

from our viewpoint...

# Higher driving age saves teenage lives

The headline was sad, the story sadder. A 15-year-old girl was killed, her passenger, also 15, hurt, when their pickup rolled on a rural highway. The girls were thrown from the truck as it rolled. Neither was wearing a seatbelt, and it's a wonder both weren't killed. These girls were 15. The driver, who was killed, had a restricted license good for driving to and from school and on farm errands. The wreck occurred when the inexperience driver lost control, drifted off the pavement, then "overcorrected" — jerked the wheel — and rolled the truck. Police said she was driving illegally, joy riding with a friend. Teens under 16 are not supposed to have anyone with them except an adult or a relative. None of that matters much now to a grieving family or a grieving town. A child has been lost, and nothing will bring her back. We can save others. Kansas needs to change its driver licensing laws. Kids 14 and 15 don't need to drive. It isn't safe. Too many of them are killed every year. They don't need to drive to school. Kansas districts have plenty of buses. The don't need to drive on farm errands. That can wait until they are 16. The sure don't need to be out cruising with their friends. They'll have plenty of time for that later — if they live. Most surrounding states no longer allow 14- and 15-year-olds to drive. All are farm states, but most have seen the light. We should, too. The law needs to be changed, and until it is, Kansas police officers need to enforce the laws we have. No more kids driving to school in violation of the law. No more kids driving around without a license. The cops should stop them, give them a ticket and send these kids home. Before it is too late. Before another one is killed. Sure, the kids won't like it. Some parents will be angry. It won't be the most popular bill this session. But it will save lives and end this senseless loss of our children. Kids 14 and 15 don't need to drive. We shouldn't let them go out and kill themselves. We need to change this law, this year, before one more child dies. — *Steve Haynes*

## The Goodland Star-News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)  
Member: Kansas Press Association  
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 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](mailto:star-news@nwkanssas.com). Advertising questions can be sent to: [goodlandads@nwkanssas.com](mailto:goodlandads@nwkanssas.com)

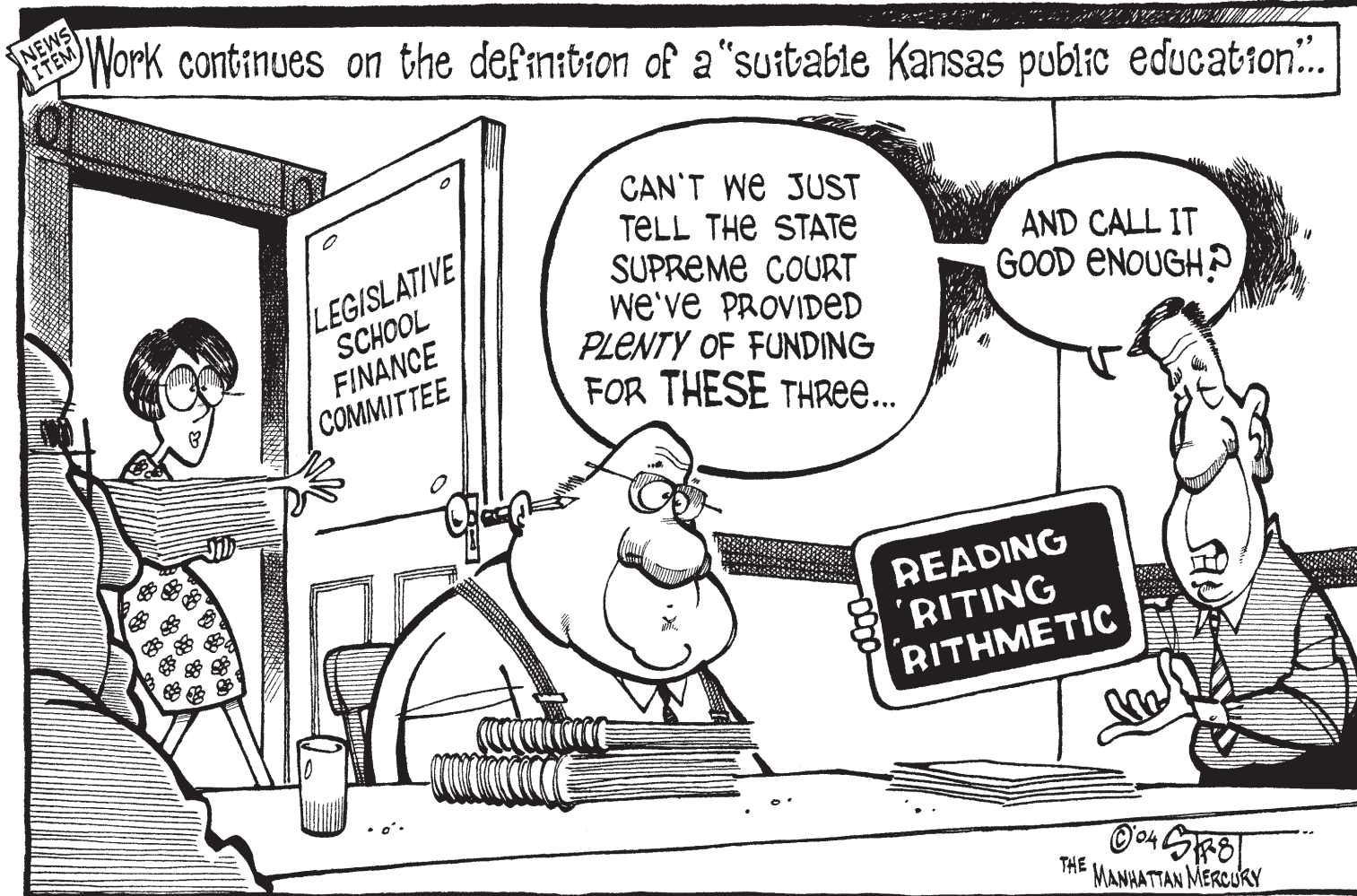
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**THE SHERMAN COUNTY STAR**  
Founded by Eric and Roxie Yonkey  
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# Border guard comes to the rescue

