

Other Viewpoints

Time for contracts more than overdue for Kansas teachers

As of July 13, fewer than one-third of Kansas' school districts have their teachers under contract for the upcoming school year.

While that number figures to jump in the coming weeks as school boards convene and pass contracts already agreed on by their teachers, there are still a few that are nowhere close to agreement.

So what is taking so long?

It appears a foregone conclusion that there is no negotiating leverage to be had. Not in this economy. The downturn may have started on Wall Street, but its impact is being felt on Main Street.

And while some optimistic economists point to indicators to properly spin an end to the economic woe, that end is not yet here.

Balancing a state budget this year required a second straight year of cuts in financing for education. School districts were forced to make deep cuts in their budgets to compensate for the loss in state money.

That said, it shouldn't be a surprise that there isn't a lot of money left for raises for teachers this year. Next year's budgets will be equally tight.

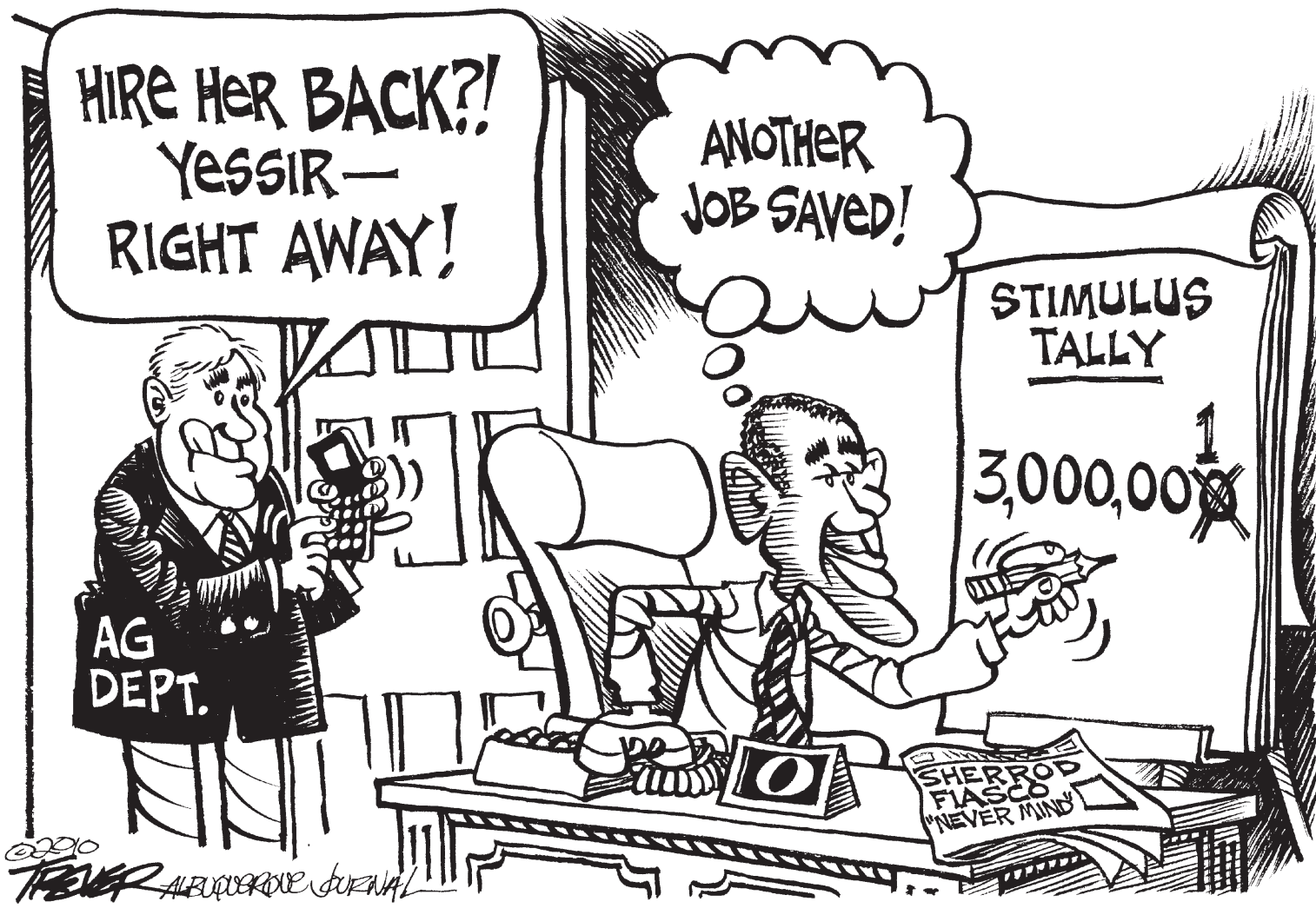
Kansas teachers have seen an average salary hike of 1 percent this year, according to the Kansas Association of School Boards, but a number of districts have proposed cuts in salaries and insurance benefits to their teachers this year.

