



Drive, skill, heart: The sky's the limit

These high school standouts have it all. Meet the stars who shine the brightest, The World-Herald's athletes of the year. **SPORTS**



Obama salutes veterans at D-Day remembrance in France
PAGE 12A

Sunday World-Herald

SUNDAY, JUNE 7, 2009 SUNRISE EDITION

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER OWNED BY EMPLOYEES

OMAHA.COM BREAKING NEWS

MUST READ



Sculptures draw a crowd

The Joslyn Art Museum's new outdoor Sculpture Garden has its grand opening.
E.T.A.

Race full of adventure

Running, bicycling and getting wet are all part of Adventure Omaha.
Midlands

rēading program picks up the pāce

By JOE DEJKA
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

GERING, Neb. — There's a transformation under way here that is so intriguing, the governor flew out to see it — twice.

Five years ago, educators in this Panhandle town of 2,000 realized their students were

In latest reading battle, Gering, Neb., gets its scores up using program

WORLD-HERALD EXCLUSIVE

Stripping the raucous out of rides on Niobrara

■ Regulations are proposed to reduce the raunchy and risqué behavior too often seen on river outings.

By DAVID HENDEE
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

If floating the Niobrara River were a movie, some past summer weekends would score R ratings.

Flashes of nudity, obscenity-laced chatter, drunkenness, littering and other boorish conduct spoiled for many the serene scenery and peaceful experience of floating one of the nation's top paddling streams.

The National Park Service hopes some new rules will scuttle such river rowdiness.

The goal is to increase safety, protect nature and ensure memorable

Task of health care reform made harder by recession

BY JESSE FISHER

The writer is chief executive officer of Binovia Corp., an informatics and biomedical services firm with offices in Omaha and California.

Health care reform has been at the forefront of national debate in recent weeks, and President Barack Obama's plan to create affordable health care for Americans will work well for taxpayers and citizens who were unable to afford health care in the past.

Even people who receive health care benefits from their employers would have their burdens lifted, and it seems that the plan also would help businesses to afford health care for their employees. While this plan would ensure that Americans receive good-quality health care, it also would place a burden on hospitals and other health care facilities that have been hit hard by the economic recession.

Obama's plan to reform health care includes a requirement that hospitals and health care facilities become more efficient and transition to things such as electronic medical records (EMRs). The plan also would require the collection of data on health care costs and quality of care.

Not only would the Obama administration plan require health care facilities to become more efficient and implement new technologies, but the market also demands it.

Like many businesses throughout the country, the health care business is service-oriented. Patients want top-notch health care and the newest technologies, in-

cluding new equipment such as MRI machines, CT machines or PET scan machines.

Although the economy is faltering and companies throughout all sectors have seen a decline, I think most Americans would agree that good-quality health care remains high on the list of spending priorities.

However, health care facilities have been hit so hard by the economic recession that purchasing new equipment, transitioning to electronic record systems and training employees on new technology seem far out of reach.

These days, hospitals are focused on keeping employees on staff and providing good-quality

Good-quality health care remains high on the list of priorities.

health care with the means they already have. Just as families have had to delay plans to take a vacation or purchase a new car and businesses have had to halt plans for expansion, hospitals and health care facilities have had to rethink purchasing that new MRI machine or new computer software.

Unfortunately, this halt in progression in the health care world could have dire consequences on our country. In the medical field, new technologies emerge daily and doctors learn of new ways to fight diseases, diagnose patients and provide better-quality care. With facilities unable to afford new technologies to support these advancements, quality of patient care would suffer.

Not only are health care facilities hurting, but there are still facilities such as rural community hospitals that will never have the budget to afford thousands of dollars' worth of new technology. These facilities will always be a step behind the "big city" for-profit hospitals, which means they'll have to send patients away when their injuries or diagnoses require more specialized care than they are capable of providing.

This new economic climate has brought into focus the high costs for new health care technologies, and it has become increasingly more difficult to pass those costs onto the patient. Today, hospital executives have to find ways to decrease costs while still providing good-quality patient care.

Whether that means prolonging the life of the hospital's current operating system software or finding ways to expand the life of imaging machines, health care technology service firms can be a driving force behind lower health care costs.

Now is not the time to stop innovation and implementation of new technologies. If that were to happen, our health care system would soon be in the dark ages of medical innovation. Instead, hospitals must weigh their options and priorities for new technologies and utilize service firms that can extend the lifetime of the technology they currently have.

Although our economy is demanding the tightening of our belts, we should always recognize the significant correlation between technology advancements and patient care.

OTHER VOICES

Kearney Hub

The recent stories in the Hub recounting Black Thursday — the nickname attached to the destruction caused by tornadoes that pounded Kearney one year ago — no doubt conjured scary memories for many who were in the storms' path.

But looking back, it isn't the fear and damage that most stands out about the storm. In-

stead, what's most memorable from Black Thursday is that no deaths or even serious injuries resulted from the devastation.

