

# Opinion



## A Kansas Viewpoint

### We aren't starving

From The Hutchinson News

Few of us living in the breadbasket of the United States can imagine what hunger is like. Not the kind of hunger that comes with a growling stomach in between meals but real hunger that comes from going days without food and the despair of not knowing when solid sustenance will come along. ...

Hunger is always a fact of life somewhere on the globe, but right now it is becoming a crisis as it spreads to many more places.

One of those places is Haiti, where one father was quoted in a recent New York Times' story. His children's only meal recently was two spoonfuls each of rice, after which they went without any food the following day. ...

Hunger isn't confined to the places that are accustomed to periods of famine. It is becoming an issue around the globe. ...

Not only are people starving, but it is putting pressure on the fragile economies of developing nations and causing unrest in places such as Haiti. ...

The crisis has led to sharp criticism of U.S. policies meant to stimulate production of corn-based ethanol and other biofuels. ...

Global hunger ought to get the attention of the U.S. Congress and the Bush administration.

Maybe we need to take a time-out on the rapid growth of our biofuels industry. We also need to be shifting focus to new inputs such as switchgrass, crop waste and other alternatives to grain-based ethanol.

And we need to be taking a hard look at our agriculture policies as Congress works on a new farm bill. When commodity prices are so high is not when we should be renewing rich subsidies to the big corporate agriculture producers. ...

Meanwhile, the U.S. and other prosperous nations need to step up aid to famine-stricken nations. ...

Americans are finding higher prices in the grocery store and at the pump, but we aren't starving, and it wouldn't hurt to practice a little conservation and suffer through the high gas prices. Not when millions of our brothers and sisters around the world are going hungry with little hope of food for their stomachs tomorrow.

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## Pick and choose

After a couple of months of recovery, it's time for pro football fans to break out those Dallas Cowboy jerseys or Denver Bronco T-shirts once again.

The NFL Draft, which serves as the unofficial start to the new season, begins Saturday afternoon, meaning hope is in the air even for fans of the lowly Miami Dolphins or Oakland Raiders.

Heck, for some teams, the draft will be the highlight of their season.

I'm one of those people that realizes the importance of the draft, but I don't necessarily think it has too much bearing on what happens on the field next season. The New England Patriots could have the worst draft in the history of the sport this weekend and will still at least win their division next year.

There's a few players, like Adrian Peterson of the Vikings, that are special enough to contribute to two or three extra wins their rookie year, but for the most part the draft determines who will be in a position to be successful three, four years down the road.

I'm not saying the draft is overrated, but it certainly doesn't deserve the amount of coverage it gets on ESPN or the NFL Network.

I know as sports fans we love everything



**Joe Falkoff**

### • A Sideline View

hyped up to the extreme, but give me a break. The NFL Network covers the NFL Combine like it's the second version of the Super Bowl. It's crazy that people actually care so much about the physical skills of potential draftees, because 40-yard dashes and the number of times you can bench press 225 pounds mean very little on a football field. Just ask Tom Brady, who draft expert Mel Kiper admitted had very poor testing results the year he got drafted.

I'm obviously going to be watching this weekend, but afterwards I'm usually so burnt out on draft talk I don't even want to think about football again until July.

The most interesting story for me to watch this year is to see how the Chiefs do. With the trade of Jared Allen to the Vikings, they now

have the fifth and 17th overall picks and the most total picks in this draft of any team in the NFL.

The youth movement is officially underway with the Chiefs and it's good to see. In this day in age of the NFL, you can win every now and then with free agents, but too be consistent over the long haul you've got to build with young players and have young players ready to fill in for aging veterans.

I've heard a lot of experts projecting the Chiefs to take Ohio State defensive end Vernon Gholston with the fifth pick, but I really wish they would take Boston College quarterback Matt Ryan.

He doesn't have the arm strength of a Peyton Manning, but has enough physical tools to get the job done. At Boston College, he was practically their whole offense and still led that team to an 11-win season last year.

I've mentioned this before, but I don't think Brodie Croyle will ever be even an average NFL quarterback. I could count on one hand last year the number of good plays he made.

I'm sure the plan is to give Croyle this season to prove himself, but I think it's just a lost cause.

