

Our City

Thank you Kristen Jensen for writing the column a week ago as I spent seven days in Indianapolis working with the National FFA organization and other Ag teachers from around the country. Thank you too to Tyler Moore with the Chamber of Commerce for the best AF Day celebration I can remember. To all the departments within the City of American Falls you have my unwavering gratitude for what you do daily; but two weekends ago you went above the call as you handled not only AF Days but also the Kyle Curry Softball Tournament at Willow Bay and three golf tournaments, the last of which concluded around midnight. It should be no surprise to any of us what astounding things folks who choose to work together can accomplish.

Those ideals and sentiments were brought to light again for me as well as County Commissioner Bill Lasley last Monday night as we worked with the Power County 4-H and FFA Sale Committee to prepare the fairgrounds for the 49th annual Livestock Show and Sale. Bill summarized it best when he said to me, “it’s amazing what you can do with volunteers.” Whether you participated or observed this week at the fair, you will certainly recognize and should fondly appreciate the validity of County is unprecedented. To the pillars of the committee, especially Bill Schroeder and Stan Gortsema, I know firsthand what you do to make this event possible and meaningful as you set the bar of service at levels attained by very few. I am continually inspired as I work with this group.

As we were concluding our Monday night work night at the fairgrounds, I had a chance to visit with Mark and Travis Mills. You may recall my comments about Travis and the new volunteer group The Power of Pride. Well Travis and I were reminiscing a bit about the days when the football field would be at standing room only as folks came from near and far to watch the Beavers compete on the gridiron. And, make no mistake when any of the three AF football teams took the field they competed. Many of you will remember those days, some of you lived those days with Travis, teammates like him and coach Dick Brulotte. Travis’ comment to me was blunt but one I am asked continually, “What the hell has happened?” What happened to the three teams we used to have? What happened to the nine coaches that were at every practice and game? What happened? I think about that question and those days a lot. And, my conclusion is always the same. I think it boils down to parental expectations and support for their kids.

Coach Bob Brulotte and Kirk Dahlke used to call them “nones.” Those kids who roamed the hall and belonged to no group, club or team. Kids who didn’t take pride in their school or much of what they did. There weren’t many back in the day, but there are more now. The sad thing is they aren’t bad kids, they just have no direction, motivation or support at home for whatever reason. As coaches and teachers we try and provide that direction, motivation and support, although we are less successful when those values aren’t duplicated at home. So now two of those three teams walk the halls as “nones.”

As Travis’ dad, Mark, and I chatted about grandkids later that evening Mark made a very simple comment that I think rings true regardless of the context. He said, “The only thing I want from my grandkids is that they know the value of a dollar and what it takes to earn it.” There is no substitute for hard work and a job well done. Regardless if it is in the work place or at home; with teammates or family; there are no short cuts. Nothing worthwhile in life is free or easy.

As we finished up and as per tradition, horseshoe stakes were set in the Beef Barn and a few “friendly” games ensued. My partner was GR Long. Now I, like most of the group, play horseshoes maybe once a year. I, unlike most of them, suck at it. If horseshoes were manure the stake I pitch at seldom gets a whiff. But, beyond my inability to play that game what I appreciated about it was that while GR and I disagree to some extent on the matter of the Power County Highway District’s possible vacation of their easement through property owned by Koompin Brothers, we can still enjoy each other’s company and work together. I think too often some folks let one thing divide them; I appreciated that GR does not. I further appreciate the work ethic he and his wife Kelly have instilled in their son Brandon. Brandon spent his summer playing Legion baseball, caring for and mowing 11 yards and raising a steer as an FFA member. Not many kids do that anymore; some do, but not many. Sorry, I wasn’t more help in the game GR.

Last Tuesday brought some closure to the flooding event of May 21st. After two months of phone calls, meetings, review and deliberation, the City’s insurance company, Idaho Counties Risk Management Program (ICRMP) called to tell me they would be contacting the homeowners who had filed claims with the City to begin working on those claims. I hesitated to put this bit of good news in the column because I do not want you as citizens of American Falls to think it can always be expected. Homeowners, if you have flooding issues please make the City aware of them. We cannot address a problem we don’t know about. However, with our new sewer camera van and equipment, trouble areas within our part of the system should be minimized and with continued work, eliminated. That being said what happens between your home and the sewer line in the alley is your business. Mine has a root issue that has to be addressed regularly. Sewer backflow preventers are a good idea too, especially if you live in an older home with a basement. To the affected families, thank you for your patience. To ICRMP, thank you for doing your due diligence and making the right choice.

As I began to weigh in lambs Wednesday morning it didn’t take long to notice the differences. I noticed similar differences at the other end of the barn where the pigs were being weighed in too. Now, 4-H and FFA livestock projects have always premised themselves by teaching young kids the value of responsibility and work ethic. Often to a lesser degree the value of competition and striving always to make your best better. Within 4-H and FFA, as in life, there are stark differences between participants and competitors, and the sadder side is those that do it just for the money. If you read these ramblings regularly you know I take great pride in our FFA Chapter, its members and their accomplishments. But, this week at the Power County Fair we got our butts handed to us by the Rockland FFA Chapter and its young members in the swine and lamb shows; not only in quality (which factors in many variables uncontrolled by kids) but in fitting and showing as well (which comes down to meaningful time spent with the project). To the Alan Woodworth, Kyle Mathews, Scott Lish, and Hutch Swan families and advisor Andy Nelson I tip my hat, very well done. You are a tight-knit group who have remarkably changed what it means to be a 4-H’er or FFA member with a livestock project in Rockland and Power County. To the Daniel Madalena family of American Falls, thank you for showing us all what it means to pay it forward. If you were at the Livestock Sale Friday you know what I am talking about.

Until next week...