

from our viewpoint...

Volunteers show how training pays

Volunteers train and practice to handle emergency situations, and Saturday was an example of when the training pays off in the heat of the moment.

Saturday afternoon dispatchers called out the Goodland Sherman County Rural Fire department for a fire south of town and west on County Road 55 with three trucks dispatched to handle that fire. They were aided by the tanker with extra water.

Minutes later a second fire was reported north of Ruleton, and dispatchers called out Kanorado Fire to handle that fire with two trucks heading to the fire scene.

Sherman County Undersheriff Roger Studer was out in front of the fire trucks heading south to help give them directions and find ways to reach the fire. As he headed to the fire he came up against a locked fence belonging to the state department of wildlife that had a combination lock.

Studer called in to dispatch saying he would have to cut the lock to get to the fire. A quick response from the dispatcher was to give the combination for the lock, and Studer was able to open the gate quickly. That is how things are supposed to work, and with the two fires going, a second dispatcher was on board to help handle the radio messages and keeping track of what was happening at each site.

Both fires happened about 4 p.m. on Saturday and the volunteers found themselves fighting the muddy roads as well as the fires. At both fire scenes, the firemen found their trucks getting stuck, and needing help from nearby farmers to get the trucks out.

At the Ruleton fire, the Kanorado firemen were aided by the rescue truck from Goodland, and with shovels got ahead of the fire. Volunteers had to put out a small fire in a building as the fire had started as a trash fire, but got away and headed into conservation reserve land to the west.

The weather cooperated as the wind was at 8 mph out of the east, and was much lighter than the gusty winds on Friday. The firemen down south got to a position to allow the fire to come to them, and were able to get it under control.

Both fires were out and the volunteers back at their stations by about 6 p.m. For the firemen it was probably another hour or more before they got the mud off the trucks themselves and were able to go home for the evening.

Many times the many volunteers in the community do their best without fanfare. We felt proud of the Goodland rural fire department and Kanorado fire department as they handled the two fires miles apart in the county.

The dispatchers played their part, and handled the sometimes confusing traffic coming from firemen at the two fire sites. The afternoon demonstrated the success of the training and emergency planning the volunteer firemen do on a continuing basis.

We salute our dispatchers, volunteer firemen and the farmers who assisted with the emergencies. — *Tom Betz*

Letter Policy

The Goodland Star-News encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, and must include a telephone number and a signature. Unsigned letters will not be published. Form letters will be rejected, as will letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and good taste. We encourage letters, with address and phone numbers, by e-mail to: <star.news@nwkansas.com>.

