



## Other Viewpoints

### Getting vaccinated smart thing to do

More than two-thirds of area residents who responded to an *Ottawa Herald* online poll said they don't plan to get vaccinated against the H1N1 flu virus.

Those aren't scientific numbers, but they make it clear a lot of people aren't concerned about the flu.

That may turn out to be an unfortunate truth.

The seasonal flu kills thousands every year. The H1N1 virus — a wholly separate disease — already has killed seven Kansans, including a healthy adult and a child.

To top it off, public health and school officials have observed that this year's flu season has started early. It's the No. 1 reason for school absences at a time when the flu season normally has not started in earnest.

It's not uncommon to hear people say "it's just the flu" when they, or a relative, contracts the disease.

And maybe some of those who don't plan to be vaccinated are just tired of hearing about H1N1 so often.

Whatever the reasons, ignoring the risk is just a way of expecting everyone else to protect you by seeking their own protection.

With as many two-thirds of us saying we aren't interested, that's a feeble strategy.

So, let's compromise.

Don't panic. But take the risk seriously and be part of the solution for protecting our at-risk neighbors and our children.

Get vaccinated.

— *The Ottawa Herald, via The Associated Press*

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**U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521

**U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124

**State Rep. Jim Morrison**, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St. Room 143-N, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7676 e-mail: [jmorrison@ink.org](mailto:jmorrison@ink.org) web: [www.morrisonfamily.com](http://www.morrisonfamily.com)

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## October snowstorm no scoop

We've had our first snowfall of the year, and it was a doozy.

Thursday evening, the reports got worse and worse, with barricades going up on the Interstate and motels filling up. At first, it seemed the biggest problem was visibility, but then the snow started sticking.

By Friday morning, there was enough heavy white stuff to make getting around town tricky. Schools were closed.

By afternoon, in a typical Kansas switch, there were puddles instead of snow, and only light coats were needed.

It's always surprising to me when a storm that causes so much disruption doesn't stick around and follow through. It seems that in the natural order of things, the snow would at least stay on for a couple of days.

That's probably why we collect storm stories. Just a few days ago, as a matter of fact, the older generation here in the newsroom was passing on tales of memorable winter weather, some we remember personally and some that have been passed down in legend. One such storm here came in 1997, as we printed in an anniversary article a week ago.

The blizzard I grew up hearing about was in January 1949, and was one for the record books, with huge drifts, people stranded and train tracks and roads blocked for weeks.

Another historic storm, in 1888, was notable



**Marian Ballard**

### • Collection Connections

not so much for the amount of snowfall but for its suddenness. It came in January, but was immediately preceded by a spell of warm weather, and became known as the "school-children's blizzard" because many children were caught at school by the storm. Stories abound of the heroism of country teachers who kept woodstoves going or led children to safety through near-whiteout conditions.

Most of our storm adventures, of course, don't begin to approach that level of risk. There are times we had scares on icy roads, times the visibility was near zero and times it was too cold to be out at all. With better roads, better vehicles and better forecasting, the dangers of winter are more manageable than ever.

It seems to me, as well, that better planning and work on keeping roads clear makes a difference, though I don't have the numbers to back that up. I do remember, though, that my dad needed tire chains to get around town when I was small, but they are now for the most part

restricted to areas such as mountain passes.

Maybe the demise of morning farm chores has also had an effect on how bad our winter storms seem. A blizzard, after all, is in the mind of the beholder. Scraping off a windshield and slipping around driving down the street is one thing. Wading through drifts to the barn or chicken house, shoveling them out and hauling feed and water to cold and hungry animals is quite another.

Thinking about Friday's storm reminds me of two very different writers and their take on winter. John Greenleaf Whittier's poem "Snowbound" begins, "The sun that brief December day / Rose cheerless ..." and goes on to tell a blizzard's story at length, including digging a tunnel to the barn and telling stories around the fire.

By contrast, a column written years ago by Ben Hecht entitled "Scoop" takes an ironic look at the large headlines generated by a mild snow storm on a slow news day. I'm reminded of that when the snow that closed schools and roads is gone before noon.

Sure, it mattered at the time, but couldn't it stick around a little longer?

*Marian Ballard has collected careers as counselor, librarian, pastor, and now copy editor for the Colby Free Press. She collects ideas, which are more portable than other stuff.*

## Dream harvest just keeps coming

Awesome. Excellent. Wonderful.

With dryland soybeans yielding nearly 80 bushels an acre and corn averaging from 150 to 210, 2009 is a fall harvest destined to go down in the annals of Kansas farming history.

While yields each and every Kansas county may vary depending on planting dates, stands, moisture and heat this summer, and harvesting conditions, for the most part, row-crop farmers are smiling all the way to the elevator.

Brown County farmer Keith Olsen says this year's fall harvest is a "dream come true."

"It's been an outstanding growing season for corn and beans," Olsen says. "A nice cool summer, with plenty of moisture, has resulted in these wonderful yields."

In his home county, Olsen reports, soybeans are averaging nearly 70 bushels per acre and corn is shelling out 190-plus.

During his 23 years as a row-crop producer, Olsen said, he's never experienced a harvest like this on his northeastern Kansas farm.

"If I have another 10 years like this," he said, "I can retire with a smile on my face."

Olsen's father Claire, who'll turn 80 in December, says he thinks this fall harvest is special indeed. He said he'd like to see commodity prices continue strong.

The elder Olsen still comes out every day



**John Schlageck**

### • Insights

Kansas Farm Bureau

and helps his son on the farm. He drives the truck during harvest.

While October has been rainy and overcast, Olsen says he's "about on schedule" to finish fall harvest. As of Wednesday, he said, he needed a good week of sunny days to wrap up harvest.

Kansas farmers, including Olsen, rarely complain about moisture of any kind. They're glad to get it and they deal with it.

In some ways, the lengthy wet weather in October has allowed the elevators to catch up with the inflow of grain by shipping it out and freeing up storage. Throughout this '09 harvest, Olsen hasn't had to wait in line to dump his crops.

"As of now, storage isn't a problem," he says, "but if it ever turns sunny and we string several consecutive warm days together, it may become an issue."

If that happens, elevators may erect bunkers or resort to storing some crops, like milo, on the ground. If this happens, farmers like Olsen may be forced to settle for cash only when they haul their crops to the elevators.

"We'll have to sell our crops when we go across the scales," he says.

While he says that may be disappointing in a way, when you look at this year's yields and crop prices, "I really can't complain too loudly."

And while the forecast for early November calls for more wet, cool weather, Olsen considers this typical fall weather.

"It's been a beautiful fall, and I'm just pleased to be harvesting these great yields," he says. "Every year, we hear and read about Missouri, Illinois and Iowa cutting these fantastic yields. It's nice for us to harvest abundant crops this fall."

Olsen says every day he "thanks the good Lord for giving us a crop like this," and he hopes everyone is having a safe and enjoyable harvest.

*John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm near Seguin, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.*

### Mallard Fillmore

#### • Bruce Tinsley

