

from our viewpoint...

Building prosperity, community spirit

Spring has arrived! The ground continues to be dry, but where the irrigation systems are operating and where there has been just enough moisture, the surface is turning green. The leaves are beginning to show on the shrubs and trees, and the spring flowers are in display. There are other signs of progress, and with help from above, there will be some rain to help the farmers have a good growing season and harvest. With the warmer weather, more people are moving around outside in the sunshine, and yard work begins with the first mowing and turning on of the sprinkler to irrigate the grass. At a recent Economic Development Council meeting, a special sheet showing How to Build Community was presented by vice chair Dave Daniels. He said he had seen it in Steamboat Springs, Colo., during a ski trip and felt it was worth sharing. The list has a number of ideas that are small enough that everyone can use them to help boost the vitality of the community. Some take more planning and participation, but are no less worthy. “Turn off your television. Leave your house. Know your neighbors. Look up when you are walking. Greet People. Sit on your stoop or porch. “Plant flowers. Use your library. Buy from local merchants. Take children to the park. Fix it even if you did not break it. “Pick up litter. Talk to the mail carrier. Listen to the birds. Put up a swing. Help carry something heavy. Hire young people for odd jobs. “Share your skills. Read stories aloud. Bake extra and share. Organize a block party. “Learn from new and uncomfortable angles. Know that no one is silent though many are not heard. Work to change this.” As we come back out into the sunshine of spring and summer, we need to keep these in mind and reach out to our friends and neighbors. Taking these steps in our community is as important as the opening of any new business. The actions of each person build the feeling of community and the sense of belonging that ties people together and develops community spirit. We enjoy living in this city, and believe the rains will return to help make the area as green as we do our lawns. May each one of us reach out to someone to help make it a great spring. — *Tom Betz*

Letter Policy

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The Goodland Star-News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)
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National Newspaper Association
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Published every Tuesday and Friday except the days observed for New Year's Day 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@nwkanssas.com. Advertising questions can be sent to: goodlandads@nwkanssas.com
The Goodland Star-News assumes no liability for mistakes or omissions in advertising or failure to publish beyond the actual cost of the ad. SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$20; six months, \$38; 12 months, \$72. Out of area, weekly mailing of two issues: three months, \$30; six months, \$45; 12 months, \$80. Mailed individually each day: 12 months, \$115. (All tax included.)

Incorporating:
The Goodland Daily News
1932-2003
The Sherman County Herald
Founded by Thomas McCants
1935-1989
Nor'West Newspapers
Haynes Publishing Company

THE SHERMAN COUNTY STAR
Founded by Eric and Roxie Yonkey
1994-2001



Nice to get back to normal after remodeling

The house is starting to get put back together. I thought I was going to go mad for a few weeks while we had painters and carpet layers. Then a pair of guys came and tore off my back porch. I not only couldn't walk through the front of the house without moving sideways to get by the furniture, which was pushed to the middle of the rooms; I couldn't get out my back door without jumping down about 18 inches or using a wobbly cement block as a step. While intellectually I knew you have to do all this stuff to make things better, I wasn't prepared to deal with it when it came. First of all, I had forgotten we had so much stuff. We have stuff stuffed behind couches, in drawers, in closets, on shelves, on the floor, on tables, on — well you get the idea — pretty much everywhere. The scary part is we weren't even touching the basement, where we store stuff. The last time I had to deal with a mess like this was 10 years ago when I packed our household and moved to Oberlin. At that time, we had two teen-agers to blame for a lot of the stuff. The teen-agers are now 20-somethings and live in Lawrence, and I think we have more stuff than when they were both here.



cynthia haynes

● open season

After getting the upstairs and downstairs painted and carpeting put down in three rooms, the painters departed and the carpet layers said they would be back in a couple of weeks to finish the job of recarpeting the downstairs bedroom and the stairs that lead to the basement. Over the last week, we have rehung pictures, sorted and discarded piles of newspapers and magazines with articles we were going to read when we got around to it, and started putting things back where they belong. The cats have done well during this topsyturvy time. The painters found dozens of cat toys hidden under inaccessible cabinets and Molly somehow figured out how to get under the ice box. I inherited my Daddy's liquor cabinet — an antique ice box. It's filled with booze we seldom drink and glasses for same. When the painters moved it out, the cats discovered that

the flap on the front is hinged — I'm not sure why — and there was room to get under the other three sides for a cat hiding place. With the ice box back in its corner and the humidifier next to it, only the front with the flap is now available. Molly has the contraption figured out. She puts her paw under and pulls it toward her, then snakes her plump little self under before it falls back down. April Alice just can't figure it out. She sees Molly get under there, and she knows she was able to do it when the ice box was out in the middle of the room. Now, however, she can't get the hang of opening the door. It's driving her crazy, especially when she sees Molly under there. The old back porch or deck was falling apart and it took less than a week for the builders to take it off and replace it. The new one is not only strong, but as beautiful as only redwood and cedar can be when fresh. I know it will gray out, but right now it's great. I still need to get the rest of the carpeting down, but I'm in no hurry. I don't have to pay for the work until it's done, and right now it's just nice to have my house back. Plus, I still have plenty of pictures to hang.

Democrats need to explain their plan

I find myself constantly wondering if the Democrats have any plans to make our lives better. All I hear from them is about how bad President George Bush and his administration are. It seems as if everything that is wrong in the world is directly their fault. Sunday, Democratic presidential hopeful John Kerry, speaking in St. Louis, accused the administration, "our present national leadership," of neglecting the less fortunate. Maybe it's true, maybe it isn't, but what is Kerry's plan? What is he going to do about it? Right now, it looks like he'll do nothing about that, or anything else for that matter. Throughout his campaign, Kerry has managed to convince me that, if elected, he'll spend the first two years of his term blaming the Republicans for everything, then spend the next two on his re-election campaign.

When I think of Kerry, I'm reminded of the 1995 movie "The American President" with Michael Douglas. At the end of the movie, he says that his opponent is interested in two things, and two things only: Making you afraid of it and telling you who's to blame for it. Kerry is going to be the Democratic nominee, and supposedly will have the complete support of all the other current and former presidential candidates. So apparently all the criticisms other Democrats had about Kerry before are now of no consequence. I don't believe that; there are serious doubts within the party about Kerry's ability to lead the nation, even if they are being kept under the surface. My problem with Kerry is that he is a career politician, serving 20 years as a Democratic senator from Massachusetts, which to me means he has plenty of experience at being in



greg stover

● as i see it

charge, but not as a leader. He could prove to be one, but I don't vote on maybes. The last I heard the polls (for all they're worth) say an election today would be 49 percent both for Bush and Kerry, millions of dollars spent to find out the election is a toss-up. The main thing this tells me is that people lack confidence in the current administration. That is my biggest concern about the Bush administration. If the people are not confident with the leadership they'll look for something better, even if it's of unknown quality. I have

confidence in our nation's leadership, but if the majority of people don't, then I'll be the first to say it's time for a change. I don't believe either party has the American people as their primary concern, and that is not going to change anytime soon. I registered as an independent when I was 18 and have been since, even though the new term is "no party affiliation." I was ready to vote Republican in both the last two Presidential elections, but changed my mind just before election day. Not because of what the Democratic candidate said during the final days of the campaign, but what the Republican said which made me reconsider. It's bad when people vote for who they think will do the least damage rather than which one will do the best job. Perhaps what I'm saying is, "Tell me why I should vote for you and not why I shouldn't vote for him."

where to write

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