- Joe Falkoff is a reporter for the Free Press

## Your turn

### Fairground RV fees are fair

**James McDonald**  
Zephyrhills, Fla.

I would like to respond to the editorial by Dan Bourquin and the recent news article, regarding the complaints to the Board of Commissioners about the Thomas County Fair Board. Mr. Bourquin is upset because of his perception of unfair competition by the fairground campground hook-ups.

My wife, Gayona and I, travel throughout the year. We primarily winter in Florida and travel to many locations during the summer and fall. Colby is just one of the locations we choose to call home for a period of time while visiting friends and family. We subscribe to a national directory of RV parks, campgrounds and services to locate suitable places to park our RV while visiting. We look for amenities, electrical hook-up, availability of sewer and water service and, yes, we also consider price when choosing to stay at a park. It has been our experience that Bourquin's RV Park is considerably more expensive than comparable parks with comparable amenities.

The park we reside in for seven or more months a year in Florida is priced on several levels. We choose to pay by the year at a price of \$2,238. We also pay for electrical and water which comes to about \$150 monthly. This is a total of \$340.03 each month we pay, or an average of \$10.97 daily. This park has 50 foot concrete slabs for a patio beside each parking space for the RV. Each site has 20, 30, and 50 amp service and sewer and water hook-up. It also has tennis courts, pool, air conditioned clubhouse with exercise rooms, game rooms, pool room, kitchen, showers and laundry. We have shuffleboard, horseshoes, bocce ball, volleyball and many other activities year round. We are free to come and go as we please, since the site is leased on a yearly rate, and no one else is allowed to park at the site when we are

not there.

Bourquin's RV Park, by his own description, charges \$26 daily and \$390 per month for a 50 amp hook-up, water and sewer, laundry and shower. They have dirt patios, no pool or any other amenities that are advertised. This is equal to \$4,680 a year. More than double what we pay for a park that has significantly more amenities to offer.

Most other parks we stay at are in the range of \$17 - \$22 daily for service at least equal to Bourquin's RV Park, with most exceeding the amenities available. It is common now to find Wi-Fi internet service available in many parks nationwide. Many locations also offer cable TV. Very few parks we have ever stayed at have minimal services available such as Bourquin's RV Park.

Most of the parks with minimal service charge in the range of \$12- \$17 daily. When we have wanted to stay for any extended period at a location, most of the parks will negotiate a lower rate for a weekly or monthly period. When we returned to Colby for our first visit after beginning to travel, we called Bourquin's RV Park to inquire about their rates. We were told by Shirley Bourquin that the rate at that time was \$24 daily. We inquired about the weekly and monthly rate and were told that they only had daily rates.

Every attempt to negotiate a different rate was denied, it was take it or leave it. Since we really only needed a place to park with electrical and sewer/water, we considered this rate too expensive for our needs. We decided to leave it and find other accommodations that would better meet our budget and needs. We contacted the Thomas County Fairgrounds and were able to get a better price that exactly met our needs of a simple parking place to hook-up while we were visiting. Their rates were \$15 a day and provided the simple hook-up we needed.

There are many localities throughout the United States that have privately owned RV parks that also have county, state or national RV parks located nearby. In virtually all cases the public parks are priced considerably lower than the nearby private parks, some lower than \$10 daily. Never once have we experienced any of these private parks complaining about the public parks or their rates.

These private parks offer a service to a different type of customer and usually offer different amenities to attract these customers. The Thomas County Fairground is not unfairly competing with Bourquin's RV Park. They offer a fair service for a fair price. The RV hook-ups provide much needed revenue to the Thomas County Fairground that augments the revenue needed to operate the fairground year round. We have found them very friendly and willing to assist us in any manner. We found Bourquin's to be rude and unwilling to even talk about negotiating a monthly rate. First impressions with businesses affect my willingness to support them.

My first impression during my first phone call to Bourquin's was less than satisfying. Rather than constantly complain about the unfair competition, I would suggest Dan Bourquin start offering a service that attracts customers to his business. He should consider that there are many homes and apartments located in Colby that are renting for approximately the same rate he is charging. These homes provide a lot more than a dry patch of grass and an electrical hook-up with sewer and water.

I have always believed that if you provide an exceptional service and a fair price for your customer they will be more likely to return and use you in the future. Provide what your customer wants and needs and your business will prosper, regardless how much competition you may have.

## Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

