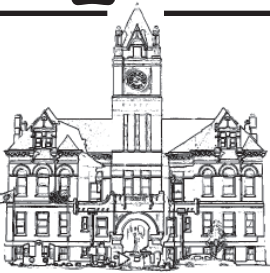


Opinion



Free Press Viewpoint

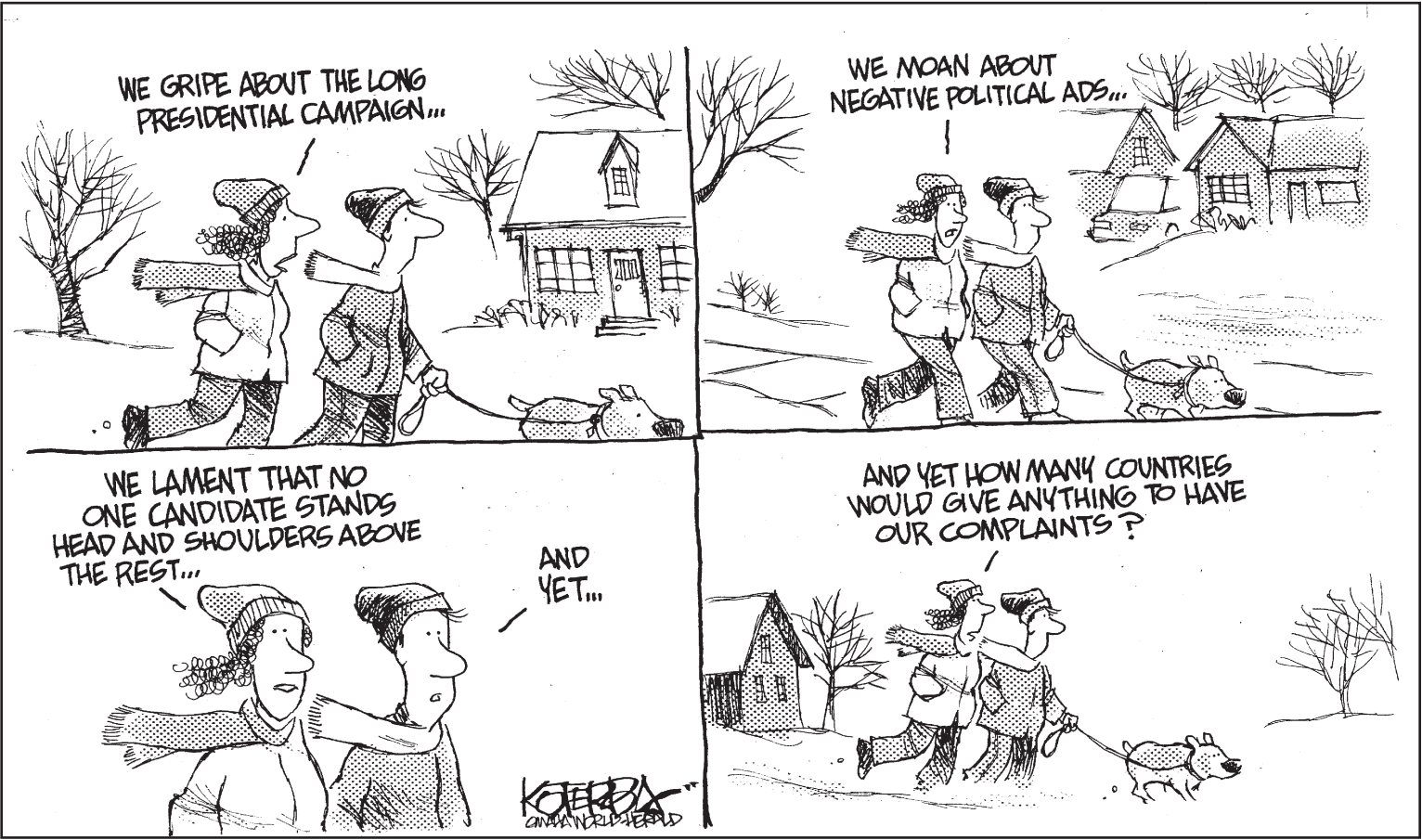
Customers’ rights

**By Steve Haynes**  
They say honesty is the best policy, but ethanol proponents apparently haven’t gotten the message. Backers of the alcohol-based fuel have pushed state after state — Kansas among them, unfortunately — to eliminate laws requiring gasoline pumps to be posted for ethanol content. While some vendors have kept the labels, they’ve quietly disappeared from others. The underlying logic of this scheme seems to be that it’s OK to fool all of the people some of the time. Let us say right here, we see nothing wrong with ethanol-blended fuel. We might as well be burning the stuff as drinking it. Increased use of alcohol-blend fuels promotes farm income, reduces dependence on foreign oil and reduces costs. But alcohol fuel isn’t for everyone. Some people with older cars don’t want to endanger their engines, and the need to know what’s in the gas they buy. Others either don’t want to use the fuel, don’t think it’s right or don’t want to pay the extra price — and there is one.

