

from our viewpoint...

Empty buildings are an opportunity

Over the past year the Goodland school board has struggled with the closing of a school building or two, and last week the board finally voted to close North Elementary as the first step in a building reduction plan.

The decision was not easy for the board as they vacillated on which building to close or to try to keep them all open. The architect who reviewed the buildings told the board all of the school buildings were structurally sound, but that it was his recommendation to close Grant Junior High and move it to the high school.

At the meeting where the final decision was made a number of speakers thought the board should have taken the architects recommendation rather than the recommendation made by Superintendent Shelly Angelos about North.

The major difference is the architect was looking at the buildings from a perspective of the structure and the ability to move the junior high back into the high school where it was located years ago.

Angelos made her recommendation looking at a larger picture that includes a second step in the future to move the junior high to the high school. Angelos explained a two-school plan to the board which would be a high school and junior high combined and then create a k-6 building. She said the high school building will need to be remodeled to handle the junior high and she is recommending those changes be made in the next year or two if possible.

The school board will hold a public meeting at 7 p.m. on Monday, March 8, to hear from the public on what the future of North Elementary should be. The school board has several options, and wants to hear from the citizens what they think ought to be the direction the board takes.

Selling the Kansas Ave. land to the city was another remarkable move by the school board. The \$100,000 will be a drop in the bucket against the money the school district has lost from the state funding, but it is more than they had a month ago.

For the city, the purchase of the land will save about \$100,000 in having to run a pipe under K-27 to a site in the Goodland Industrial Park. That decision is better for both the city and the school district.

Another process dealing with an open building is taking steps forward with the establishment of a citizen committee to recommend a use for the Kansas National Guard Armory that becomes city property about noon today.

The committee toured the armory last week and talked about a number of ideas for the future use. The committee will meet again on Thursday to consider a proposal from Northwest Tech about establishing avionics and civil engineering programs using the armory.

Most of the ideas for using the armory have been mentioned in letters to The Goodland Star-News in the past month, and were mentioned at the meeting last week. The committee plans to present a recommendation to the city commission at their meeting at 5 p.m. on Monday, March 15.

Closing North and the closure of the armory are not good things by themselves, but the decisions do give the citizens an opportunity to take these and find ways to use them to improve the community in some manner.

The snow reminds us winter is not over, but the return of the sun is not far away, and we believe better times are coming with the spring. Some of those may be announced by the end of March.

— Tom Betz

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Wind tried, but good Samaritan prevailed

Thumbs up to the bonnet rescuer, who, when it looked like the wind was going to win, made sure it didn't.-(e-mail); to Taylor Tom-sic, for winning the 2009 Goodland Masonic Lodge essay contest.-(e-mail); to the visiting Colorado pilots, for picking Goodland and the Butterfly Cafe for their lunch stop. Mr. TD, that was Good for Goodland, right?-(e-mail and telephone); to the two young men who stopped to help me with my stalled car. Next time I will check the gas gauge.-(e-mail); to those courteous folks at our fine public library, for their friendship and super assistance.-(e-mail). (Send your thumbs up to td1@st-tel.net, or phone 785-890-2475; no charge)

When you receive your 2010 census form, please, PLEASE fill it out. It is so important that you do. Unfortunately, too many people look at it as just a head count. It's more than that, much more. It also has to do with funds we will get based on the number of people we have. The higher the percentage of forms returned, the more money our community and country will receive. A 50- or 60-percent return won't cut it; we need upwards of 80 percent or better. The responsibility rests in your lap. Don't simply lay it aside and forget it. The only thing it'll collect is dust, whereas if you mail it in it turns into money. Just look at it that way, then sit down and fill it out and mail it. Thanks in advance for your cooperation.

I watched the CPAC convention coverage on



tom dreiling

- time out with td

C-Span over the weekend and was somewhat surprised at the presidential straw poll result. The Republican conservatives picked Texas Congressman Ron Paul the runaway choice with 31 percent of the vote. Sarah Plain was on the lower end of the poll with 7 percent. It was a lively convention and was a showcase for GOP presidential possibilities for 2012. The guy I like on the Republican side of the ballot is Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty. He, too, was on the lower end of the poll with 6 percent. But it's early. Gosh, they must have had a dozen plus hopefuls address the crowd and many of those have already chased a White House bid. The presidential stage is being readied.

Submitted: Remember when Congress said it was going to look into the Bernie Madoff scandal? Madoff is the guy who made \$50 billion disappear. Kind of laughable, isn't it, that he was to be investigated by the very people who made \$1.5 trillion disappear.