In Hutchinson, the only teachers who will earn raises are those who spent the summer taking and passing graduate-school courses. A number of other school districts in Kansas have taken this tack and rightly so. Raises should be earned.

Maybe someday all teachers will follow suit.

Until then, summer is beginning to wind down. It is almost time for our teachers to get back to work. Getting those contracts signed is the first step toward that happening.

— Hutchinson News, via the Associated Press



Mom accepts everything but the beard

My mom has really become more relaxed lately.

She seems to have finally come to terms with all my shortcomings.

I'm not sure how to feel about this relatively new development. On the one hand, it's nice to know that she doesn't worry about me as much, but there is a part of me that misses the constant lectures about being organized, assertive and a myriad of other fun topics we have discussed over the years.

It's nice to have someone who cares about you enough to regularly remind you of your faults. And she has always been willing to put up with my brazen responses, even when I have later admitted she was right.

Mom seems genuinely amazed at how much more organized I have gotten. This reflects how disorganized I used to be, more than how organized I am today. And I wouldn't have improved my organizational skills if it weren't for the constant pestering of my mom. She never gave up on me, even when reforming my organizational skills, or lack thereof, seemed like a hopeless task.

Lately, the only thing Mom has been bugging me about is my beard. She has made it abundantly clear that she isn't a fan of my new look.

Unbeknownst to me, my brother Erik had also started growing a beard, so Mom has two new things to worry about. Every time I talk to her on the phone she asks me if I've shaved my beard off yet. The disappointment reflected in her voice is all too evident when I answer in the negative. It almost makes me shave the



Andy Heintz

• Wildcat Ramblings

damn thing off. Almost.

But other than her strident anti-beard agenda, Mom has been taking things in stride. On Saturday, I confessed that I couldn't find my driver's license. When I found it scrunched in between two cards in my wallet a few minutes later, she only asked me once if I needed to clear my wallet out. The usual lecture about the need to throw away things that I don't need never came.

Mom had to put up with quite a bit during my younger years. One recurring irritant that tested my Mother's sanity was the notorious sweatshirt years. When I was in middle school I acquired the rare talent of being able to lose about one sweatshirt a day. The usual scenario went a little like this: Mom would be sitting on a side street waiting to drive my friends and I home, only to see me strolling over to the car with no sweatshirt.

After an initial smile, a grim look would appear beneath Mom's sunglasses when she noticed I didn't have my sweatshirt. The transformation was similar to when the Incredible Hulk gets angry, except thankfully Mom never turned green.

Then she would ask the question that still

haunts me to this day: "Where is your sweat-shirt." My memory is not what it used to be, but it seemed like the weather got 10 degrees cooler and dark, threatening clouds appeared in the sky every time she asked me that question. My carefree, blissfully ignorant face would quickly transform into a "deer in the headlights look" that Mom had grown all too familiar with over the years.

Most of the time, I would just shrug and tell her I didn't remember. Then she would send her hapless son back into the school to look for his long-lost sweatshirt. After 10 minutes or more, I would appear from the building and tell her my sweatshirt had apparently disappeared from planet Earth.

But through it all, my Mom never gave up on her imperfect, yet ruggedly handsome son. While doing her best to correct my ongoing follies, she also found the time to teach me the importance of empathy, unselfishness and tolerance. She also instilled in me a hatred for bullying and all forms of prejudice. My chronic sympathy for anyone getting picked on or neglected is definitely something I got from my mom.

So thanks, Mom, for teaching me some important life lessons and for putting up with my antics for so many years.

