

from our viewpoint...

Future planning begins with youth

It has been said that the true test of a nation is how it treats its young and elderly, and that has never been more true than today.

With the specter of school violence popping up around the country the concern about the safety of our schools has been making headlines around the world.

We were proud to have Goodland High Senior Michael Smith be part of the White House conference on school safety on Tuesday. Smith as the national president of Family Carrier and Community Leaders of America told President George Bush and the other 300 attending the conference that the in-school program he is president of can help students handle stressful situations and teaches students to have good character based on family values.

Sherman County citizens can join the discussion about the future of our youth and schools as part of the "community conversation" to be held at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday at the Goodland Elks Lodge, 1523 Arcade.

Our youth and the schools are a vital part of the future of the community. Terry Woodbury the consultant from Kansas Communities, said Gen. Colin Powell and America's Promise — An Alliance for Youth, laid out the five essential resources for youth that he has adapted for the community planning program.

The five include a healthy start, caring adults, safe places and structure activities, marketable skills and volunteer service.

In an interview Woodbury asked if these essential resources are available in Sherman County.

We believe there is a healthy start for our youth that includes access to medical and dental care; immunization, quality pre-kindergarten care/early education; good diet and exercise and avoiding destructive behavior (drugs, alcohol and teen pregnancy). These are not perfect, and part of the discussion Tuesday will be what we can do to improve these resources.

Woodbury said the caring adults resource should mean there are at least six involved in a young persons life including parents, extended family, teachers, coaches, 4-H leaders, Scout leaders, Sunday School teachers and neighbors. The rural setting of Goodland helps bring our young people into contact with a wide range of adults. For the future we can find ways to be sure these caring adults are touching the lives of all of our young people.

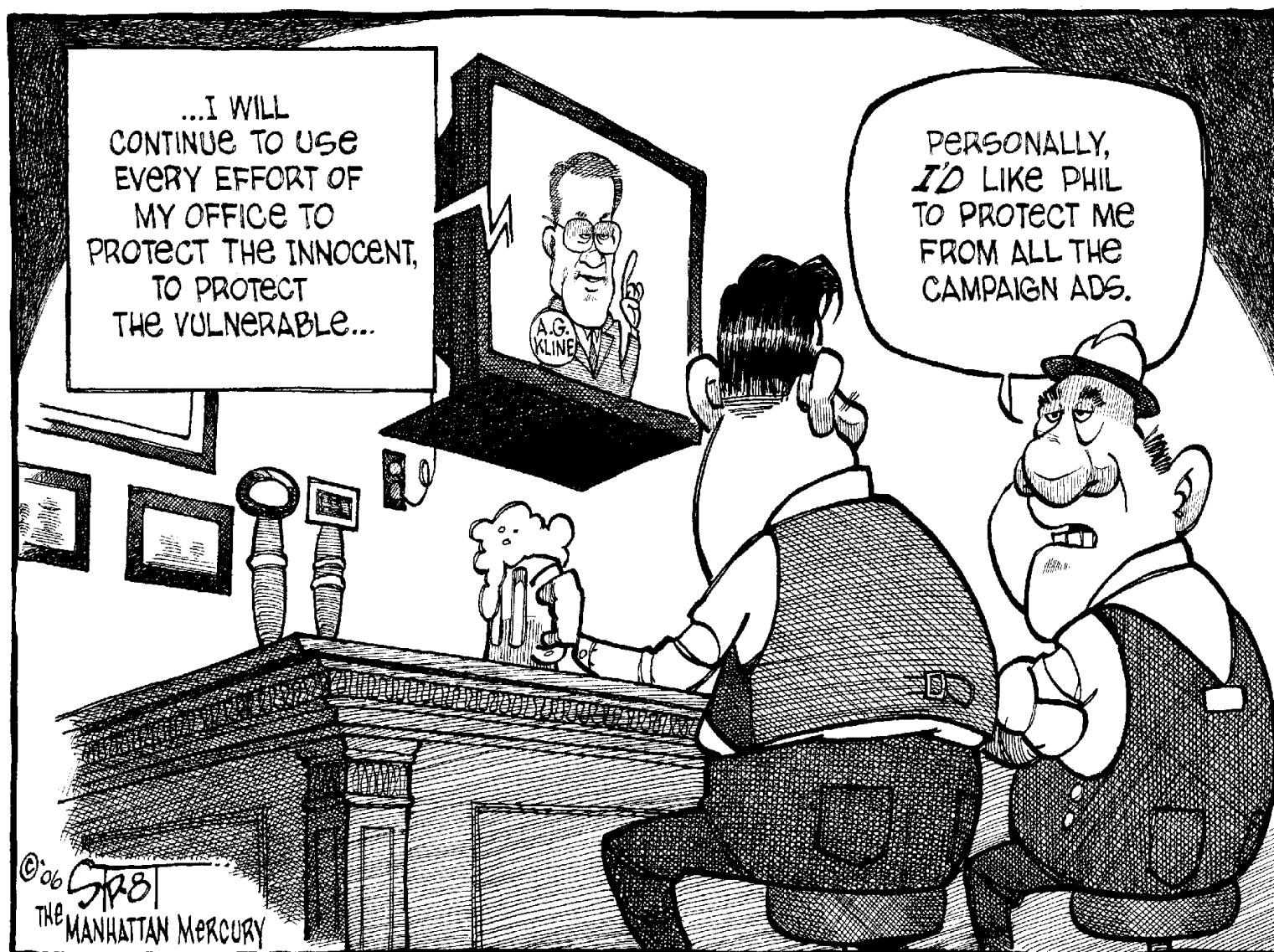
The safe places and structured activities is more for when school is out, but we can look at the safety of our schools and the places our kids go to play after school and on the weekends. We have a wide range of safe activities available, and for the future we can be sure they stay that way.

