



COLBY FREE PRESS

State official stops in Colby to push education plan

By JAY KELLEY

Colby Free Press

Kansas Lt. Gov. Gary Sherrer said today he and Gov. Bill Graves think it is the right time to "step up" on education.

Sherrer was in Colby promoting the governor's education plan and in a visit to the *Colby Free Press* said the current budget situation made improvements in education even more important.

"With a tight budget, there really isn't going to be room for additions," Sherrer said.

"Paying for the plan is the hard part," he added. "A lot of people tell us we need this, but are concerned about the money."

Graves is proposing a 2-cent increase in fuel taxes and two percent on the state sales tax. Sherrer thinks the state will get a lot for the money. The fuel tax would be put into the state's highway program to free money from the general fund earmarked for transportation.

"We don't want to mandate to the districts," he said. "we want to give incentives."

The proposed plan would not only provide districts with funds needed for mandates, but also reward districts for excellence.

The governor's proposal includes funding for salary bonuses for National Board Certified teachers, something Sherrer hopes will encourage excellence.

"Certification is very hard to get," he said. "It takes about two years for full-time teachers, and not everyone certifies."

Schools that meet the requirements of the state assessment would also receive additional funds, as well as those who improve substantially toward meeting the requirements.

Sherrer said too much emphasis was placed on the negative in most school

Education plan at-a-glance

A lot of figures are flying around Gov. Bill Graves' new education proposal.

Here is a breakdown of the projected costs of the program:

- Increase the base state aid per pupil by \$110. This will apply to every student and the cost is projected at \$63,085,000.
- Increase weighting for K-3 at-risk students from 9-11 percent. Students in at-risk categories will benefit from \$8.2 million.
- Spend \$1 million to add 436 pupils to the four-year-old at-risk category.
- Increase state funding for mandated special education programs from 85 to 90 percent at a cost of \$22,243,000.
- Pay National Board Certified Teachers \$5,000 above their regu-

lar salaries for the 10 years of their certification.

In addition, the district would receive \$3,000 to be spent in the building where that teacher works. Cost is \$512,000

- Reward schools that meet the state standard of excellence, or show dramatic improvement, with \$50 per pupil for each state assessment standard met. Cost is \$8 million.

- Provide a total of \$2 million in competitive grants for districts to reward outstanding teachers.

- Provide up to \$20 million for extended learning programs such as summer school.

- Provide \$4.3 million for a five-year plan to double all-day kindergarten weighting.

- Total cost of the governor's education package is \$179,355,693.

finance plans.

"We want to reward the 'good kids,'" he said. He proposed additional funds for extended learning. While this would encompass summer school for students who need additional help, Sherrer said it would also be for "gifted" students.

Funding for an all-day kindergarten would also be part of the plan, phased in over five years. Sherrer said the reason he and the governor are canvassing the state is to inform the voters and look for alternative ideas.

"We are not locked into funding methods," he said, when asked about the impact of a 2-cent increase on gasoline that has already jumped almost 50 percent in the last year.

He also said the state was not in fiscal crisis, though the budgets are going to be a little tighter. "We cut the

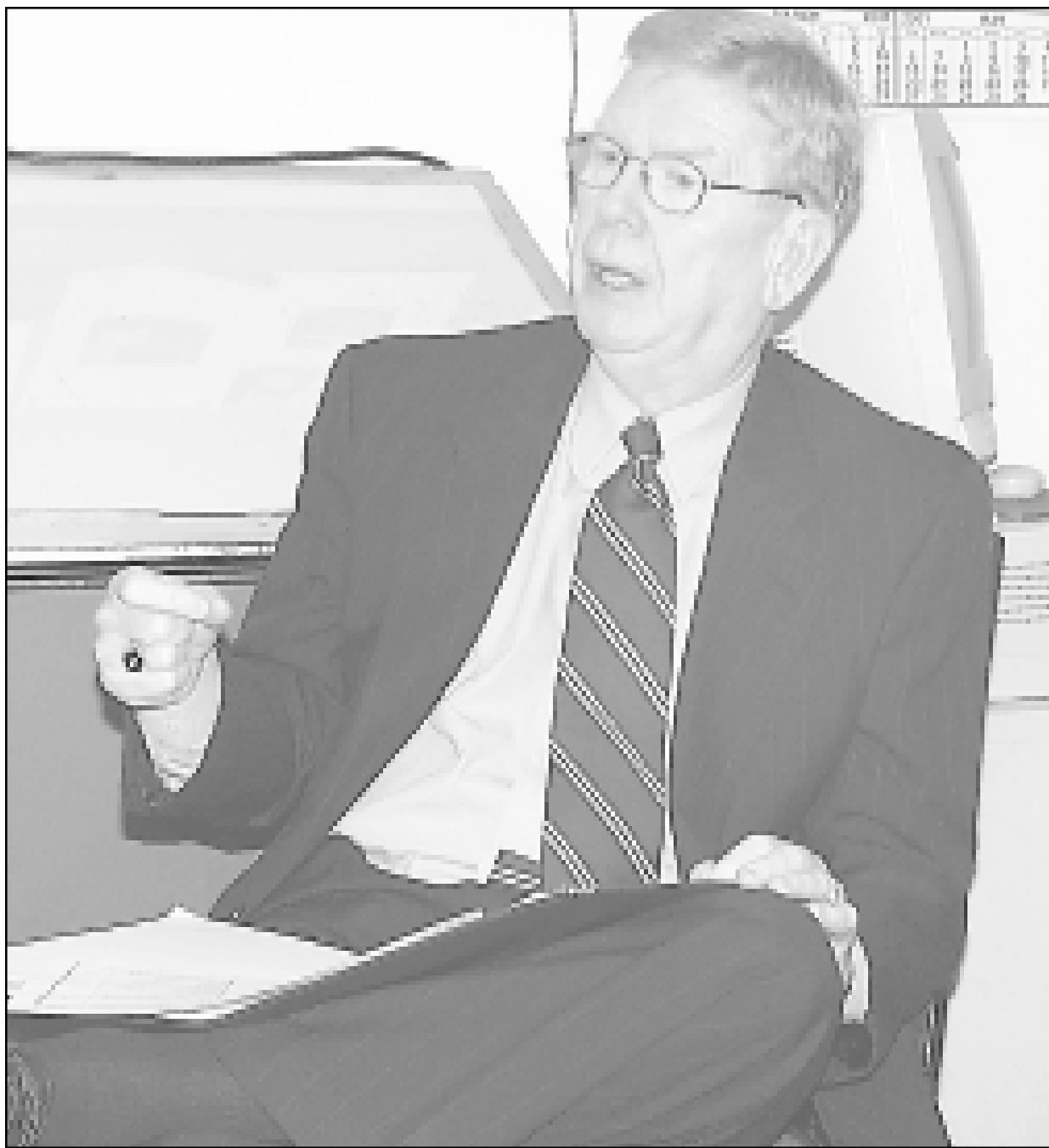
education levy from 35 to 20 mills," he said.

