th Congress were marked by the passing and national mourning of our 38th President, Gerald Ford.

As the new Congress assembles in our nation's capital, it would do well to remember the example set by President Ford, who helped restore our faith in the American system of government following Watergate. Ford once said, "We might question the other side's ideas, but never its motives or its patriotism."

Kansans have grown weary of the partisan bickering and gridlock that has taken over Washington, D.C., in past years. They are ready for a change - for Republicans and Democrats to restore civility, respect differences and work together to find answers to today's problems. Though time will tell whether attitudes will change this year, my commitment remains unchanged from day one - to see that good things happen for Kansans.

All of us are concerned with the situation in Iraq. With more than 125,000 U.S. service members deployed at the start of 2007, this will be an important year as Congress seeks to advise the president on U.S. policy in Iraq. My goal is to find a strategy for success so our troops can come home. The sacrifices of our military men and

**Jerry Moran**

• Kansas Rep. First District

women must never be forgotten, and I will continue to work to ensure veterans receive the benefits they have earned.

2007 will be a significant year for Kansas agriculture as Congress writes the new farm bill, examines our nation's energy policy and considers disaster assistance for farmers and ranchers. After meeting with agriculture producers across the nation last year, I have learned that most farmers and ranchers want the same thing - to provide their sons and daughters an opportunity to return to the family farm. I will fight for a farm bill that encourages rural development and improves the economic circumstances of Kansas producers.

As a nation, we must reduce our reliance on foreign oil.

By increasing use of fuels made by Kansas

crops, we enhance the vitality of farmers and rural communities, in addition to helping our environment and making the country more energy independent.

Disaster assistance for weather-related losses also remains a priority as agriculture producers continue to feel the effects of years of drought.

Rather than more bills and new laws, we need to fix those already on the books. I will work to improve No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit. Our Kansas schools are struggling to meet the flawed standards and unrealistic demands of NCLB and I will reintroduce legislation that offers practical changes for the program.

I will continue to advocate for reforms to the prescription drug benefit, including allowing the government to negotiate with drug companies for lower-priced medications and protecting community pharmacists who have been adversely affected. Other aspects of health care deserve attention and we must find ways to reduce the costs of health care for our families and small businesses.

I look forward to working on your behalf in Congress to see that good things happen for Kansans.

**Mallard Fillmore**

• Bruce Tinsley

