

Senator visits town

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U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback was in Oberlin last Tuesday to talk about energy, the environment, the economy and to visit with voters on the third stop in on this leg of a 105-county tour of Kansas.

The lobby of the Business Entrepreneurial Enhancement Center filled with 30 to 35 people as the senator arrived just a tad late, accompanied by an aide, his two youngest children and a bag full of poster-size flash cards which he used to illustrate his points.

The biggest driver of energy price increases, he said, is China, where millions who a few years ago rode bicycles are now driving cars.

The simple answer to our oil problems, he said, is to produce more and use less. We import 60 percent of our oil today, which costs us half a trillion dollars a year.

Part of the answer is to increase the supply of energy produced here, he said.

"I'm a kitchen-sink guy on these things," he said. "Do everything and then (throw in) the kitchen sink."

Everything, he said, includes:

- Find new domestic supplies of petroleum by tapping into off-shore reserves and taking another look at oil shale.
- Increase fuel efficiency, including making more "flex-fuel" vehicles that can burn 85 percent alcohol fuel.
- Lower demand for imports by using other energy sources, such as biofuels.
- Increase refinery construction and capacity.

Other ideas for energy production, he said, include wind power, not just huge wind farms, but small wind — one or two wind generators producing energy for a small city, farm or business. Also, he said, we should increase the use of ethanol from whatever source is best.

A lot of people don't like using corn, a food source, for fuel, he said, but the corn used for fuel is different than that used for food. Most of it would go to animal feed, he said, and once the fuel is produced, the leftovers can be used for animal feed.

He then passed around a T-shirt, square of carpet and piece of cloth made of synthetic material from corn and soybeans instead of petroleum.

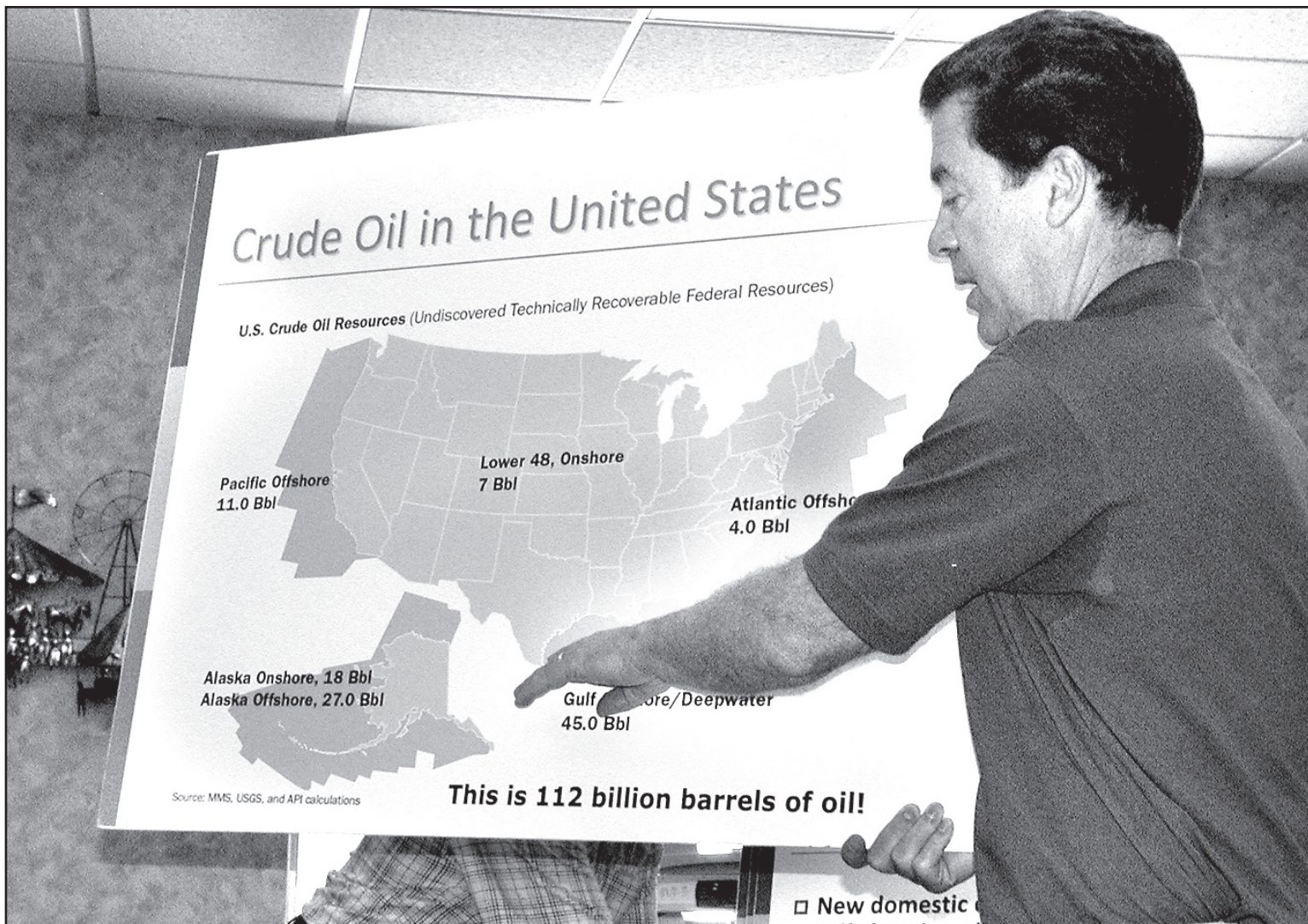
Someone in the crowd noted that the shirt had been made in Bangladesh, which brought a blush from the senator, who said he'd talk to his people about that.