As consumers, we think they all have a right to know what they are buying. Farm groups backing the move away from pump labels say they hope to promote more ethanol use. It’s their right to promote farm products, but it ought to be done above board. Let the Farm Bureau buy ads to push the acknowledged values of ethanol fuel. They could write letters to the editor, put up billboard, buy time on television. Tricking consumers isn’t really a nice thing to do, but that’s what this change amounts to. News reports suggest that many motorists don’t know they’re buying adulterated fuel. Many think the law still requires a label on the pump. Some states require ethanol in all gasoline sold. Colorado is one, but there, all pumps are clearly labeled. Nothing wrong with that. The alcohol is used to oxygenate the fuel to reduce pollution. Missouri just began requiring more alcohol in fuel, a move strongly backed by farm groups. One farmer-owned oil firm pushes the claim that alcohol-based fuel actually performs better than regular gasoline and that a 10 percent blend — the most common — should have “little effect” on gas mileage.

And that’s true, as far as it goes. Ethanol blends are good fuel, with high octane ratings. Our experience with the newspaper’s fleet is that a car will run about 5 percent farther on regular gasoline, though, so the cost difference can be as much as 10 cents per gallon. For years, ethanol fuel sold at the same price as regular, then a couple of cents cheaper. Now, many stations sell it for six cents a gallon less, and that at least approaches a fair deal. Ethanol is fine for those who want to buy it. Many people will buy it just because it burns cleaner, many others because it is cheaper. Some people object that it doesn’t really save energy and may not want to buy it. But all consumers deserve to know exactly what they are buying. A policy aimed to help farmers, but based on dishonesty and trickery, cannot help but fail. And the farm groups ought to know better. Shame on them.

— Steve Haynes, president of Nor’West Newspapers including the Colby Free Press



Let’s get ready to caucus!

How could this have happened? Nary a few days ago it seemed as if she was doomed. Several pundits and nearly every poll showed her finishing with a double-digit loss; a distant third in New Hampshire, and yet there she was Tuesday night, smiling for the cameras while her crowd of flunkies screamed like raving lunatics all around her, frothing at the mouth and speaking in tongues, dressed in sackcloth and cutting long jagged scars into their chests, proclaiming uncontested allegiance to their modern day Dem-messiah, who had risen from a certain death on Tuesday night to proclaim herself victorious in the New Hampshire primaries, jamming a broomstick into the spokes of my proverbial bicycle. She be the reason I haven’t slept since Monday night. She be the reason I am now prone to fits of uncontrollable sobbing. She be the reason I have ground my teeth to ivory nubs. She be the reason I watch CNN until my eyes bleed, contracting what my physician has dubbed “trauma-induced cataracts” that are threatening my sight. She be the reason I lost fistfuls of cash to my Uncle Wallaby, on odds 10-1. She be the scourge that haunts my dreams. She be #1 on the list of my darkest fears. Hate and discontent, thy name be Hillary. The question now is where do we go from here? With a caucus and a primary down, the nation has found itself thrust into the middle of a presidential election that will surly leave millions with broken jaws, bruised ribs, insomnia, paranoia, the gum disease known as gingivitis, and enough smear campaigns to make you finally fill out that application for Canadian citizenship you have considered for so long. But this is where the fun begins; this is where you just grab that old donkey by the ears and hold on until it hee-haws its way into an el-



**Kevin Johnson**  
• Tales from a Colorado import

ephant, or visa versa. No matter where you toe the partisan line, election season is the kind of deranged fun that goes beyond any reason: where there are no punches pulled, no wart left concealed, no scandal too scandalous, no barb to barbarous, no method to the madness. In election season, it is best to just close your eyes, hedge your bets, count your blessings, and hang on for a ride so sweet it only comes around every four years. Let’s get ready to rumble! My fear of round two with the Clinton family is almost as bad as if Jeb Bush had thrown his name into the ring as the Republican nomination... almost. The thought of the only presidents in my lifetime, outside of Reagan, in my infancy, being Bushes and Clintons is something that I am not prepared to handle at this point in my life. Even as a woman, Hillary is still one of the “good old boys” and I am not sure our fine nation can handle another one of them in the office. And as I mentioned earlier, it seemed no more than a week ago that her campaign was doomed. She finished third in Iowa and the popular opinion was that she would get smoked in New Hampshire, but what does the popular opinion matter in politics these days anyway? I am not saying that the New Hampshire primary was rigged but... I mean, come on, she sheds a couple of tears and all of a sudden the votes come pouring in. I can see it now:

