

from our viewpoint...

## Change's promise, progress coming

Change is always happening because time does not stand still, and the promise of change is what happens brings progress.

In today's edition of *The Goodland Star-News* is an annual special section we devote to the changes and progress of the past year. Inside the section readers will learn about changes businesses in the county have made over the past year, and information about the larger changes coming in the future.

Some of the changes are small, and without writing them down might have been missed by the people who may not notice these changes.

Big changes such as the city water project and the street projects are hard to miss as we find ourselves dealing with several closed streets and cone zones for detours. The K-27 project will continue through the summer, and the first two phases have reached the halfway point with the east lanes poured. The detour will be switched soon to begin the second half replacing the west lanes. Plans for the third phase from the Walmart and Herls entrance north are moving and bids will be let by mid August. The hope is Smoky Hill, the company doing the first two phases, can win the bid and continue this fall to finish the project.

The city water line project is getting closer to being done. That makes way for the mill and overlay of Caldwell Ave. from Ninth to 12th or further south depending on the money available. Work is moving forward on the water treatment plant on Kansas Ave., but the city water system could get a major change when the water lines are done and all the water is blended through the main collection point.

Northwest Tech is another big change of the past year, and on Monday the college held an open house for the newly remodeled Cosmetology program with a much needed face lift and new entrance to make it easier for customers. College President Dr. Ed. Mills has been aggressive in efforts to improve the image of the college and through his efforts more of the community has come to understand and embrace the college and students.

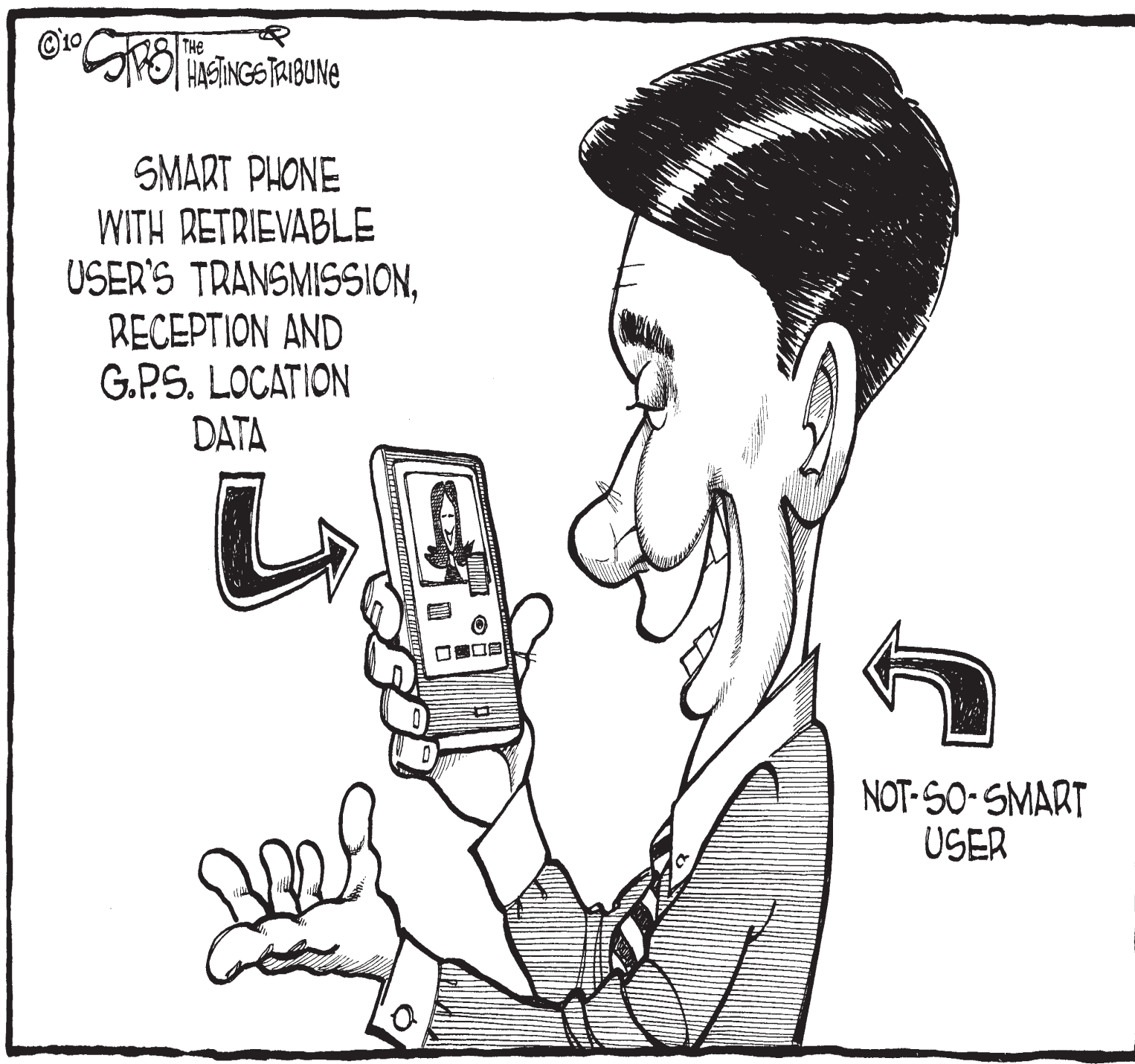
When the college opens in August the enrollment is expected to increase by more than 10 percent, and part of that will be the students who will be part of the Mavericks men's wrestling team, women's golf team and a co-ed rodeo team. Northwest Tech is the first technical college in Kansas to expand into the athletic arena.

