



## Other Viewpoints

### Power play seen in abrupt departure

The sudden departure of Kansas Department of Health and Environment Secretary Rod Bremby wasn't a surprise. According to reports, Bremby – who's best known for denying an air-quality permit needed for expansion of the Sunflower Electric Power Corp. generating station at Holcomb – had been asked to assume new duties as part of a transition team for Gov.-elect Sam Brownback.

Bremby declined, and soon after left his job. Environmentalists cried foul, claiming Gov. Mark Parkinson had forced out Bremby as another Sunflower air-quality permit hangs in the balance.

But Bremby's departure seemed inevitable, considering a deal brokered by the governor to allow the latest Sunflower expansion plan to move forward.

Bremby, after all, had derailed the previous expansion plan over environmental concerns of carbon dioxide emissions from the coal-fired power plant.

Kansans only had to look to the governor's office for the impetus behind that arbitrary decision. Acting on behalf of then-Gov. Kathleen Sebelius, Bremby ignored the recommendation of department staff in a ruling fueled by the political aspirations of his boss (she was running for vice president at the time) and denied the air-quality permit – even though CO2 wasn't regulated by law.

The Sunflower expansion project got back on track following Sebelius' departure to join President Obama's cabinet as secretary of health and human services. Not long after Parkinson was elevated from lieutenant governor to governor, he helped put together a deal that cleared the way for a new, 895-megawatt coal-fired power plant at the Sunflower facility, along with a renewable energy standard requiring Kansas sources to generate 20 percent of their power from renewable sources by 2020.

Even though Bremby's sudden departure was attributed to his refusal to assume a new role, it's easy to see how the current or incoming governor would want him out of the Sunflower expansion decision chain.

Like it or not, that's politics – something those opposed to the plant expansion know full well, considering the political power play to block the project a few years ago.

Politics aside, what still matters most is that the pending Sunflower expansion and the economic boost it would deliver remain on track – and Bremby's departure can only help.

– *The Garden City Telegram, via the Associated Press*

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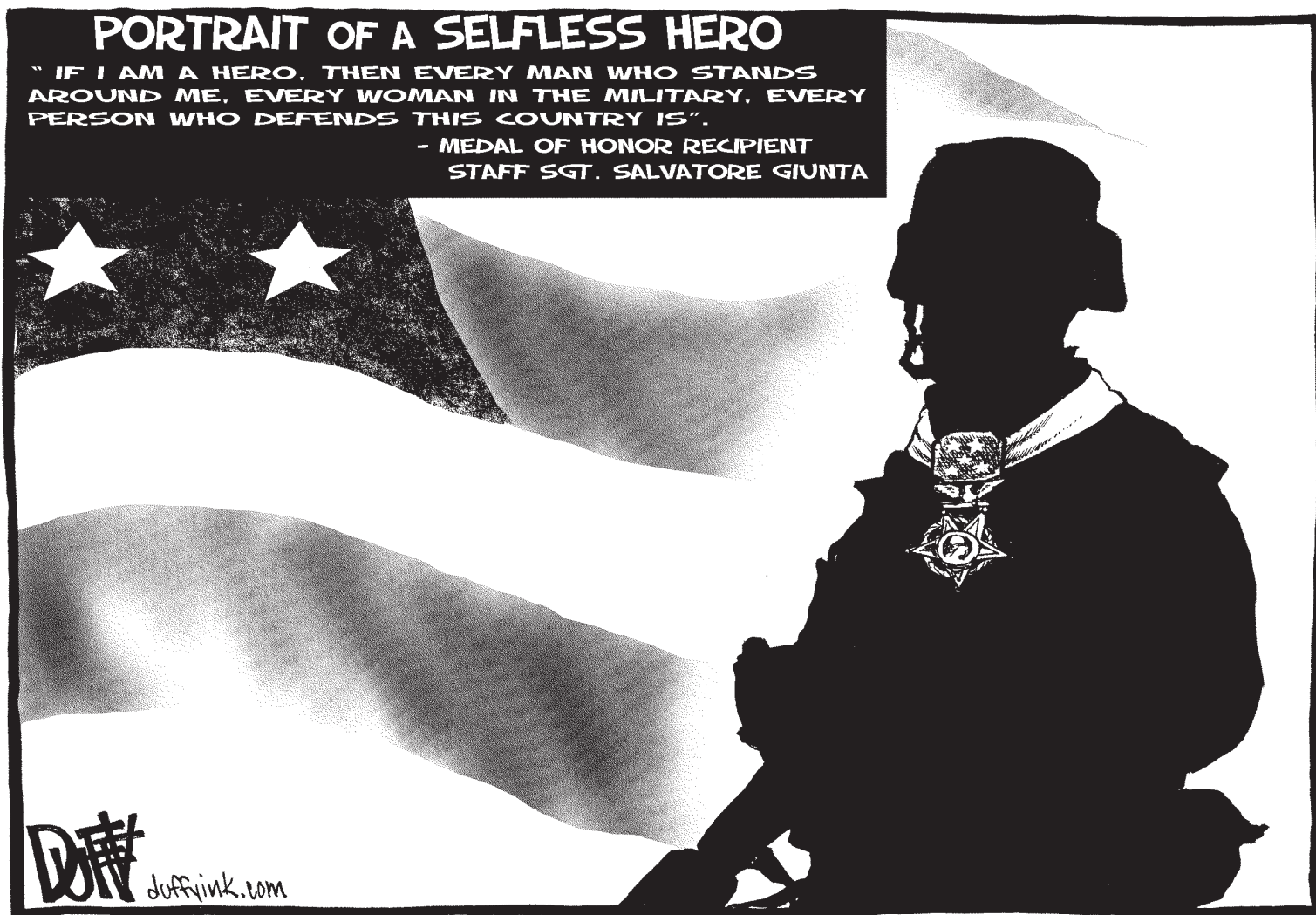
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### Blizzard-less forecast looks promising