Lee "Doc" Franklin, who is running for county commissioner, had his own flash board showing the problems the agricultural community is having with rising expenses and unstable grain prices. He asked the senator if he could help.

Mr. Brownback admitted that he could only be of partial assistance.

"If we can get the fuel demand and prices down, we can help," he said. "We can't do anything with commodities."

Connie Grafel, county economic development director, thanked the senator for his support of the Oberlin Airport expansion.



SENATOR Sam Brownback (above) talked about the rising cost of fuel last week during a listening tour here while two of his kids Mark and Jenna (below) sat and played a video game and read a book.

The senator said that he had been working on the project, but he also has been dealing with a \$40 billion government contract for Air Force tankers, which he said, Boeing should have gotten in the first place.

"It really irritates me," he said. "The (French) subsidize the development of planes and use it against us."

Hospital Administrator Lynn Doeden told the senator that she hopes someone will soon figure out that it takes more money to take care of older people than children and that everyone needs some sort of insurance protection.

The senator said he felt a community rating system is needed for health care, but thinks the government shouldn't get involved in health insurance.

At no time in history, he said, has government done a better job than the private sector in running that sort of thing.

Bill Duncan, pastor of the Oberlin Church of Christ, thanked the senator for his stand on abortion and the protection of marriage.

"I really put these family issues first, because it's core to building your future," Mr. Brownback replied.

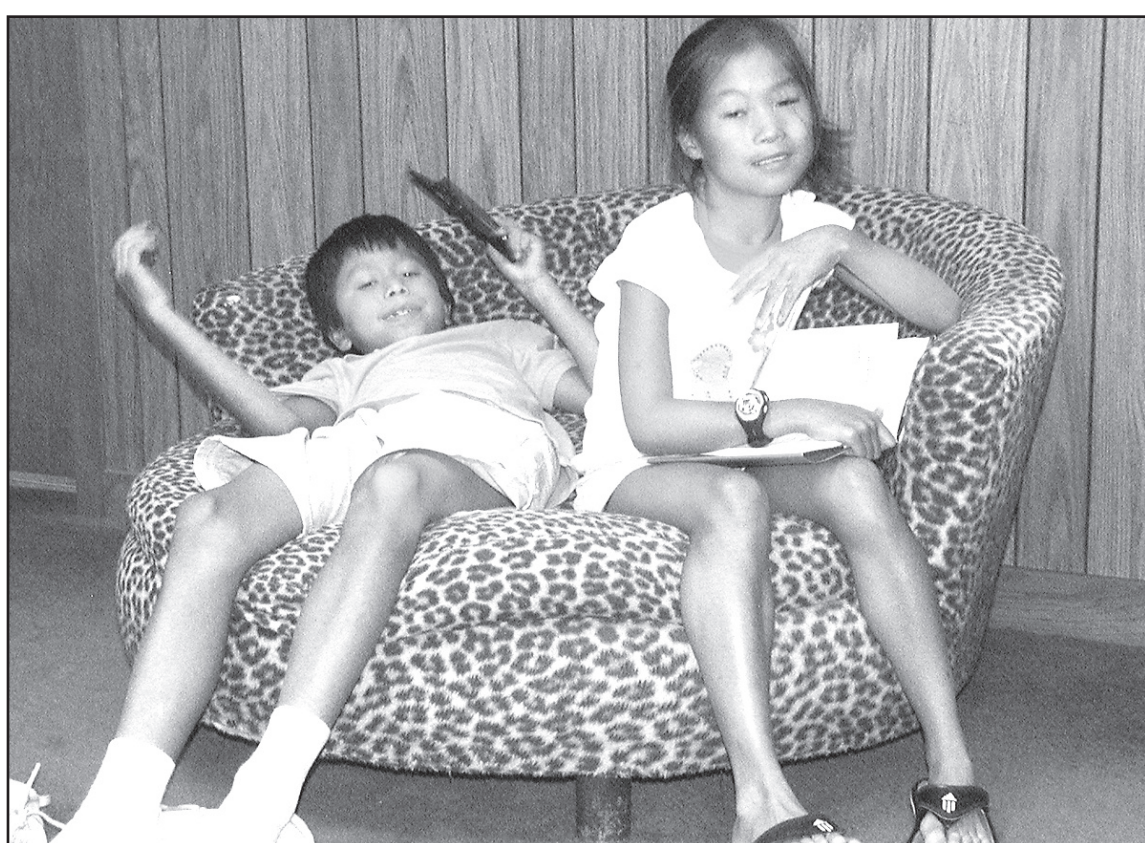
Oberlin Mayor Joe Stanley asked if the senator could help the city with its problems with the federal mandates on water quality, which forced the city to build a new sewage treatment plant and soon may force it to build a water treatment plant.

