

Sunny week is a gift

Government needs sunshine

By JERRY TIDWELL
 A week of Thanksgiving. No, not November. March 11-17. That is when we give thanks that we live in a society where the people are presumed to be wise enough to govern themselves.
 It's Sunshine Week, a time to remember that the government is us — and we have not only the right but the obligation to know what we are doing.
 As president of an organization of thriving community newspapers, I have the opportunity to speak with journalists and their readers from Boston to Arizona and from states as red as my home state of Texas and as blue as New Jersey, where my friends, the Parker family, are deeply committed to covering local government.

It is rewarding to know that my newspaper friends AND their readers deeply believe in open government. Sunshine on government is the Vitamin D for democracy. It makes us whole and healthy. When we know what is going on, we are better able to make wise judgments on those few things that need to be confidential for a time in order to let our public servants function.

Tom Brokaw, NBC News anchor, said this about Sunshine Week:
 "If we present ourselves to the world as patrons of democracy, then we must be vigilant stewards at home of the oxygen that it requires — access to what our government is doing and the right to speak freely about it. The Greatest Generation fought valiantly to preserve and protect those freedoms. It is up to us to ensure during Sunshine Week and all year that their sacrifices were not for naught."

I am proud that community newspapers provide their share of oxygen. Our immediate past president, Jerry Reppert, publisher of the *Gazette-Democrat* in Anna, Ill., for example, sued for copies of employment contracts for top officials of a state university, reasoning that citizens supporting higher education had a right to know how money was spent.

The *County Courier* in Enosburg, Vt., in an editorial in advance of Sunshine Week, made the point both visually and with words by "redacting," or blacking out, portions of the text.
 "There's always room for more sunshine in our lives," he wrote. "When it comes to government, we just have to be willing to stand up in the darkness and demand it."

Newspapers in Kansas helped to test local governments' responses to requests for public records, and found a reasonably good response except from sheriffs. Two years later, it tried again and found remarkable progress: only four of 33 offices failed to comply with the law.

The *Altoona Mirror* in Pennsylvania asked for information at 40 agencies. A reporter was surprised by confrontations and threats he met while trying to examine the public's business. Newspapers there have banded together in "Brighter Pennsylvania," a program designed to help officials better understand open government laws.

And just recently our friends at a small daily paper in Missouri, pursuing information at city hall, reported that the mayor said, "The way you come to City Hall will determine whether you are worked with or not."

Somehow, I have the feeling that isn't what our Founding Fathers (and Mothers) had in mind. I imagine some of our Founding Mothers might have washed that mayor's mouth out with soap.

That reminds me that community groups like the League of Women Voters participated in Sunshine Week last year, as well as groups as diverse as university journalists, local attorneys and even a fire department in Los Angeles.

I have two messages for newspapers and their readers.

One is: remind public servants that we trust them the most when we know the most about what they are doing.

The other is: read the newspaper. It's the best way to enjoy the sunshine.

Jerry Tidwell of Granbury, Texas, is president of the National Newspaper Association and publisher of The Hood County News.

Making his voice heard



IN THE COURTHOUSE on Monday, Don Stapp, a former city councilman, filled out paperwork under the direction of deputy County Clerk Colleen Geishler to vote an advance ballot for the city and school election.
 — Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

Do your part to save our precious water

By JIM MERRIOTT
 Considering the fact that ol' Mother Earth is covered two-thirds by water, it doesn't seem too important to conserve water until you look at the facts.

In Decatur County, the average rainfall for one year is about 18 inches. If we compare that with the average rainfall in the eastern half of the country, roughly 35 inches, as all area farmers and the rest of us who live in northwest Kansas know, our part of the state is pretty thirsty.

After these past few years, with drought conditions slamming each of us in the face, it only makes sense to look at some important facts.

Even though the earth is two-thirds covered with water, only 3 percent is fresh water and most of that is melting in the solar ice caps. The rest of it is salt water.

The fact is, we use the same water over and over again: The same water that our grandparents used, the same water in which Abraham Lincoln washed his feet, the same water that George Washington threw his famous silver dollar across, the same water Ben Franklin brushed his teeth in.

For a fact, the water that you wash your face with each morning is an estimated four billion years old.

Scientists say less than 1 percent of the earth's water is available for our use. We can't make new water, and as we all know, we can't make new land. You can't just send a spaceship through the universe and pick up a load of the fresh stuff.

We assume that we have vast reserves of water available, but we do not.

We also assume that the majority of the wet stuff is free, but before we take a fresh cold glass from under the tap, several things have occurred.

First, we have to locate a source, then build the machinery to pump it, piping to carry it and treat it.

Thanks to our treatment plants, chlorine has become an acquired taste for most of us.

The more water we process, the more bleach we have to add to the

Group salutes social worker

To the Editor:
 Hospice Services is proud of the social workers who are an integral part of the Hospice team.

Hospice social workers provide initial assessments, ongoing support, bereavement services and community education and outreach. More than just treating the physical effects of an illness, social workers work with psycho social issues that play into providing quality end-of-life care. This profession promotes dignity for everyone, especially the most vulnerable among us.

Since the inception of National Professional Social Work Month in 1984, March has been a time to celebrate social workers and their commitments and accomplishments.

Hospice Services salutes and celebrates hospice social workers Mindy Greene, West Team; Missy Lamont, East Team; and Diane Frickey, Oberlin, along with all social workers.

Sandy Kuhlman executive director Hospice Services Inc. Phillipsburg



The Jayhawker

By Jim Merriott
 jtmerritt@nwkansans.com

water to clean it. Remember that bleach is a *poison* even though we only use a tiny bit in drinking water to kill the bacteria and such during the treatment process.