Downtown businesses have seen change over the year, and some of that is included in the stories in today's edition. One of the stories is from Sam Mancini, owner of Valley Markets, who is moving ahead with plans to open a grocery store in the old IGA building at 10th and Center Ave., known as the Ed Wolak building. This project has come a long ways from the first contacts Mancini made with the Sherman County Economic Development County in September.

A sad change this past year was the closing of the Kansas National Guard Armory, but the city has named the building for Sgt. Derrick Lutters, who lost his life in Iraq and was a member of the Goodland guard unit. A citizens committee looked at many options for the building, and the best was to turn it over to Northwest Tech to be converted into an off campus location for an aircraft maintenance and development program.

Goodland Regional Medical Center continues to look at the future and is working on establishing a renal dialysis clinic to fill a void created when the clinic in Burlington closed this year.

Changes in the business community happen all the time, but the hope is with every new opening the business will be around to celebrate many years of success. — Tom Betz



## Health information exchange in Kansas

To facilitate a health care delivery system in Kansas that ensures quality, confidentiality, efficiency and effectiveness for patients, Governor Mark Parkinson has established the Kansas Health Information Exchange, Inc.

"A strong health information exchange will not only improve patient care, but it will add efficiencies and thus cost savings to our health care system in Kansas," said Parkinson. "As we work to have an electronic health record for every Kansan in the next four years, we also remain focused on protecting the safety and security of their information. I look forward to seeing the progress the corporation will make in this endeavor and the economic benefits for our state."

The governor created the Kansas Health Information Exchange, Inc., a not-for profit corporation, to uphold federal requirements for a statewide exchange of health information. Widespread use of health information technology has the potential to improve the quality and efficiency of health care, prevent medical errors such as adverse drug reactions and reduce



from other pens

• commentary

health care costs by increasing administrative efficiencies and decreasing paperwork.

Secretary Roderick Bremby of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment was a member and convener of the eHealth Advisory Council that recommended the formation of a not-for-profit, public-private partnership for the purpose of operating the Kansas Health Information Exchange, Inc. "The Kansas Health Information Exchange, Inc. will implement this important policy to improve our health care delivery and support health care providers," said Secretary Bremby.

Once a state plan is submitted to and approved by the federal Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology, the State of Kansas will be awarded a

little more than \$9 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to assist in the creation and implementation of a governance, policy and technical infrastructure that will enable standards-based health information exchange (HIE) and enable a high-performance health care system.

