



Other Viewpoints

Program's job value didn't keep it secure

It's not as if the community-based organizations relied on the state for operational funding. Garden City Downtown Vision, for example, enjoys strong support from members and sponsors, along with local government, and will stay viable. Local Main Street organizations did, however, benefit from training and expertise in crafting strategies that spurred job growth.

State officials cited shrinking federal and state budgets in defending the move. But in their haste to erase Main Street, they didn't bother to address the fallout, including the fate of one effective program.

Through the Incentives Without Walls program, individual Main Street organizations could apply for zero-interest loans of up to \$20,000 each to assist businesses with specific projects. The money was matched, and as loans were repaid, those dollars went back into a revolving loan account.

It's been a prudent economic development strategy in Garden City, with more than two dozen such loans helping to launch new ventures or assist existing businesses.

Knowing active incentive loans are in place, state officials have yet to explain to Garden City and other Main Street communities what will happen with that particular program, and how they're supposed to move forward in general without valuable Main Street support.

Downtown districts and their small businesses warrant the attention and support. A drab, uninviting downtown sends the wrong message to prospective businesses and residents.

Plus, the Main Street program has helped create and maintain jobs, something Brownback has deemed a priority.

Kansas needs to invest in such initiatives. State lawmakers who reportedly knew nothing of the plan to scrap Main Street should speak up in defense of the program.

And the governor should explain how eliminating an effective economic development program makes sense, and what the state will do to replace those vital efforts.

- The Garden City Telegram, via the Associated Press

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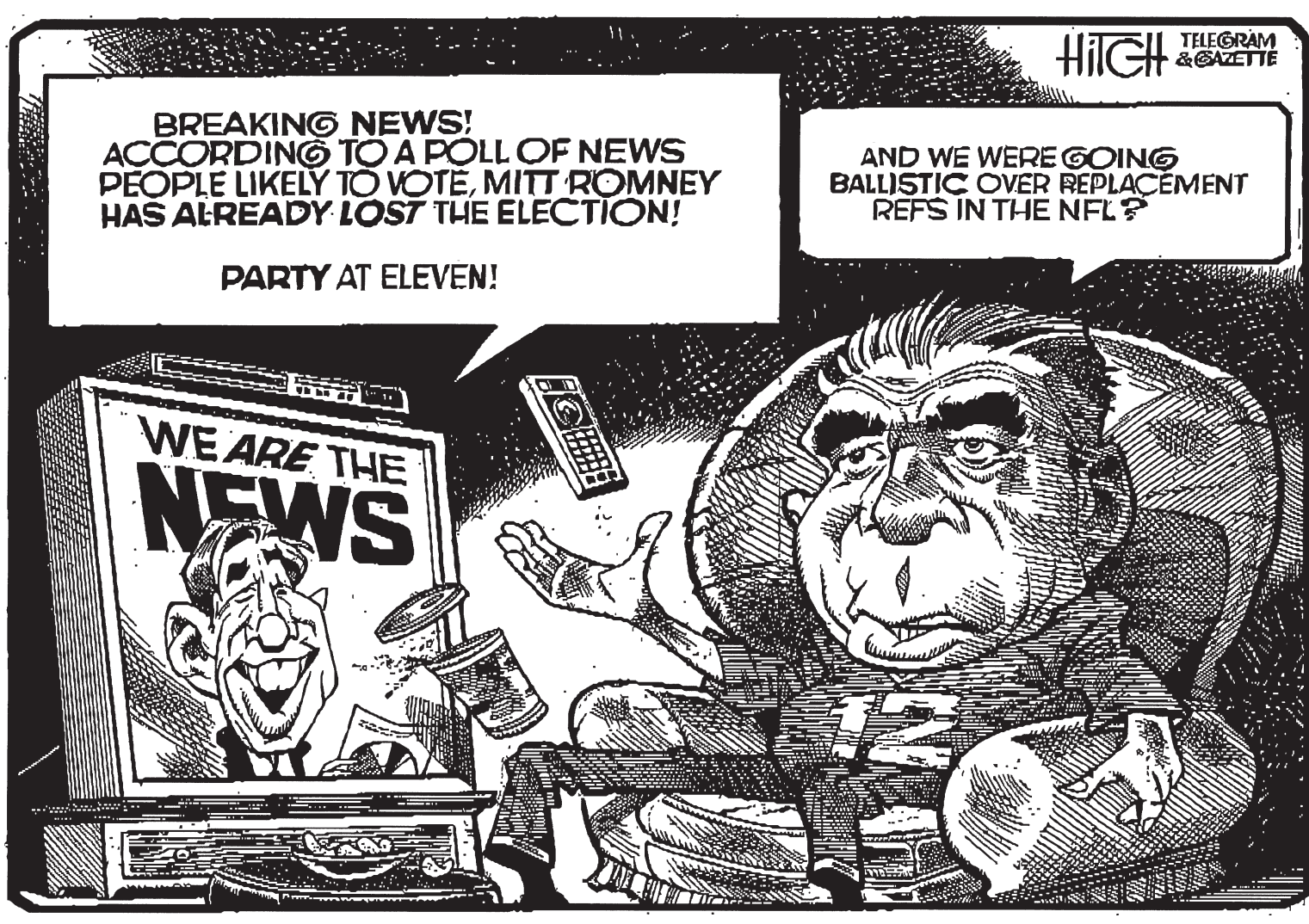
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Seasonal decorations fall short of art

Have you ever noticed the decline in artistry out there?