“Please Mr. Ahmadijead (sniffle), please disarm immediately (sniffle), I’ll call Bill if you don’t... (sob)” Anyway, she won, and what is done is done, and despite Tuesday’s loss, the smart money is still on Barack Obama. Though from the looks of it, the race is going to be a close one. Hillary is going to have the vote of the old school Democrats, but Obama’s chances at the nomination lies in his message of hope and the fact that he is able to turn out young voters and independents in droves; people who aren’t confined by the party lines and are honestly seeking a better alternative to the “good old boys.” And I want to make a prediction here and now: as the race heads down to the wire, and things get tight, John Edwards will find himself mired in third place at what looks more and more like a two person race; realizing he has no legitimate shot, he will throw in the towel and join forces as Obama’s running mate. It is clear by the way Edwards continually came to Obama’s aide during Saturday’s candidate debates that he is already setting himself up for another bid at the vice presidency... and anything short of Hillary teaming up with her hubby to form a political monster known only as “Billary” would stop Obama and Edwards in ’08. But only the fates will tell us for sure, and therein lies the fun of the electoral process; the twists and turns, the nights spent glued to 24 hour news channels, the early mornings spent scouring the news papers for the latest poll results. The football season maybe winding to an end, but the real battle of the gridiron is just beginning.

— Kevin Johnson is a reporter for the Colby Free Press

Your turn

Foundation grants more than \$157,000

**By Melinda Olson  
Thomas County  
Community Foundation**

Happy New Year! As I have been visiting with people in our county, there is one question that reoccurs time and time again: What exactly is the Thomas County Community Foundation and what does this organization do? We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose mission is to endow funds to improve the quality of life for all citizens in Thomas County. What does that mean in layman’s terms? We are here to serve you, the citizens of Thomas County, and to help make this the best place to live and raise a family! We operate strictly off of donations and contributions from generous donors who have established endowed funds. Endowed funds are a group of money set aside and invested for the long-term use. In our organization, the interest that is generated from these funds is used as grants that are awarded to area non-profit organizations to help with their programming, projects, or capital improvements. These endowed funds can also be used for establishing scholarships to college-bound students. Thanks in most part to the generous donations from people in our community, we have been able to grant out more than \$157,000 to

- local charities and college students since the foundation’s inception in 2001.
- In 2007 alone, we were able to grant out a total of \$27,219.94 to the following students attending Colby College and non-profit organizations listed below:
- \$3,500 American Youth Soccer Organization
  - \$750 Colby College and Christina Mullenkamp
  - \$1,872 Colby College and Laken Steele
  - \$750 Colby College and Ryan Luckert
  - \$1,500 Colby Football Association
  - \$500 Colby Promotion
  - \$1,050 Friends of Pioneer Memorial Library
  - \$1,667.94 Golden Plains Community Outreach
  - \$1,830 Leadership Thomas County
  - \$500 Mothers of Preschoolers
  - \$1,000 NWKS Council on Substance Abuse
  - \$1,350 Pioneer Chapter of Pheasants Forever
  - \$500 Puddle Duck Preschool
  - \$700 Sacred Heart Catholic School
  - \$500 Santa City
  - \$1,050 Shepherd’s Staff
  - \$500 Thomas County Amusement Association
  - \$3,250 Thomas County Branch of the American Red Cross
  - \$1,000 Thomas County Fair Board

- \$1,450 Thomas County Historical Society
  - \$500 Golden Plains Elementary
  - \$500 Colby High School Technology Student Association
  - \$500 Colby Middle School Library
  - \$500 Western Plains Arts Association
- As we look forward to this new we want you to know that we are your community foundation.
- What are your visions and dreams for Thomas County? Where would you like to see improvements? Would you like to see more walking trails and trees planted in Thomas County? We can set up a fund for that. Would you like to see more technology in your favorite area school?
- We can set up a fund for that! Would you like to see more funding available for the local Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts?
- We can set up a fund for that. The possibilities are endless and we are here to make those dreams a reality.
- So as you look forward to this year and the years to come, think about your goals for our community and how your friends at the Thomas County Community Foundation can make your dreams a reality!
- If you are interested in more information, visit our web site, [www.thomascountycommunityfoundation.com](http://www.thomascountycommunityfoundation.com) or call Melinda Olson at the foundation office, 460-9152 or e-mail: [tcfc@st-tel.net](mailto:tcfc@st-tel.net)

Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley



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](mailto:jvannostrand@nwkansas.com) or [pdecker@nw.kansas.com](mailto:pdecker@nw.kansas.com). Opinions do not necessarily reflect the Free

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