"In hindsight, we should have held back a little," he said, referring to the mill levy rollbacks in the last five years. "But we were the ones holding people back," he said.

The bill passed by the house Thursday doesn't address the root of the problem, Sherrer said.

"It only helps K-3 students, and it is only a partially funded mandate," he said. Sherrer said mandates without funding are the reason local school systems are in the financial crises many of them face.

"It's time for the state to step up and do our part," he said. Although he admitted that local tax relief would probably not result from the governor's plan, he said it would remove pressure on local boards to increase taxes.



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Kansas Lt. Gov. Gary Sherrer was in Colby today to promote the governor's education plan to area media and citizens' groups. Here, Sherrer is pictured during his interview in the *Free Press* office.

New foundation reaches out to the community for support

By JAY KELLEY

Colby Free Press

Lelani Thomas said the Thomas County Community Foundation is "an opportunity to give back to our community."

Thomas, along with Rick Dickman, Kathy Harrison and board president Cindy Black are getting the foundation up and going as an organizational board with a view of having an "inclu-

sive, county-wide foundation."

The idea started in 1999, when the Kansas Health Foundation, a non-profit group dedicated to "making Kansas the best place to raise a family" identified Leadership Thomas County as one of 17 leadership groups to offer a four-year, \$10,000 grant for projects.

The next year, the health foundation offered Thomas County a \$100,000 endowment grant to set up a commu-

nity foundation.

Interest on that money would be divided between youth and leadership enrichment, but other monies donated can be used for any purpose.

"We want to be inclusive," said Harrison. Grants will be available for any purpose in Thomas County and can be tailored to the donor's desires, also. "We aren't project driven," said Thomas. "It will be up to the commu-

nity."

The group said all of Thomas County needs to be part of the foundation. Grants will be available for projects throughout the cities and rural areas of the county.

Arts, historic preservation, new facilities and events are just a partial list of things grants can be used for, said board members.

They are also seeking donors from

all areas of the county. "This foundation comes from the heart," said Harrison, "and the money will stay in the county."

The health foundation also offered a \$300,000 matching grant to set up the

foundation. Pledges need to be in by Dec. 31, 2001, but the money doesn't have to be collected until Dec. 31, 2003.

See "FOUNDATION," Page 6

More cash is brought in off Interstate 70

Two area traffic stops kept Colby Police Officer Scott Sitton and his canine partner, Blitz, busy on Thursday night. Actually, Blitz was the officer Kansas Highway Patrol Troopers requested after the occupants of the stopped vehicles began to act "suspiciously."

Lt. Tim McGuire, highway patrol troop commander in Hays, said the first

stop came on I-70, about 10 miles east of Colby. Hector Campas, 59, of Douglas, Ariz., was stopped at 5:35 p.m. for a registration violation. He and his passenger, Debra Urquijo, 43, also of Arizona, began to act suspiciously and refused consent for the trooper to search their vehicle.

Sitton and Blitz were called out and Blitz "hit" on the trunk area. A black

duffle bag with an estimated \$270,000 was found. Neither Campas nor his passenger were willing to claim the money and were released.