Andy Heintz, a K-State journalism graduate, is sports reporter for the Colby Free Press. He says he loves K-State athletics and fishing, sports and opinion writing.

Where to write, call

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774

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 274-W, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7676 e-mail: jmorriso@ink.org web: www.morrisonfamily.com

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St., Room 225-E., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 ralph.ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth St. (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963 Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

Send news to: colby.editor@nwkansas.com

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout, Columns, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography. Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

Steve Haynes - Publisher
s.haynes@nwkansas.com

NEWS

Kevin Bottrell - News Editor
kbottrell@nwkansas.com

Andy Heintz - Sports Reporter
aheintz@nwkansas.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor
mballard@nwkansas.com

Vera Sloan and Rachel Bomba - Society Editors
colby.society@nwkansas.com

ADVERTISING

Heather Woofter - Advertising Representative
hwoofter@nwkansas.com

Andrea Miller - Advertising Representative
a.miller@nwkansas.com

Kathryn Ballard - Graphic Design
kballard@nwkansas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Robin Tubbs - Office Manager
rtubbs@nwkansas.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator
support@nwkansas.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Richard Westfahl - General Manager

Lana Westfahl, Jim Jackson, Betty Morris, Jim Bowker, Judy McKnight, Barbara Ornelas, Kris McCool

Good foods can be organic – or not

Do organically produced foods have higher nutritional value?

Let's take a look.

Colorado State University researchers recently compared vitamin content of organically and conventionally grown carrots and broccoli. The study found no significant differences.

Other research focused on growing potatoes using four different farming techniques under the same growing conditions: an intensive high-chemical system; a moderate conventional system; customary organic farming (livestock manure and crop rotation on land used for organic production for 10 years); and virgin organic production, using cow manure on land cleared from brush. Nine minerals and seven vitamins were analyzed and no clear differences were discovered.

Another U.S. study found more soluble iron in conventionally grown spinach. The proportion of the soluble iron available to consumer's system was somewhat higher for both spinach and peppers grown with compost and manure.

In other studies abroad, a Norwegian study found conventionally grown carrots contained more beta carotene, more magnesium and more manganese. The ecologically grown carrots had more aluminum. When carrots of the same variety were compared, the only difference was a higher level of carotenoids in the conventionally grown carrots.

A German study discovered lower levels of nitrate in carrots, beets and potatoes grown with manure but the differences were minute under good storage conditions. Stressful storage conditions enhanced the difference.

Consumers can conclude from such findings



John Schlageck

• Insights
Kansas Farm Bureau

that people who do not buy organically grown fruits and vegetables, can find equally good products with equal nutrition at supermarkets and roadside stands – usually at lower prices. It also means people who wish to eat organically grown fruits and vegetables should do so.

Bottom line – differing farming systems produce virtually no difference in the nutritional value of the crops. The variety, or strain, of the carrots and potatoes grown appears to have a bigger impact on their nutrient value than organic production methods.

It's no secret; plant breeders have long advocated that fruits, vegetables and grains require three main nutrients – nitrogen, phosphate potassium and trace minerals in varying amounts according to the species. If a plant is sorely lacking in one of these nutrients, it will not grow. If it has access to these nutrients, it will grow into the crop its heredity determines and will pass along the nutrients its heredity intends.

Translation – for a healthy diet, eat plenty of fruit and vegetables each day, regardless of how they were grown. Doing so will probably mean a person eats more fiber that is healthy. It also means less room for fatty foods that are one of the major contributions to poor health.

Eating five fruits and vegetables per day reduces our risk for heart disease and cancer. Re-

searchers tell us this health-enhancing effect is derived from the high levels of antioxidant chemicals in the fruits and vegetables. Studies are confirming this cleansing effect from specific chemicals from specific crops, including broccoli and blueberries.

So much of this research on conventional versus organically grown food has demonstrated little nutritional differences. In our society, consumers have a choice. It is an individual decision.

Organic-food enthusiasts may choose products grown the way they prefer. Those with a more traditional bent can enjoy fruits, vegetables and grains grown conventionally. Remember, scientific research and studies indicate conventionally grown fruits, vegetables and grains have the same nutritional value and are equally healthy.

The choice is yours.

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.

Write us

The Colby Free Press encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of general interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

We do not publish anonymous letters.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley



THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE paid at Colby, Kan., 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72