The marketable skills question is about the basic skills learned at school plus teamwork, discipline, positive attitude, work ethic, interpersonal skills, ethics and leadership. Are our youth trained in this community ready for the work marketplace?

We need to be sure the youth are getting firsthand experience in volunteer service to others. Woodbury said adults who serve their communities learned that as a youth.

There are good programs for getting our young people involved in the community, and we can work on ways in the future to expand this to be sure all are getting involved to provide the growth and leadership for the future.

If you have not put attending the community conversation on Tuesday on your list of things to do, we suggest you think about the essential resources and we are sure there are ways you can contribute to developing a bright future for our youth and our community. Come be a part of the plan for the future. — Tom Betz



How many divisions has the Pope?

Joseph Stalin is alleged to have asked contemptuously just how many divisions the pope had at his disposal.

The answer came after the Soviet dictator's death when the Berlin Wall came crashing down and Eastern Europe came out from behind the Iron Curtain thanks to Pope John Paul II, my father Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher — the phalanx that drove a spike through the heart of Soviet tyranny.

Pope John Paul II had no military divisions, but he had a huge army of people yearning for freedom who responded to his message that united they could prevail over a master who commanded vast military forces. Those forces eventually proved helpless in the face of the people's determination and will.

Today the question might be, "How many supporters does the pope have among the world's leaders?" Shamefully, the answer is none. Assailed all across the globe by millions of Muslims for quoting a few passages from a debate featuring the 14th Century Byzantine emperor Manuel Paleologos II — next-to-last emperor of what had been the Eastern Roman empire — Pope Benedict XVI has been left standing alone among the leaders of the Western world despite his warning that they face a foe determined to subjugate them and their citizens.

Writing in the Sept. 20 *Front Page Magazine*, Robert Spencer reminded the West's leaders just how much they owe to Pope Benedict, the man they have left hanging in the wind that is blowing like a typhoon from the world of radical Islam



michael reagan

● making sense

Spencer, director of Jihad Watch and author of "Onward Muslim Soldiers: How Jihad Still Threatens America and the West" wrote: "In choosing Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger to succeed Pope John Paul II as Pope Benedict XVI, the Catholic Church has cast a vote for the survival of Europe and the West."

He quotes historian Bernard Lewis as warning "Europe will be Islamic by the end of the century," and observes that the pope is unlikely to be happy about that eventuality.

"Late in 2003, the semi-official Jesuit magazine *La Civiltà Cattolica* departed from John Paul II's policy toward Islam and published a scathing criticism of the mistreatment that Christians suffer in Islamic societies," wrote Spencer. "It represented the first indication that any Catholic officials recognized the dimensions of the religious conflict that jihadists are waging against Christians and others around the world."

He adds that "La Civiltà Cattolica pointed out that 'for almost a thousand years, Europe was under constant threat from Islam, which twice put its survival in serious danger.' Now, through jihad terrorism and demographics, Islam is threatening Europe's survival yet again — and it looks as if now there is a Pope who has noticed. Maybe in Europe the resistance

is just beginning."

You wouldn't think so from the wall of silence that has surrounded the West's leaders, including our own President Bush. Not one of them has sprung to the pope's defense in the face of the violence and threats made against the pope by Muslims all over the world.