Kansas Health Information Exchange, Inc. will facilitate the secure exchange of health information throughout the state as well as use information technology to improve health care quality and efficiency. The corporation will also connect regional HIEs and other stakeholders within the state to each other and connect subscribers to HIEs within and outside the state for the purpose of improving health care quality for individuals and patient populations.

Governor Parkinson created the Kansas Health Information Exchange, Inc. through Executive Order 10-06. To view the full executive order, please visit: <http://governor.ks.gov/issues-a-initiatives/executive-orders>.

## Unnecessary and costly

A recent notice of intent to sue the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency filed by the Friends of the Kaw could cost the agriculture industry in Kansas millions of dollars by pushing more nutrient control measures for wastewater treatment systems on the agricultural landscape. Friends of Kaw is a non-profit, environmental organization whose mission is to protect/preserve the Kansas River.

Not only would this expansion of authority be detrimental to Kansas agriculture, small businesses, cities and others who have made significant improvements to control runoff and to protect streams and water supplies, but there is little evidence the requested standards would result in additional improvements to water quality.

For several decades, Kansas has operated under a narrative standard for nutrient management. This meant Kansas operated under a verbal statement of its intention to maintain best management practices to ensure water quality from agriculture (and other) storm water runoff to limit nutrients entering surface waters.

However, in 1998 EPA directed states to adopt stricter numeric standards for nutrients, requiring a single, set number. Compliance with this type of standard is much more difficult given the variable nature of Kansas waters and runoff events.



Insight this week

• john schlageck

Throughout the years, farmer and rancher members who belong to Kansas Farm Bureau have worked closely with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment in the development and implementation of our current narrative standard. Through their farm organization, these members have responded back with their intention to intervene should this Friends of Kaw suit move forward.

"If it ain't broke, don't fix it," said Ottawa County farmer Steve Baccus, who serves as president of the state Farm Bureau. "By all accounts, the state's current nutrient reduction system is working."

Farmers and ranchers understand the critical need to maintain water quality and are using farming practices to limit the application of nutrients. They have installed millions of dollars worth of runoff control measures to ensure Kansas streams remain a valuable and available resource for everyone.

Farming and ranching operations across Kansas are diverse. Each and every business is different.

Some producers operate small-scale livestock backgrounding operations and at the same time grow row crops. Others grow specialty crops. And still others operate commercial cattle feeding facilities or large-scale row crop businesses.

The diversity of agricultural operations and the type of aquatic ecosystems in Kansas makes the "one-size-fits-all" approach of a numeric standard costly, illogical and difficult to administer. In addition, each of those operators — when required — have worked to monitor and develop control measures as well as implement best management practices to ensure nutrients are applied within acceptable limits, or are contained to prevent runoff which could impact water quality.

During the short amount of time this strategy has been in place, improvements to water quality have been seen and will continue to be measured. Imposition of numeric criteria will not enhance this strategy, and in fact may retard its progress.

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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**U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715; Fax (202) 225-5124 web address — www.jerrymoran.house.gov

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(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)

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Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association

National Newspaper Association

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Published every Tuesday and Friday except the days observed for New Year's Day, Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas Day, at 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

Periodicals postage paid at Goodland, Kan. 67735; entered at the Goodland, Kan. Post Office under the Act of Congress of March 8, 1878.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Goodland Star-News, 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

TELEPHONE: (785) 899-2338. Editorial e-mail: [star-news@nwkansan.com](mailto:star-news@nwkansan.com). Advertising questions can be sent to: [goodlandads@nwkansan.com](mailto:goodlandads@nwkansan.com)

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SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$29; six months, \$46; 12 months, \$81. Out of area, weekly mailing of two issues: three months, \$39; six months, \$54; 12 months, \$89 (All tax included). Mailed individually each day: (call for a price).

Incorporating:

**The Goodland Daily News**  
1932-2003

**The Sherman County Herald**  
Founded by Thomas McCants  
1935-1989

**THE SHERMAN COUNTY STAR**  
Founded by Eric and Roxie Youke  
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