Yes, that may be a credit to providence to a certain extent, but let's also recognize the value of excellent emergency systems in giving residents ample warning to take shelter.

We are truly fortunate to live in a time when storm-tracking and

communications technologies are advanced to such a degree as to give even those at a tornado's ground zero a good chance for survival.

Equally important, when a storm such as Black Thursday occurs, it doesn't take long to be reminded that communities still pull together in tough times, and that there's never a shortage of caring people in need.

but Obama offers more than profitable brands," unilaterally promised government-backed warranties for GM cars and argued that the company should focus on "manufacturing the fuel-efficient cars and trucks that will carry us towards an energy-independent future."

This past week, the president reiterated, "What we are not doing — what I have no interest in doing — is running GM." It was during the same speech in which he announced that the federal government was forc-

blind nostalgia to justify sinking \$50 billion of taxpayer money into a company that is failing, by his own account, because of "bad business decisions." He offers jingoism, too. Obama says he is "absolutely committed" to "one goal: The United States of America will lead the world in building the next generation of clean cars." If those sneaky foreigners think they're going to build non-polluting vehicles and sell them to Americans at reasonable prices, they'd better

nonunion workers, ing SUVs versus smaller, fuel-efficient cars or st with conventional cars in of gambling on "the next era of clean cars."

After they see how C handles these and other rate decisions, American start to wonder whether who claims to have no in in running GM is the best date for the job.

Contact the writer: jsu@reason.com

Bailout poorly structured

On Jan. 21, 1988, a General Motors executive named Elmer Johnson wrote a brave and prophetic memo. Its main point was contained in this sentence: "We have vastly underestimated how deeply ingrained are the organizational and cultural rigidities that hamper our ability to execute."



David Brooks

New York Times

On Jan. 26, 2009, Rob Kleinbaum, a former GM employee and consultant, wrote his own memo. Kleinbaum's argument was eerily similar: "It is apparent that unless GM's culture is fundamentally changed, especially in North America, its true heart, GM will likely be back at the public trough again and again."

These two memos, written by men devoted to the company, get to the heart of GM's problems. Bureaucratic restructuring won't fix the company. Clever financing schemes won't fix the company. GM's core problem is its corporate and workplace culture — the unquantifiable but essential attitudes, mindsets and relationship patterns that are passed down, year after year.

Over the past five decades, this company has progressively lost touch with car buyers, especially those who have flocked to European and Japanese brands. Over five decades, this company has tolerated labor practices that seem insane to outsiders. Over these decades, it has tolerated bureaucratic structures that repel top talent. It has evaded the relentless high-quality focus that has helped companies like Toyota prosper.

As a result, GM has steadily lost U.S. market share, from 54 percent to 19 percent.

The problems have not gone unrecognized, and heroic measures have been undertaken. But technocratic reforms from within have not changed the culture. Technocratic reforms from Washington won't, either. For the elemental facts about the Obama restructuring plan are these: Bureaucratically, the plan is smart. Financially, it is tough-minded.

But when it comes to the corporate culture that is at the core of GM's woes, the Obama approach is strangely oblivious. The Obama plan wouldn't revolutionize GM's corporate culture. It could make things worse.

First, the Obama plan reduces the influence of commercial outsiders. The best place for fresh thinking could come from outside private investors. But the Obama plan would ride roughshod over the current private investors and so discourage future investors. GM is now a pariah on Wall Street. Say farewell to a potentially powerful source of external commercial pressure.

Second, the Obama plan entrenches the ancient regime. The UAW has been given a bigger leadership role. This is the union that fought for job banks, where employees get paid for doing nothing. This is the organization that championed retirement with full benefits at around age 50. This is not an organization that represents fundamental cultural change.

Third, the Obama approach reduces the fear that impels change. The U.S. government would own most of GM. It would be politically suicidal for the Democrats, or whoever is in power, to pull the plug on the company — now or ever.

Therefore, the current ners can rest assured that never need to fear liquidation. There will always be federal subsidies for their mediocrity.

Fourth, GM's executive unions now have an incentive to see Washington as a revenue center. Already, the union has successfully lobbied to move production back from overseas. Al the company has succeeded in sought to restrict the import cars that might compete GM brands. In the years, GM's management will have a strong incentive to spend in Washington, urging the pany's owner, the federal ernment, to issue laws to against Ford and Honda.

Fifth, the new plan would create an ever-thickening relationships between new owners — in government management and unions, thickening bonds between lic and private bureaucra fundamentally alter the rate culture, and not for the ter. Members of Congress are getting more involved the company they own and have their own quaint inq. The end result is that will not become more like cessful car companies. They become less like them. The eral merger will not accept the company's viability, impede it.

We've seen this before, in different context: An confident government t itself into a dysfunction ture it doesn't really stand. The result is qua. The costs escalate. There exit strategy.

Contact the writer: <http://nytimes.com/gst/email.us>