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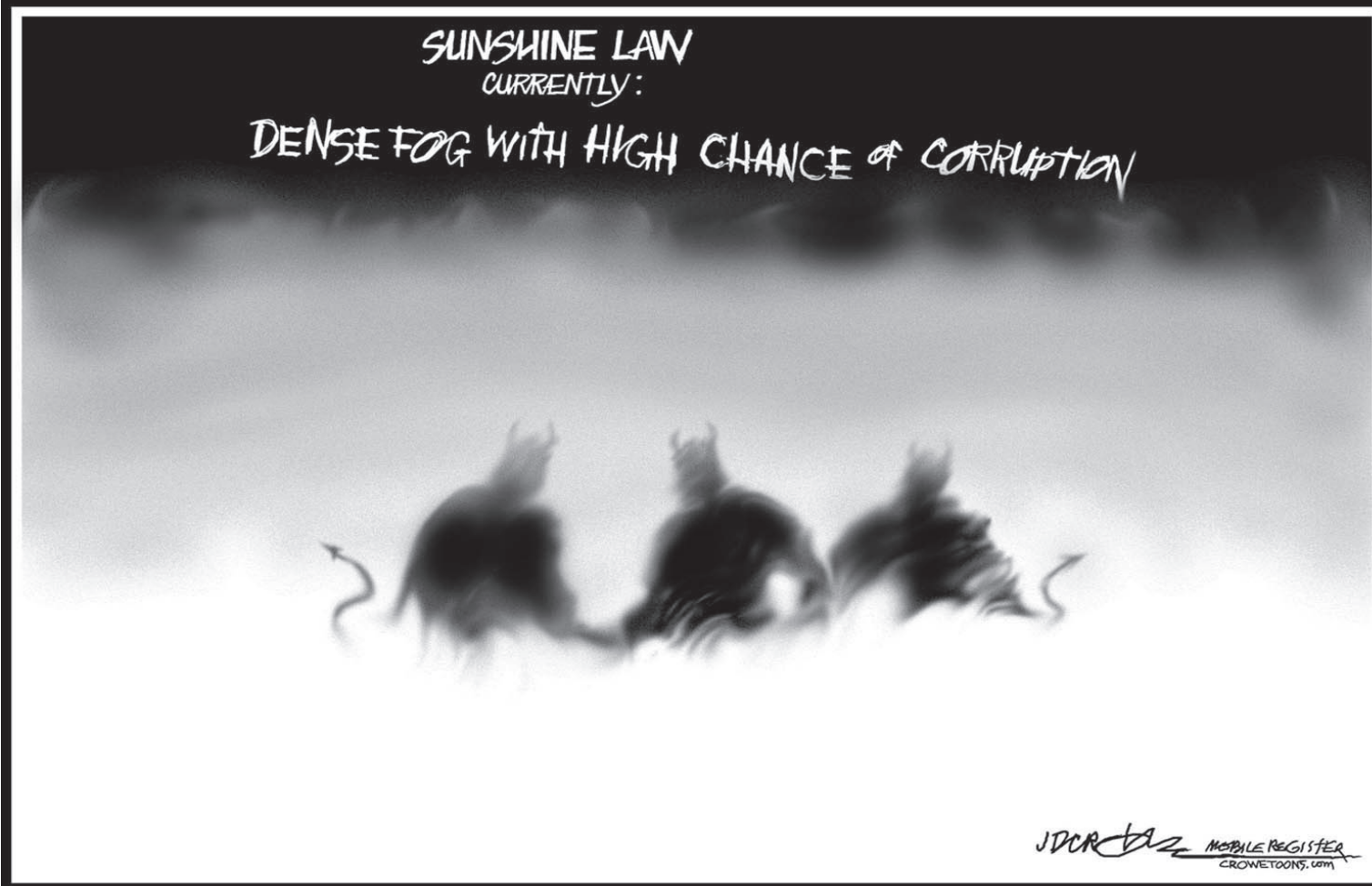
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THE SHERMAN COUNTY STAR
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Let's hear it for these volunteers

Thumbs up to: "All volunteers for their early start to get things ready for 'The Run For The Wall' group's overnight stay in Goodland."-(e-mail); "the county and the hospital for donating an unneeded ambulance to Northwest Tech."-(e-mail); "President Ed Mills, for his vision for the use of the National Guard Armory. Makes a lot of sense."-(telephone); "All of those students you guys had in the paper for National Honor Society."-(e-mail); "It's time someone gives a salute to our 4-H Clubs reporters for doing such a nice job.-(telephone);" *(To render a salute, simply e-mail tad1@st-tel.net, call 890-2475 or mail to or drop it off at The Star-News Office. Thanks for your input; no charge.)*

-td-
Well, it's here! March Madness! Basketball fan or not, all eyes will be glued to the television set to see what two teams will battle it out for the national title. Of course before then there will be 64 contenders, the least of the lot hoping to become the Cinderella of the (basket) ball. I don't see any budding cinderella out there. It's a tough field, to say the least. Here in Kansas we can be proud that both the Kansas Jayhawks and the K-State Wildcats are drawing considerable attention, KU is favored to win the national title and K-State a potent threat. Get out the popcorn, the Coke, the Pepsi or whatever your choice and become part of one of the most popular sporting events — March Madness.



tom dreiling

• time out with td

-td-
Well, Gov. Mark Parkinson signed a House- and Senate-passed bill to snuff out all the cigarettes in nearly all public places in the state. The only untouchables are the handful of casinos. Huh?! You read that right. But word has it that the House and Senate are going to pass legislation to put those place on the "no smoking" list also. Why they were overlooked — smacks of lobbying to me — escapes common sense. I've been smoke free for 40 years, and if I was able to kick that habit to allow me to hang around longer to enjoy my kids and grandkids, so can you.