When my mother suggested we spend a week in the California desert near Palm Springs, it was OK with me, but my wife said she had other plans — anything but the desert. My daughter Nikki, from Blackfoot, Idaho, decided she could come down and go with me. Ava and I picked her up in Denver while we were there for the National Newspaper Association convention. The computer said it is a 14.5-hour drive from Lamar, Colo., to mom and dad's home in Casa Grande, Ariz., and that's what it took us to get there — even with stops for gas and a couple of meals. We loaded Mom and Dad into the van and headed for Indio, Calif., where we spent six days at the Indian Palms Intervals. Sightseeing from Indio is a trip, and usually involves driving for at least an hour to get to where you are going. The Joshua Tree National Park is interesting, but unless you are planning to camp there, it is a long drive to see this unusual palm tree. We did a drive through the park, and by the end of the day, we had racked up 140 miles. Driving to the Salton Sea was a bit shorter — more like a 60-mile round trip. The nearest wine country is in Temecula,



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southwest of Indio. That was another wild trip, but we did get to visit three wineries and bring back a few bottles of decent wine. Gas prices gave us a lump in our throat, with the medium-grade unleaded that my wife's van takes going as high as \$2.39 a gallon. It dropped back to \$2.05 a gallon when we returned to Arizona. As we left Thursday, Nikki volunteered to drive, and after all the driving I had been doing, it was fine with me. We were driving south of Indio to reach El Centro and I-8 when suddenly I heard a strange sound out of the left rear, and Nikki and I both realized it was a blown tire. She did a good job of getting across the highway and off on the shoulder. Unpacking the van, we found the jack and lug wrench, but the book said the spare tire was up under the left, and there was a release in the floor. Unfortunately that was where Ava's

handicap hoist for her scooter was bolted to the van floor, and we did not have a wrench. I hiked down the highway to find out where we were while Nikki called 911 for help. The dispatcher kept asking if she knew where we were, but Nikki could only tell her we were outside of Westmoreland, which was about 15 miles ahead. I found the 41 mile marker and headed back to the van. A car and a semi tractor stopped to see if I needed a ride, but neither of them had any tools. When I got back, a white car pulled up on the side and it had a government plate. It was Officer Vasquez of the Border Patrol. He and his K-9 partner Rek had come to the rescue — he had a socket set and pliers to unbolt the hoist so we could lower the spare tire. We managed to get it out, but we ended up buying two new tires when we limped into El Centro. It was amazing that in all that the ice cream we had in the cooler did not melt, but there were moments when I thought we were while trying to get that tire out. We may have to think about a different way to carry a spare, or at least have a socket set and wrench in the van for the next time.

# The world is what we eat



prairie writers circle  
wylie harris

farming — and shopping — can do both. Pound for pound, growing food organically emits less carbon dioxide than the methods most commonly used to grow food today. Conventional agriculture uses large amounts of synthetic, fossil-fuel-based nitrogen fertilizer, and its production and use account for as much as a third of agriculture's carbon dioxide emissions. Organic farms don't use synthetic nitrogen, relying instead on crop residues and manure for fertility. What's more, Rodale Institute studies show that this recycling of organic matter back into the soil can increase the amount of carbon stored there. So organic farming takes the prize in today's agriculture for addressing the problem of mounting carbon dioxide levels in our atmo-

sphere. And organic has an added benefit: It doesn't poison our soil and water with the synthetic pesticides so widely used in conventional farming. Growing food, however, is only half the battle. Getting it to the table also puts out a lot of carbon dioxide. Food in the United States typically travels 1,500 miles before landing on the dinner plate. The food industry is the largest user of freight transportation in the country. Buying more locally grown food would reduce those miles, keeping more fossil-fuel carbon in the tank and out of the sky. Local foods might seem hard to find at first, but there's no better way of increasing supply than to make demand felt. And demand is already growing. The number of farmers and customers at farmers, markets and other direct sales outlets is up 20 percent annually over the past decade. Web sites like [localharvest.org](http://localharvest.org), [csacenter.org](http://csacenter.org) and [eatwellguide.org](http://eatwellguide.org) are good places to start looking for local sources. Buying organic and local food is a nearly unbeatable combination. Home gardening is another option, and is also a great source of exercise — without the gym fees. If you're concerned about global warming, you can — and should — express that concern to your elected representatives, and get them to start applying your tax money to keeping the worst-case climate change scenarios in the movies. Meantime, you can send a more immediate signal in the way you buy — or grow — your food each week.

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