

from our viewpoint...

Preparedness begins with good people

Every emergency is local to those who need help — and for the first to give it. No matter what happens, the people closest to the scene are the first to arrive, and what they do to handle the situation will go a long way in determining the outcome. Having an emergency plan is a good idea, but having a group of dedicated volunteers who know the plan and how to handle themselves in an emergency is better. Sherman County can be proud of the effort shown in the Thanksgiving weekend blizzard, and the people who helped have a renewed understanding of the old Boy Scout motto, “Be Prepared.”

People from all over the county came together during that storm to take care of the over 1,000 people who were stranded here, and to help their friends and neighbors. The storm is something that only comes along once in 25 years or so, we hope, but there are usually at least two or three times during a winter that snow and wind shut down I-70. The weather service usually can give a day or two advance warning for bad weather, and frequently they are overly cautious about when or how much snow the High Plains will get. Over the years they have learned — as have those of us who grew up on the Plains — that the openness can make ground blizzard conditions very dangerous.

Power problems caused additional frustration and problems for residents, along with the huddled masses at the Methodist Church, the armory and Max Jones Fieldhouse. Several lessons were learned in the course of that three days, and the members of the county’s new Local Emergency Planning Committee are working on some of the things that happened. Good volunteers are needed to be part of a Community Emergency Response Team and a Red Cross Disaster Team. These volunteers can be trained to be the lead responders in an emergency. Dangerous times can take a lot of forms, including tornadoes, fires, blizzards and dust storms, as well as a possible terrorist attack or bioterrorism incident.

Having a couple teams of people who can be first on the scene to begin helping and organizing the relief effort could make all the difference in how people work together and how well the community comes through. Disasters today have taken on a different look with the Homeland Security efforts that followed the airplane hijackings on Sept. 11, 2001. If you listen to the people who plan for emergencies, there are all kinds of dangers we need to be prepared for, and the ones from Mother Nature might be far down on that list. Training for the Community Emergency Response Team is coming up in March, and officials hope several people from Sherman County can attend to form a nucleus for a larger team to organize through the Neighborhood Watch program. Anyone interested in learning more about this should call Judy McKee at 890-5188. For the Red Cross, call Curtis Duncan, 899-2309, or Roberta Bretz, 890-3736. We have good police and sheriff’s officers, fire fighters and emergency medical people, but they will need help and relief if an emergency is widespread or lasts longer than a day.

Today is a good time to think about how you can help and volunteer. — Tom Betz



Hating the federal deficit doesn't solve it

Everyone hates the federal budget deficit, but nobody does anything about it. The deficit, fueled by war costs and ever-rising “entitlements,” is out of control. Congress is incapable of acting, it seems. The deficit this year is lurching toward \$580 billion. Total debt is now \$8.1 trillion dollars. Only war and welfare cost more than the burden of this debt. Interest on the national debt will be \$356 billion this year, larger than the budgets of all but two federal departments: Defense, and Health and Human Services. Time was when Democrats pushed to spend more every year, and Republicans tried to cut the budget. Then the Republicans got in power, controlling the White House and both sides of Congress. They cut taxes, but not spending, gambling that higher incomes would more than make up for the tax cuts. It worked, but guess what?



steve
haynes
● along the sappa

Spending still rose faster than income. Now it's the Democrats who call for a balanced budget while Republicans deliver record deficits. Why? They don't mean it. Democrats still want to spend. They don't have to make the Republicans look bad, though. The GOP has done that to itself. Given the chance to show some leadership and do something about the national debt, the Republicans ran the other way. Only Bill Clinton posted a balanced budget. Not Ronald Reagan. Not George W. Bush. To be fair, Clinton came to power during an unprecedented boom. Tax money rolled in

faster than Congress could spend it. George Bush inherited a failing economy and plunging tax revenue. He did what he promised and cut taxes. Then a couple of wars sucked up the money his economic moves generated. And with Republicans in power everywhere, the country has its worst deficits, its largest debt and its worst trade balance ever. Some legacy. What happens next? Federal spending is out of control. No one in Congress will vote to cut any program, because every program has its pressure group. We all have our favorites. Some day, though, Social Security will collapse. Mr. Bush is right about that. Some day, the debt will grow so large we won't be able to pay the interest. Other countries will stop loaning us money. Some day, this country is going to be broke. The way things work in Washington, no one will make a move until it's too late. Not a pretty picture, but there's nothing on the horizon to suggest it won't happen that way.

Veterans should continue cooperative effort

During the Kansas legislative session last year, I carried a resolution asking for another 60-plus years of cooperation between the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs and the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars. I did this to ensure service and support for Kansas veteran's programs, including filing claims with the federal Department of Veterans Affairs. My intention is for the State of Kansas to continue to furnish employees to veteran service groups that will help with accreditation, training, and offices for the state employees housed in our VA hospitals.

This has been an effective partnership serving veterans and their families, but it is being dismantled by the state Veterans Commission. Positions have continually been eliminated as VFW and American Legion service officers have retired or died. These vacancies present a serious disservice to our veterans and their families seeking claims. The commission executive director's solution would be to hire a "pure veterans commission" employee and have veterans groups train and furnish office space for these people, who would, of course, meet the minimum qualification of the commission. Our veterans organizations have a right to be concerned, because these employees could lack experience and qualifications needed to understand the claims being filed by veterans, especially our senior veterans. I met with state adjutant quartermaster of the VFW, Darell Bencken, concerning this. I'm aware the governor has added \$400,000 to the veterans commission budget, but I am not convinced this will solve the problem. I met with a reviser to get an exemption in the wording of the bill for veteran's service representative of the commission to receive a stipend from veterans service organizations in addition to their full-time compensation. This House Bill No,



ralph
ostmeyer
● state senator

2565 has been filed with the Appropriation Committee and has broad support. Two questions need to be asked of your leg-

islators: will dissolving this partnership between the state veterans commission and the veteran's organizations be beneficial to Kansas veterans and their families? If not, then who does benefit and how? At a time when we have our young men and women returning from the war in Iraq, along with the many veterans of past wars, we need to be sure the veterans have a voice as to whether this partnership is dissolved.

The Goodland Star-News

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

Member: Kansas Press Association
Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association
National Newspaper Association
e-mail: star-news@nwkansas.com

Steve Haynes, President
Tom Betz, Editor
Erica Harlan, Copy Editor
Sharon Corcoran, Society Editor
Pat Schiefen, Reporter
Greg Stover, Sports Editor

Anne Hamilton, Yvonne Ornelas, Advertising Sales
Sheila Smith, Office Manager

Nor'west Press

Jim Bowker, General Manager
Richard Westfahl, Ron VanLoenen, Judy McKnight,
Betty Morris, Heather Merklin, Adam Stuhlmiller,
Jerry Kirkpatrick, Lana Westfahl



nwkansas.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services
(ntbetz@nwkansas.com)

Evan Barnum, Systems Admin. (support@nwkansas.com)

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@nw-kansas.com. Advertising questions can be sent to: goodlandads@nw-kansas.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, \$24; six months, \$42; 12 months, \$76. Out of area, weekly mailing of two issues: three months, \$34; six months, \$49; 12 months, \$84. Mailed individually each day: 12 months, \$119. (All tax included.)

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 Yonkey
1994-2001

Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company



garfield

