

# Happy 105th!



Hazel Webster (left) visited with Sharon Lightle as she celebrated her 105th birthday at the Sherman County Good Samaritan Center Wednesday, Aug. 24, 2005. Staff at the center bought and made gifts for her that included a lighthouse snow globe that lights

up and makes the sound of the ocean and seagulls when it's touched, and items with St. Bernards, her favorite breed of dog.  
Photo by Sharon Corcoran/The Goodland Star-News

# Are consumers getting gouged with fuel prices?

Dear Attorney General Kline:

I just filled my car with gas and can't believe how high the prices are. And what's worse is they continue to rise. Isn't this price gouging?



**phill kline**

• attorney general

Dear Kansas Consumer: With gasoline prices at or near record levels, this is a question frequently being asked by consumers in Kansas and across the country.

The Kansas Consumer Protection Act provides broad protections against unconscionable pricing in general, not just for gasoline.

In its simplest terms, an "unconscionable" price is a price that far exceeds what the current market conditions would justify.

As consumers, we need to be aware that during normal market conditions, price fluctuations of 20 or 30 percent can frequently be justified, depending on market conditions, even when those factors are not readily apparent to the public.

Since gasoline prices are among the most volatile of prices in our economy today, when the prices change, we all notice it.

But like most goods, the price of gasoline can change for a number of reasons — seasonal driving habits affect gasoline prices and weather patterns alter the demand for fuel, while refinery problems and political considerations in OPEC countries affect fuel supplies, which cause the price of crude oil to increase, which in turn can cause prices at the pump to increase.

It is unlikely that any violation of Kansas law will be triggered until a station's price per gallon grossly exceeds the price of the same product in similar markets.

But if there is evidence that a supplier has artificially increased their selling price a significant amount beyond what other suppliers in the market are charging for the same product, then there is a basis to question what factors could justify

that change. If the supplier cannot provide a legal basis for the substantial difference, then the Consumer Protection Act's prohibitions and possible penalties may be applied.

The Kansas Consumer Protection laws exist to remedy true price gouging, not to regulate supply-driven fluctuations or to fix gas prices at a level we would all prefer to be paying.

Nothing in the consumer protection act attempts to set the market price, but it does provide a means to punish those who act with the intent to defraud or abuse the public trust.

If you are aware of a station selling at a price well in excess of other similar suppliers or a situation in which all stations double their prices in a short period of time, you should contact my Consumer Protection Division by calling 1-800-432-2310, or by visiting our website at [www.ksag.org](http://www.ksag.org).

Kansas consumers should be assured that my office is prepared to litigate cases in which we believe sudden gasoline price jumps do constitute "unconscionable" increases.

Attorney General Phill Kline offers this public service to help you avoid becoming a victim of consumer fraud. Although some of the details have been changed, the cases appearing in this column are based on actual complaints or questions.

For further information or to file a complaint, please write Attorney General Phill Kline, Consumer Protection Division, 120 SW 10th Ave., 2nd Floor, Topeka, Kansas 66612, or call the toll-free Consumer Hotline, 1-800-432-2310.

# Rotarians learn about health care

The Goodland Rotary Club met at noon Friday at the Vocational College to hear from Dr. Travis Daise about his practice and health care in general.

Brenda McCants, Rotarian of the Day, introduced her guest, Leandro Deguzman, director of the Goodland Family Health Center.

Deguzman is from the Philippines and his wife is a floor nurse in charge of the surgery at Goodland Regional Medical Center.

McCants introduced Dr Daise,

who talked about community health care.

He discussed health care issues, the need for everyone over 6 months of age to receive a flu shot and recommended pneumonia shots for at-risk patients.

Speaking of his own philosophy, Daise said a doctor-patient relationship is truly a partnership emphasizing the individual patient's medical needs.

The doctor emphasized the importance of "communityism," the need to be involved in all aspects of

community life and not just your own vocation and profession. To summarize his philosophy in this regard, he said, "pitch in and be involved in all aspects of your community and reap the benefits."

Rotary President Ron Lucas reminded all of the Tailgate Party to be held before the Cowboy-Indian Football game at 4:30 p.m. on Friday at Steever Park. All Rotarians and their wives are invited, and Hoxie Rotarians are the invited guests. Food and drink will be provided.

Participants are asked to bring a chair or two.

Members made certain Rotarian Larry Morgan celebrated his 95th birthday in style by having cake, ice cream and a rousing rendition of Happy Birthday. Morgan has been a Rotarian since 1933.

Larry McCants is Rotarian of the Day for Friday, and he has chosen engineer John McCullough, of JMC Engineering of London, to present a program.

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