Enough on politics.

The weekend snowfall wasn't nearly as much as anticipated, but it stands as a reminder

that we are nearing the month in which we get most of our snow — March! We seem to get spring fever as February winds down. But after March does its thing, the month that follows isn't always April showers — as in rain — but at times April plays around in the snowpile, too. So, don't rush anything, just sit back, relax and enjoy whatever meteorologist Mother Nature dishes out.

Speaking of March, remember the time change to Daylight Saving Time this year occurs on Sunday, March 14. The night before that date, as you prepare for bed, remember to move your clocks UP one hour. In other words, Spring Forward! And speaking of Spring, it enters the scene on Saturday, March 20, six days after the time change. I like Daylight Saving Time.

I see where the Cialis TV couple is now pictured painting what looks like their front room (they must have gotten tired dancing), when he suddenly climbs down the ladder, looks at her, she looks at him and the scenery suddenly shifts to the woods where they are sitting on the grass and chatting. He takes her by the hand and....seconds later, they are back in their famed bath tubs. Strange neighbors!

Have a good evening! And remember your comments are always welcome to td1@st-tel.net.

This is Food Check Out Week

Food Check Out Week will be celebrated in Kansas and across the United States February 21-27. This celebration commemorates the calendar day when the average American will have earned enough income to pay for his/her entire year's food supply.

Based on U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) statistics, it takes just 37 days for the average American to earn enough disposable income to pay for the family's yearly food supply. In comparison, the average American had to work until April 11 to pay for taxes last year.

Consumers in Kansas and across this country share in this wealth of food products every time they step foot in their favorite supermarket. Yes, today's shopper is fortunate to reap the benefits provided by America's farmers and ranchers. Incidentally, the average American devotes just 10-percent of his or her disposable personal income to pay for food, according to USDA statistics. This is the lowest in the world.

This year's theme, "Stretching your Grocery Dollar with Healthy, Nutritious Food" is the perfect message to provide new opportunities for farmers and ranchers to tell their story.

As part of this year's Food Check Out Week celebration, the Kansas state committee of Farm Bureau Women, Sedgwick County Farm



Insight this week

- john schlageck

Bureau and KFB President Steve Baccus will partner with the American Farm Bureau's women leadership committee and AFBF President Bob Stallman. They will work together to highlight how consumers can stretch their food dollars while donating food and time to worthy causes in elementary schools and Ronald McDonald Houses in Sedgwick County.

Food affordability is just one of the many success stories worth celebrating when it comes to American agriculture. There are many others.

In 2008, \$115 billion worth of American agricultural products were exported around the world. Of each dollar spent on food, the farmer's share is approximately 19 cents. The rest goes for costs beyond the farm gate including wages and materials for production, processing, marketing, transportation and distribution. In 1980, farmers and ranchers received 31 cents.

More than 21-million Americans (15-percent of the U.S. workforce) produce, process, sell and trade this country's food and fiber.

Only 4.6 million people live on farms — slightly less than 2-percent of the total U.S. population.

Farmers and ranchers are proud of their profession. Nowhere is this more visible than the Midwest and our home state of Kansas in particular. Members of this profession take great pride in producing the cleanest, most abundant wheat crop anywhere in the country. Farmers are also proud of the other cereal crops they produce along with fruits and vegetables.

Ranchers produce some of the best cattle, hogs and sheep. As producers of some of the most abundant, healthy and economical food anywhere, they wouldn't trade their profession for any other. They remain a fiercely independent group.

Kansans are also proud that Food Check Out Week is an idea that originated with Kansas Farm Bureau in 1997 and has since gone national. Neosho County Farm Bureau member Linda Reinhart, former chair of the Kansas committee of Farm Bureau Women and the American Farm Bureau Women's committee thought the concept was important and saw it through to completion.

The core message of Food Check Out Week remains the same — food in America is affordable and safe, thanks in large part to America's productive farmers and ranchers. Food Check Out Week allows us to back up that message and build on it to strengthen the consumer's awareness and image of America's farmers and ranchers.

The story of the American farmer and rancher is truly a success story. Our producers are the most productive in the world. Remember to help celebrate this story and the healthiest, safest food anywhere on the planet Feb. 21-27.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau has been writing about farming and ranching in Kansas for more than 25 years. He is the managing editor of "Kansas Living," a quarterly magazine dedicated to agriculture and rural life in Kansas.

where to write

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