

parks to more restaurants, shopping, and entertainment? You need more people to support those amenities and more people requires, well, more jobs.

It is easy for community leaders to pass off the role of job creation to your local economic development entities, which might include both paid employees and volunteer board members. To some extent, that is a reasonable view, because these entities are usually entrusted to administer the funds that can legally be used to attract, create, and/or retain jobs. However, it should not be treated as their quest alone. Jobs do not exist in a vacuum in which they are totally unaffected by any other factor but economic development funding. Jobs and the labor force in general are affected by a whole host of factors.

Allen Savory is a pioneering ecologist from Zimbabwe. Over the last half century, he has revolutionized the manner in which thousands of ranchers and pastoralists graze their livestock and manage their grasslands across the world, with a practice called holistic management. To be clear, I could stop now and devote a dozen essays to this, one of my favorite topics in life, but I will digress for now. I bring this up for a reason beyond being the most unexpected of non-sequiturs.

Holistic management is a management tool with wide application beyond just grazing of livestock on grasslands. This philosophy is detailed, such that it is found in a textbook, but to summarize, holistic management states that nature functions with interdependence



Showmanship! Kaylee Pentecost of Robert Lee recently was awarded Senior Showmanship Champion at the Sheep Capital Lamb Camp, held in San Angelo July 30 - August 1, 2021.

between the people, animals, and land. As a result, management of any of those aspects must consider the others, because no part of it operates within a vacuum. A manager must consider the complex relationships and the external factors and context that affect each piece of the ecosystem at large.

Which brings me back to jobs. There is budding research into applying the philosophy of holistic management to local government, which I have only begun to study, but we can see the application right here in the topic of job creation. Jobs and the labor force exist within the larger context of the community and external factors have significant impacts. Local taxes, utility costs, and regulations (zoning, building permits, etc.) play a role in the decision for a

business to expand or move to town. The real estate market and available space for offices, warehouses, etc. have an impact. Cost of living and quality of life for employees is a favor. In short, if it touches your daily life in a community as a business owner or resident, then it is probably a factor in the creation of new jobs.

So, with that said, why * wouldn't* you involve other agencies, community leaders, and decision-makers in the conversation about job creation? If a community has great economic development incentives but other factors are highly unfavorable towards job creation, that's a real problem. If your business climate is not particularly friendly towards existing businesses, why would you assume it'll be any better for new businesses?



Farmers Market! A variety of homegrown vegetables was available to shoppers at the farmers market held on Saturday, July 30, at Coke County Feed and Ranch Supply in Robert Lee.

Allen Savory constantly preaches that context is key within management of ecosystems. So it is with job creation too. We've talked about improving the labor force and strengthening existing jobs, as necessary aspects to creating more jobs in town. In that respect, we see "new jobs" as part of a much larger conversation, an economic ecosystem of sorts. As we move forward, I pose this question to

community leaders: have you viewed your economy in such a holistic manner? Have you examined all the factors that make your community attractive or unattractive to create those jobs?

James Decker is the Mayor of Stamford, Texas and the creator of the West of 98 website and podcast. Contact James and subscribe to these essays at westof98.substack.com and subscribe to West of 98 wherever podcasts are found.



Burglar Caught!

Coke County Sheriff Wayne McCutchen recently announced the apprehension of a suspect in local burglaries. With the discovery of several storage shed break-ins, an investigation was conducted by Chief Deputy Williams, Deputy Burdett, and with assistance from Administrative Assistant, Misti Hayes. The suspect has been identified as Gayla Carlisle and she has been arrested on two State Jail Felony Charges. She was booked into the Runnels County Jail on Monday, August 2, 2021, with a recommended bond totaling \$20,000. Several stolen items have been recovered by the Coke County Sheriff's Office. A State Jail Felony is punishable by 180 days to two years in state jail and a fine of up to \$10,000. At this time the investigation is ongoing. The Coke County Sheriff's Office appreciates the support from the community in making Coke County safer!

Texas Farm Bureau releases 2020 report

Despite the challenges brought forward by the COVID-19 pandemic, Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) accomplished its mission of being the Voice of Texas Agriculture in 2020. A look at the year's activities, successes and programs is available in the 2020 Accomplishments report.

The 32-page report can be found on texasfarmbureau.org.

"Farm Bureau members from Coke County can take pride in the accomplishments outlined in this report," Coke County Farm Bureau President John Ross Copeland said. "Our members

are active in many of the programs and efforts that are highlighted."

Achieving membership goals each year is a priority for the organization, as well as providing member benefits and services to help member-families save time and money. The fiscal year ended with TFB membership at 533,856 member-families, which represents 20 consecutive years of membership growth. Details on those membership successes are highlighted on pages 10-11.

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