It snowed this week.

You may have missed it. I almost did, because it was really tiny. I had to scrape my windshield once, too.

Somehow, November seems a lot more bland than it did when I was a kid. It seems like snow on Thanksgiving was a regular event back then. Don't know if chained-up tires were part of the process that early, but our car seemed to spend a good part of the winter with chains on.

How times have changed. Yes, I was farther north then, but they don't use chains much anymore in my home town, either.

Instead of a blizzard, next week will probably be a lot like this one – a little frost, quite a bit of sunshine, shirt-sleeve weather if you're hardy.

That's good for all those who have holiday travels planned. The Interstate will probably be clear, at least of weather hazards. That doesn't mean, of course, that there won't be a lot of other people wanting to be someplace they are not. Hopefully, you will only meet the ones who are polite about sharing the road and paying attention to what they are doing. Hopefully, all will be sober and respectful of traffic laws.

Most of my Thanksgiving memories from childhood don't involve driving. Since my grandmother lived in my home town, all the cousins came to us. One year, though, we all



**Marian Ballard**

• Collection Connections

went to Hyannis, Neb., where my youngest uncle was a coach.

Hyannis is one of those towns in the Sand Hills that takes about 30 seconds to drive through. Its unique characteristic is that it's built on the edge of a ridge. The highway – and the north side of town, what there is of it – are fairly flat. The south side of town goes straight up. Those streets are not for the timid if there's any kind of winter weather.

The Thanksgiving we all went to Hyannis, those streets were snow-packed. The view from Uncle Dave and Aunt Mary's house was spectacular. It was about 20 feet from a 50-foot drop off, so you could see for 20 miles.

Of course, the temperature was about 15 degrees, with a north wind that had probably travelled a hundred miles before hitting this poor, defenseless, under-insulated rental house. (I think they only lived there one year; probably that cold winter had a lot to do with it.)

That Thanksgiving stands out in my memory because it was different. Other Thanksgivings

were pretty much the same – too much food, the women hanging around the kitchen, the men glued to the Nebraska-Oklahoma football game on television.

Kansas? That was a place the teams had to go past to get together.