A second stop near Goodland at 8:10 p.m. resulted in the confiscation of \$100,000. Troopers stopped Robert Barnes, of Washington, D.C. Barnes said he was going to Las Vegas to do some gambling. According to Mc-

Guire, the trooper became suspicious because Barnes was getting very nervous. Barnes gave consent to a search and the money was found, wrapped in Jamaican newspapers and vacuum-sealed in a plastic bag.

Blitz was called out and hit on the vehicle, but no drugs were found. "Apparently, there were drugs in the vehicle at one time," said McGuire.

Army Field Band is under the baton of Col. Finley Hamilton

By TOM (TD) DREILING

Free Press Publisher

Commander and conductor of the United States Army Field Band and Soldiers' Chorus, appearing in concert in Colby on Saturday, March 31, is Col. Finley R. Hamilton. He was appointed to the post in March of 1999.

The concert, free to the public, will be held in the Colby Community Building.

Although free, tickets are required and can be obtained by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Pat Ziegelmeier, Western Plains Arts Association Executive Director, Colby Community College, 1255 S. Range, Colby, Kan. 67701.

The Association and the *Colby Free Press* are jointly sponsoring the northwest Kansas concert.

Doors will open at the Community Building at 6:45 and those holding tickets are asked to be seated by 7:15. Ten minutes prior to the concert, those without tickets will be admitted if there are available seats.

Col. Hamilton is a native of Richmond, Ky. and earned bachelor's and



Col. Hamilton

master's degrees in music from Eastern Kentucky University. He completed ROTC training and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army in 1971.

His first active duty assignment was a director of instruction at the Armed Forces School of Music, where he was responsible for training band members and bandmasters for the Army.

Hamilton's next position, as staff bands officer for Forces Command in Atlanta, involved inspections and staff oversight of more than 100 Active, Reserve and National Guard Army Bands.

In 1982, he assumed command of the Army Ground Forces Band in At-

lanta. Under his direction, the band conducted concert tours in North and Central America, and performed for President Reagan, President Mitterand of France and Prime Minister Peres of Israel.

Hamilton was transferred to Heidelberg, Germany in 1985, where he served as staff bands officer for the U.S. Army, Europe.

He became commander for the U.S. Army, Europe Band and Chorus in 1987. In this position, he conducted concerts and ceremonies throughout the European continent and performed on two separate occasions for President and Mrs. George Bush.

Col. Hamilton was assigned previ-

ously to the U.S. Army Field Band in July 1990 as director of the Soldiers' Chorus. He assumed the duties of deputy commander and associate conductor of the U.S. Army Field Band from 1991-1997.

Conducting more than 700 concerts throughout the United States, Europe and Hawaii, Hamilton was also responsible for initiating the Field Band's performance series at the Maryland Hall for the Performing Arts and conducting concerts with the Boston Pops Orchestra, Cincinnati Pops Orchestra and the Detroit Symphony.

In June 1997, Hamilton was assigned as the Department of the Army Staff Bands Officer, Washington, D.C.,

overseeing the entire Army Bands program.

Col. Hamilton is a graduate of the Adjutant General Officer Basic and Advanced Courses, and the Command and General Staff College.

His military awards include the Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, the Army Achievement Medal, the National Defense Service Medal and the Armed Forces Reserve Medal.

Professional affiliations include the American Bandmasters Association, National Band Association, World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles, and the Texas Bandmasters Association.

Briefly

Weather: Cool and damp

The Colby area could see rain showers or snow showers, depending on where the mercury settles, in what looks to be another dreary, cool weekend. Tonight, cloudy, fog, a 30 percent chance for rain or snow showers, lows 25-30 and northeast winds 20-30 mph, decreasing to around 5-15 mph late. Saturday, cloudy, fog early, a 20 percent chance of rain or snow showers, highs only in the 30s and southeast winds 10-20 mph. Saturday night, cloudy, fog, lows 25-30 and a 20 percent chance of rain or snow showers. Sunday, dry,

highs 40-50 and Monday, rain likely, lows in the middle 30s and highs in the 50s. Thursday's high in Colby was 67 and the overnight low this morning was 34. No additional precipitation to report. The records for March 23: 88 in 1910 and -1 in 1898. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

Feast and Fanfare planned

The Colby High School Show Choir will host a "Feast

and Fanfare" dinner theater beginning at 6:30 p.m., Monday, March 26, in the high school commons area.

The cost of the event is \$10 per person and tickets can be purchased by calling Chris Latta, vocal teacher, contacting any encore member or by e-mailing to: clatta33tenor@hotmail.com.

Grass clipping pickup starts soon

The City of Colby will begin picking up grass clippings, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday starting Monday, April

2, according to Gerry Bieker, public works director. Grass clippings must be at curbside by 8 a.m. on the day it is to be picked up and must not be mixed with any solid waste, he said. Businesses using dumpsters must bag grass separately and place beside dumpsters.

Municipal solid waste will continue to be picked up as regularly scheduled on Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

"This would consist of any household waste as well as small tree limbs, dry leaves, and other yard waste (except grass clippings)," he said.

For questions, call 462-4420 or 462-4410.