The pope was dangling out there all by himself. There is not one leader in any part of the world — left, right, center or anywhere in between — standing up for the pope who, as Spencer noted has "dared to speak more clearly about the threat that Islam poses to Western civilization than his predecessor — for all his many and remarkable gifts — ever quite managed to do."

All this proves the point I have been making for a long time: the world fears Islam and its adherents. In an attempt to spur a dialogue between Christianity and Islam, the pope quotes a Byzantine leader from 1391 to make his point about the futility of violence between religions and what do we get?

We get a dead nun, churches burned, the leader of the world's billion Catholics burned in effigy, hordes of angry Muslims demonstrating in the streets and demanding that the pope be hunted down and slaughtered, all of which proved the point stressed by Manuel Paleologos II in the 14th century.

And worst of all, we get silence from the leaders of the besieged West.

Mike Reagan, the eldest son of the late President Ronald Reagan, is heard on talk radio stations nationwide. E-mail comments to mereagan@hotmail.com.

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Drought hits the soul of farmer, family

For some farmers in Kansas this fall harvest is going to be another one of those where there's just enough of a crop that you have to cut it but not enough to be profitable.

That's the situation Tony Horinek finds himself in. The 46-year-old producer from Thomas County is busy cutting dryland corn and sunflowers. He just finished sowing his winter wheat.

Harvest is going quickly for Horineks who farm between Goodland and Colby. The reason — another drought — the seventh year in a row.

His best corn yielded 45 bushels per acre while the lowest yield has been nine bushels per acre. Most of his land received about 10 inches of rain this year.

Crop insurance has helped and Horinek is thankful for that. However, with the seven years of drought his yield averages have dropped. Insurance payments and crops aren't covering expenses.

Just looking at diesel fuel, his costs have gone up approximately \$25,000 this year. On one hand, Horinek would like not to have to ask for disaster assistance from the federal government, but on the other hand, he believes he has little choice.

"I'm very disappointed in the way the disaster assistance is moving," the Thomas County farmer says. "Seems today like every piece of legislation that comes before Congress is sandwiched before or after an election and they can't get anything done."

Congressman Jerry Moran will be in his area this week and Horinek plans to visit with him about the drought situation he and his fellow farmers are facing.

"I run a solid, efficient farm but it's getting so you can't hardly keep it in the black," Horinek says. "I would like him to listen to what I have to say and help us."

Farming during this extended drought has not been easy. Drilling this year's winter wheat



from other pens

● commentary

crop was a challenge like others the last few years have been.

For one thing there was barely enough moisture to germinate the crop. Some of the Thomas County farmer's fields are spotty and the wheat will need a rain if it is to come up. Few things in life are more difficult for a farmer to endure than not having enough moisture to lay his wheat seed in. Fortunately a little more than two weeks ago Horinek received nearly one-half inch of rain.

"The roads out here are so filthy dusty," he says. "If we don't have a wind blowing sometimes in the evening there's just a haze all over because of the dust everywhere. The soil is nothing but powder."

Still Horinek and his fellow farmers in northwestern Kansas hope and pray for rain. There have been small periods during this seven-year drought when they've received a little precipitation and thoughts race toward a break in the drought. Then the moisture shuts off.

Horinek admits these have been stressful times. Moods can turn bad and it's depressing.

"You try to keep in good spirits, but boy it wears on you," the Thomas County farmer says. "It's like gosh do I even want to plant this crop because I know what the results are going to be because I've seen it so many years in a row."

In the clutches of this seven-year drought, Horinek planted fewer fall crops this year. He was planning to put out more sunflowers but with this year's small yields, he planted less acres. Most of his sunflowers made approximately 400 pounds per acre. During a normal year — whatever that is anymore — his sunflower

crop averages 1,200 to 1,500 pounds per acre.

"Man, I'm just tired of watching my crops die," Horinek says.

The family farming operation is still "getting by" right now. If the drought continues the Thomas County farmer says it will become more and more difficult to continue farming without rain.

Horinek says he knows other producers around the state are raising some good crops and he says he's happy for them. He only wishes one day — and soon — he'll receive some moisture and he can do what he's dedicated his life to — raising abundant crops again.

Putting talk of the seven year drought aside, Horinek said that even though it is dry, he believes he is so blessed with so many things including health, a great family, a new granddaughter — he even donated a kidney to his wife's cousin last winter. Talk about changing lives. Talk about having priorities in order.

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.

Letter Policy

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