The senator said that was a tough one. If he went against the new drinking-water standards, he said, he would be labeled as someone wanting to poison people by allowing arsenic and uranium to be in their water supply.

There is just no process for getting rid of those mandates and programs that don't work, he said.

"I've tried to eliminate government programs before," he said. "It's nearly impossible."

He added that former President Ronald Reagan had said that there is nothing so permanent as a temporary government program.



Kids travel with their dad

When Sen. Sam Brownback toured northwest Kansas last Tuesday he brought not just his regional director, Dennis Mesa, but his two youngest children, Jenna and Mark.

Sen. Brownback and his wife Mary have five children, three biological — Elizabeth, Andy and Abby — and the younger two, both age 10. Jenna was adopted from China and Mark from Guatemala.

On his web site, the senator says the two are close.

"They look like twins," he said, "and they act like an old couple, a married couple, because they're al-

ways around each other and barking at each other, but they won't be out of each other's sight."

In Oberlin, while Dad was speaking at the Business Entrepreneurial Enhancement Center, the kids settled down on a wide, low leopard-print chair and Jenna read while Mark played a video game.

Jenna was also supposed to help Dad with his presentation. She held onto a plastic bag that contained a T-shirt, a square of carpet and a piece of cloth made partly with vegetable products replacing the petroleum normally used for synthetics.

However, when the senator called

for the bag, Jenna brought it halfway across the room and tossed it to Dad, who barely caught it. Then she returned to her book, which was probably a lot more interesting than listening to the same speech from again. After all, Oberlin was the third stop of the day after St. Francis and Atwood. She and Mark still had two more to go.

Both kids did seem to appreciate the cookie plates laid out for the occasion before they were off to visit Hoxie and Colby and hopefully, more cookies and spots to read and play video games while Dad did the dull stuff.

Man to speak on encouraging kids to take 'narrow road'

Parents and students are invited to an assembly encouraging teens not to drink, but to take "the narrow road" before it's too late.

High School Principal Charlie Haag said Keith Becker, brother of Todd Becker, a Nebraska stu-

dent who was killed in a drunk driving accident, will speak at the high school assembly at 1:30 p.m. Tuesday.

That night, there will be a public assembly at 7:30 p.m. in the high school gym.

Mr. Haag said Mr. Becker started a foundation after his brother was killed. Since then, he has traveled all over the country giving his presentation.

Owner takes helm in Colby

Steve Haynes of Oberlin, co-owner of Nor'West Newspapers, has stepped in as publisher of the Colby Free Press, replacing John Van Nostrand, who left last Wednesday for a new job in Iowa.

Mr. Haynes, who is commuting to Colby, said he's unsure how long he will be at the paper's helm. He was acting publisher once before, for a few months in 1998.



Steve Haynes

He and his wife Cynthia bought the Free Press and The Goodland Star-News from U.S. Media in 1997. Nor'West also operates The Oberlin Herald, The Norton Telegram, The Saint Francis Herald and the Bird City Times. The papers jointly produce The Country Advocate, an area-wide advertising paper which is mailed or delivered to non-subscribers and inserted in the papers.

"I hope to see The Free Press remain a strong and independent voice in Colby," Mr. Haynes said. "Our goals will be quality journalism, accurate and intensive coverage of our area and excellent customer service."

A graduate of the William Allen White School of Journalism at the University of Kansas, Mr. Haynes began his career in 1970 as a reporter for the old Kansas City Times. He worked for The Times, now combined with The Kansas City Star, for 11 years as a reporter and editor.

In 1980, the couple left Kansas City and bought a small newspaper in the mining town of Creede, Colo. When they left Colorado in 1993, they operated six weekly newspapers, a small daily in Alamosa and an area-wide shopper.

Mr. Haynes is finishing a term as president of the National Newspaper Association, a trade group which represents publishers of about 2,600 newspapers nationwide. He has served eight years on the group's board, and before that was a board member and served as president of both the Kansas and Colorado Press associations.

The Hayneses have three grown children, daughters Felicia and Lindsay, who live and work in Augusta, Ga., and son Lacy, who works in Lawrence. The new publisher, an Emporia native, also is president of the U.S. Highway 36 Association, a statewide business promotion group, and a lay reader and eucharistic minister in the Episcopal Church.

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