Each election, we elect political officials to run our municipal affairs and look at our water treatment plants, then do the paperwork involved in supplying us our water.

Once that water is piped to our houses, we have to install pipes, valves, vents, and shut-offs. We install a line directly to our hot water heater so we have warm water to wash and bathe with.

Once we get the precious resource, what do we do with it?

We put it in our washing machines, we water our pesticide-filled lawns, wash our dishes and cars, and flush our toilets (yuck), then we go through the process all over again just to get a cold drink.

I guess what disgusts me is that we also clean our paint brushes, wash our windows, and hose down chemical spills with the same water that we drink and we pray that the people who are in charge of cleaning the water keep it clean.

Just think of everything that you have flushed down the toilet over the years, including your kids' dead goldfish.

Group wants charges brought against doctor

To the Editor:
 There exists evidence as verified by two judges that Dr. George Tiller, the notorious late-term abortionist in Wichita, may have broken Kansas laws and may still be doing so, but nothing is being done about it.

It is supposed to be legal in Kansas to perform abortions on viable babies only under strict circumstance, to wit:

- (a) No person shall perform or induce an abortion when the fetus is viable unless such person is a physician and has a documented referral from another physician not legally or financially affiliated with the physician performing or inducing the abortion and both physicians determine that: (1) The abortion is necessary to preserve the life of the pregnant woman; or (2) a continuation of the pregnancy will cause a substantial and irreversible impairment of a major bodily function of

Letter to the Editor

the pregnant woman. (See <http://www.kslegislature.org/legsrv-statutes/getStatute.do?number=26822>.)

In 2004, Attorney General Phill Kline sent evidence of suspected abortion law-breaking for judicial inspection. After a judge determined there was probable cause that crimes had been committed, records were subpoenaed from two abortion clinics, including Tiller's.

After a grueling battle against high-dollar abortion attorneys through several courts, Kline successfully received subpoenaed abortion evidence. In November 2006, a second judge approved the filing of 30 charges against Tiller.

However, Tiller is not being prosecuted.

Wichita District Attorney Nola Foulston dismissed Kline's charges without factual review in December 2006 because of a jurisdictional dispute. Attorney General Paul Morrison, who owes his office to Tiller's well-financed campaign to remove Kline, has also failed to pursue the 30 charges.

During Kline's tenure as attorney general, the number of viable-baby abortions in Kansas dropped 40 percent — from the high of 395, before his election, to 240 in 2005. Was that decrease just a coincidence — or will those abortion numbers again rise under an attorney general that Tiller doesn't fear?

Despite laws attempting to limit viable baby abortions, Kansas remains the late-term abortion capitol of the world. The only real hope for prosecution of Tiller is for the Kansas House of Representatives to issue a resolution ordering Morrison to act. This can be accomplished by a simple majority vote in the House. Neither the approval of the Senate nor the signature of the governor is needed.

Do you believe that laws should be enforced, especially where there is evidence two judges found that there was probable cause that they were broken? No one should be above the law — especially due to the influence of their political money.

We urge you to quickly contact your representative in Topeka (see www.kslegislature.org). Demand that a House Resolution be passed to hold Tiller accountable for breaking Kansas law!

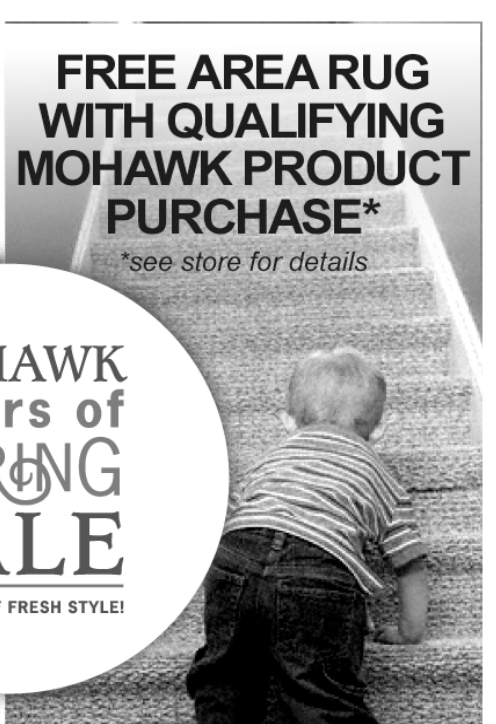
Mary Kay Culp executive director on behalf of the board Kansans for Life

in the kitchen..

- Keep a bottle of drinking water in the fridge.
 - Take a five-minute shower instead of bathing.
 - Turn off the shower while you lather your hair and body.
 - Learn the cold-water hand wash.
 - Fill a large plastic yogurt or cottage cheese container with water, and put on the lid, then slide it down into the space in the toilet tank behind the flush handle. Or just add a couple of clean bricks to the tank.
 - Fill your coffee pot the night before. Most people let the water run before they use it in the morning to eliminate floaties in the line that build up from the night before.
 - Put a pail or a wash basin or watering can, or even a bowl or coffee pot, underneath a dripping tap.
 - Turn off the shut-off valve on a leaky tap any time you'll be away.
 - Each time you want to wash the car, put it off for a day.
 - Use a bucket instead of a hose to wash the car.
 - Only do the laundry when the washer is full.
 - If you have to do laundry before you have a full load, set your water level for a smaller load.
 - Check the weather forecast before watering the lawn. If you do sprinkle the lawn, write a note that says "Turn off sprinkler," and leave it sitting out on your counter until you actually do turn the sprinkler off. Or get a timer for the sprinkler.
- These are just a few ideas that can help us save water.
- Think of saving water this way: "What if you had to carry home all the water you needed everyday — in jars on your head?"

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