-td-
Here we are, half way through the month of March. I'm not going to ask, "How did that happen so fast?" There is no answer. But it does get us that much closer to the outdoor weather and that's always worth the wait. And I see in this newspaper where the city is accepting applications for pool staff for Steever Water Park for the rapidly approaching swim season. Great opportunity to earn some cash, soak up some sun and be in the midst of summer fun! Applications available at the city office, 204 W.

11th Street, or visit www.goodlandks.us.

-td-
Sunday was an overcast, damp and cold day. But thank goodness the weekend wasn't a total failure, as Saturday was an exceptional March day. I took advantage of the sun, the slight breeze and the favorable temperature to spend a lot of my time outdoors on the patio, at Gulick Park and at the cemetery. That's right, the cemetery. I have a personal attachment to that sacred ground with my wife Jeannie buried there. I added a little color to our plot and was just in awe at how nice the cemetery looked overall. The people who maintain the cemetery just can't be given enough praise. I don't care when I go out there, it's always in perfect condition. That speaks well of the respect we pay our loved ones. May they all rest in peace.

-td-
No, I haven't forgotten that St. Patrick's Day is just hours away. And from the McDreiling home to all of you who wear the green so proudly, may St. Patrick's Day be memorable and meaningful, as it should be. It's the day all of us in this great land claim to be Irish. As we celebrate, let's do so responsibly. OK? Happy St. Patrick's Day!

-td-
Have a good evening! And remember to say something GOOD about GOODland today. Talk to you later.

Celebrate National Ag Week

In case you hadn't noticed, agriculture provides almost everything we eat, use and wear on a daily basis. This industry is increasingly contributing to fuel and other bio-products. Still, too few people understand and appreciate this contribution. This is particularly true in our schools today where students may be exposed to agriculture only if they enroll in related vocational training — if it even exists. Friday marks the first day of spring. It falls during National Ag Week, March 14-20. This is a time to recognize and celebrate the abundance provided by this nation's farmers and ranchers. National Ag Week encourages each and every American to understand how food and fiber products are produced, value the essential role of agriculture in maintaining a strong economy and appreciate the role agriculture plays in providing safe, abundant and affordable products. It's during this period we as agricultural associations help those in our communities understand how food, fiber and renewable resource products are produced. We must highlight the essential role agriculture plays



Insight this week

• john schlageck

in maintaining a strong Kansas economy as well as our U.S. economy. It's up to us to foster an appreciation of the role agriculture plays in providing safe, abundant and affordable food, fuel and fiber among today's citizenry. We must inform this same population about the career opportunities in the agricultural industry. Agriculture is too important a topic to be taught only to a small percentage of students considering careers in agriculture and pursuing vocational agricultural studies. Across Kansas this week county Farm Bureau organizations will provide programs informing Kansans about agriculture as well as celebrating our industry's contributions. Activities for National Ag Week include radio programs on farming and ranching, breakfasts, ag book distributions, library dis-

plays about agriculture, newspaper ads, farm tours, ag implement dealer tours and farm and ranch safety. All of these activities are intended to increase the knowledge of agriculture and nutrition among today's consumers to help them make informed personal choices about diet and health. Informed citizens will also be better able to participate in establishing the policies that will support a competitive agricultural industry in the country and around the world. A few generations ago, most Americans were directly involved in — or had relatives or friends involved in agricultural-related endeavors. Today, that's no longer the case. That's why it is so important we join together on this special week devoted to telling the story of this unparalleled success story. Remember, celebrate agriculture this week. Agriculture is truly amazing. 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.