With the change of seasons comes the change of décor in stores. Displays have moved on from back-to-school necessities like matching pencil holders and desk organizers. As a comment on the value of such heavily promoted items, I refer you to "Baby Blues" on today's comic page. Seems that really cool school supplies don't necessarily support really good school performance.

But now that it's October, it's a new shopping season, and every store you enter, with the possible exception of feed or auto parts stores, seems to have a new display keyed to the season. There's fall bedding plants, cornucopia cutouts, pumpkins and ceramic centerpieces and candleholders for everything from harvest to Halloween to Thanksgiving - OK, not a lot of Thanksgiving yet, but you gotta know it's coming.

I've got no objection to anyone decorating for the season - any season. I'm happy to admire - just as long as nobody expects me to jump in and decorate myself. I used to do that.

Then I discovered I was really too much of a procrastinator. I'd get things up at the last minute, then think it was a shame to turn around and take them down immediately. So Thanksgiving would wind up looking a lot like Hal-



Marian Ballard

• Collection Connections

loween, Easter would have carryovers from Valentine's Day.... Not a pretty sight.

So I'm mostly an observer these days. After all, anyone who goes to all the trouble to round up a scarecrow, a bale of straw and a dozen artfully arranged pumpkins deserves an audience. They've been creative and come up with something that is uniquely their own.

For the record, I also have a great appreciation for original finger paintings - when I am acquainted with their artists.

What I am less enthused about, however, are the endless rows of identical plastic or ceramic decorations to be found in the stores. It wouldn't be bad if they were identical works of art. After all, fine china comes in matching sets, with each piece an exquisite individual work of art. And many types of pottery are not delicate or finely detailed and yet remain remarkable examples of creativity.

On the other hand, I would be unlikely to decorate my home with mass-produced finger

paintings. I'm probably not alone in this. So what is the appeal of decorating with mass-produced seasonal pottery which looks like it was designed by an artistically-challenged second grader? Am I missing something here?

I don't think it's snobbery. I've always been a fan of "pretties," whether valued at 10 cents or 10 grand. And I freely confess to a lack of education in the area of art appreciation. But the reason for making - or buying - thousands of pieces that vaguely resemble a jack-o'-lantern, a moon with a bat flying across it, a shock of corn or any of dozens of variations on the theme escapes me. It can't be much more difficult to come up with something that actually looks like the object it's intended to represent.

I'm not saying there is nothing good out there. There is - though it usually costs more.

It's probably a good thing that I feel no need to add to my personal stash of holiday decorations. If I did, though, I'd probably resort to (somewhat pathetic) crocheted door hangars. Like finger paints, I could give myself points for trying, at least.

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.

Community takes personal investment

While Kansas is blessed with many resources, without question its people are the most valuable. While traveling from Colby to Leavenworth a couple weeks ago, the importance of people came into sharp focus once again.

One stop on this journey was in the small town of Gove in northwestern Kansas. Approximately 75 hardy souls reside in this farm and ranch community.

Main Street is a whopping three blocks long. Only a handful of businesses remain on both sides of the street including a community café, a small grocery, a yarn and antique shop, a museum and of course the county courthouse. Rarely are there more than two or three vehicles parked on the street.

The folks who inhabit this community and the surrounding farms and ranches wear many hats and those active few log countless hours nurturing and tending to their home community.

"It's home to each and every one of us," says Rayna Kopriva. She's lived a few miles south-west of Gove most of her 34 years.

"Nearly all of our citizens contribute," she says. "We want to make our little town the best we can."

Kopriva is one on the younger citizens. Many of the older residents consider her "the young kid" of the community.



John Schlageck

• Insights
Kansas Farm Bureau

"I'm everyone's daughter, 'cause I'm still around," she says. "Every year the youngsters of the community graduate. We celebrate this milestone in their lives and they leave to find jobs elsewhere. They visit, but they don't return home to live."

While Kopriva spends plenty of her time helping husband Daryl with the farm and livestock, she's also worked at nearly every business in town including the café and grocery store. Kopriva has served on nearly every board as well.

She's also served 12 years as the town's librarian. This stucco building sits on the south side of Main Street in Gove. Once the grade school, this building was converted to the community's library and houses nearly 8,000 books.

For Kopriva, the library is much more than a summer reading program or a place to check out books.

"It's really one of two main gathering places," she says. "People come here to visit just like they do when they eat at the café on the north side of town."

Gove isn't the only one of its kind in Kansas. All across Kansas, the song remains the same. People have left small communities to make their living and raise their families elsewhere. This has left fewer and fewer people behind to make the community viable. It's a progression that's been going on in our state for generations.

Still, rural communities thrive and prosper when farmers, ranchers and small community businesses work together for the common good. The people, or human resources of a community, are individuals who make up the town and their skills create the ability to lead others, manage what is there and produce goods and services.

It's the people who make a community what it is, and the people who keep it alive.

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.

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