Now, college teams don't play on holidays. That's good, I guess, though like any tradition, it's a wrench to give it up. My family doesn't gather that way any more, at least not my part of it. We couldn't we're all over the country, from Illinois to California and Washington.

I see other families having big get-togethers now, and I feel a little nostalgic, though I wouldn't go back. It was fun, it was great while it lasted, but I'm not at all the same person I was back then, and I sure wouldn't know how to connect with all those cousins.

So, it's good to live in Colby, next to an Interstate highway, where I can watch the world roll through, enjoy the variety, and be glad that it's not me trying to sooth a cranky toddler who's spent way too many hours strapped in a car seat.

Have a safe Thanksgiving – and don't eat too much.

*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.*

### Prevent type 2 diabetes in childhood

No sign of the nation's childhood obesity epidemic is more heartbreaking than the rising incidence of type 2 diabetes among adolescents. Some experts call it the "first consequence" of America's emerging problem of youth obesity.

Type 2 diabetes is supposed to be an adult disease. In fact, it was once called "adult-onset diabetes," because it hardly ever occurred before age 40 – until recently.

Now, thanks to unprecedented levels of obesity in childhood, the disease is turning up in thousands of American teenagers every year. Although no one knows for sure, the number of youths with type 2 diabetes aged 12 to 19 years may now exceed 40,000 nationwide.

This November, as Kansas observes National Diabetes Month, it is these kids – whose illness we adults are failing to prevent – who stand at the forefront of our minds.

The risk of developing type 2 diabetes increases sharply when a child carries excess weight for several years. With obesity rates doubling among children 6 to 11 since 1990 – and more than tripling among adolescents 12 to 19 – it should come as no surprise that type 2 diabetes is also on the rise.

Type 2 is by far the most common form of diabetes in adults. It develops when glucose, the basic fuel for the body's cells, builds up in the blood because the cells have begun to resist to the action of insulin, a hormone produced in the pancreas.

At first, the pancreas pumps out more insulin to overcome the resistance, but eventually it can't keep up. Over time, high levels of glucose begin to damage critical blood vessels, leading in some cases to blindness, kidney disease, problems with the nervous system and higher risk for heart attacks and strokes.

The warning signs of type 2 diabetes can



**Jason Eberhart-Phillips**

• Kansas Health Officer

include fatigue, increased thirst, frequent urination, blurred vision, slow healing of sores and cuts, and irregular periods in girls. Some youngsters exhibit a darkening patch of skin on the back of the neck or elsewhere that doctors call acanthosis nigricans.

But often there are no obvious signs at all. The onset of type 2 diabetes can be slow and insidious, leaving many young people undiagnosed for years.

That's why clinical screening for diabetes in overweight youth is so important. The only way to detect type 2 diabetes for sure is to routinely offer high-risk kids a simple blood test, such as a serum glucose level measured after an overnight fast.

If these tests show evidence of diabetes, glucose-lowering treatments can begin right away, before the damaging effects of diabetes become severe. The tests can also identify kids who have "pre-diabetes," a condition half way down the path to full-blown disease.

It is estimated that in America today, two million adolescents have pre-diabetes. Fully one in five overweight teens now finds themselves in this high-risk group.

How can we together prevent these young people from developing type 2 diabetes? How can parents, health professionals and other concerned adults join forces to reverse the troubling increase of type 2 diabetes among young people today?

The twin pillars of diabetes prevention are healthy eating and active living. This means keeping junk food out of our homes and schools, helping kids avoid excessive consumption of calorie-rich fast foods and other snacks and putting more effort into ensuring that children receive nutritious, well-balanced meals every day.

It also means being more intentional about encouraging physical activity, so that the calories kids take in get burned off in active play.

For parents, that means turning off the television and the computer games. For school leaders, it means working more vigorous physical activity into the school day. For community leaders it means ensuring that there are attractive recreational areas where children can play, and programs that promote physical activity.

No one in Kansas needs to develop type 2 diabetes before they are well into middle age. It should never happen to a child. Together we can make sure it never does.

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