



COLBY FREE PRESS

College considers free tuition for county residents

By MAXINE NELSON

Colby Free Press

Free tuition at Colby Community College for all Thomas County residents may be in the offing if plans discussed by the Board of Trustees at their Monday meeting come to fruition.

With the increase in state aid for education, the college hopes to attract enough additional students for state aid to make up the money currently obtained through tuition from Tho-

mas County residents. Kenneth Johnson, dean of fiscal affairs, estimated if the college could attract 29 additional students it would break even on tuition.

At the present time, the top 25 percent of graduates from the Thomas County high schools qualify for Thomas County scholarships.

The board is considering offering free tuition to all graduates of Thomas County high schools

(including home schooling and GED who meet requirements for graduation), plus all residents who carry six or more credit hours. They would still have to pay fees and buy their books. The board considered, but did not decide, how to determine "residency."

This scholarship would apply to re-entry students as well, but the six-hour requirement would eliminate those taking "hobby-type" classes as defined by the State Board of Re-

gents.

The students must maintain a minimum grade point average to be eligible to renew their scholarships. The scholarship will not apply to EduKan classes.

Current tuition is \$33 per credit hour. The college hopes to keep tuition the same next year, but it will depend somewhat on what happens during negotiations with the Faculty Alliance, which will affect operating expenses.

Kenton Krehbiel, board chair, pointed out that students who earn 30 hours of credit at Colby College will have saved \$990 in tuition money based on present tuition of \$33 per credit hour. He encourages parents to enroll their students locally.

Dr. Mikel Ary, college president, and Johnson will review and revise the scholarship guidelines and bring them back for board approval.

Runway light problems spark letter from doctors

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

The runway lights at Colby's municipal airport have been an ongoing problem for many years, but in recent months frustration over the outages has intensified when medical emergencies arise and patients can't be flown out.

According to Colby City Manager Carolyn Armstrong, steps to correct the situation have been as ongoing as the problem itself and the situation has continued to be a topic of discussion at council meetings.

The most recent incident occurred last month when the runway lights failed and a patient in Colby waited at Citizens Medical Center while emergency personnel drove to Oakley to rendezvous with an airlift crew. According to Armstrong, Oakley's runway lights failed as well and ambulance personnel ended up driving to Goodland before finally coming back to Colby with the air crew to airlift the patient to another facility for treatment. While not an everyday occurrence, the intermittent outages have concerned not only the local medical community, but the city as well. At last week's council meeting, Colby Mayor Warren Hixson talked about a letter sent to the city by members of the medical staff.

Hixson told the council that it was this understanding that all of the medical community was aware of the efforts by the city to correct the problem, but apparently communications between the city and hospital were not directly relayed to the physicians. This, he said, resulted in the physicians sending the city a letter.

"We know a total replacement of the runway lights is necessary," he said, "and bids will be let for the project the latter part of this month."

The cost of the project is estimated at \$300,000, Armstrong added, of which \$200,000 will be paid by the state through grant funds and the re-

mainder will be paid by the city.

"We (the city) are prepared to put additional funds into the budget just to get this done if necessary," Armstrong said.

In the letter to city council members, the doctors wrote, "The lack of adequate, functioning runway lights means that aircraft arriving to transport critically ill or injured persons to a tertiary facility must land in Goodland. The flight team must then travel by ground to our facility, prepare the patient for transfer and then return by ground to Goodland.

"The result is an unnecessary delay in transporting a patient and places him/her in a critical situation without optimal medical support for an extended period of time."

The letter was signed by seven physicians to include Drs. V.H. Hildyard, Eric S. Jacobsen, LaDonna M. Regier, Stephen G. Grillot, M.E. Fercha, Jeffrey Kasselmann and Raymond Ketting.

Yet, physicians aren't the only ones who have been frustrated by the runway lights. According to Armstrong, the city has continued to look at alternative solutions for quite some time.

"We had an especially bad year in 1999 with rodents chewing the underground electrical line," she said, "and every time we fix the lines — something else would happen."

The city had even approached the Federal Aviation Administration requesting that when the runway lights are down that taxiway lights be used in emergencies. However, the request has continued to be denied.

Funding for the city's portion of the project will come from the capital improvement reserve fund and will be repaid by the airport over the next several years. The work, which is scheduled to start about June 1, will include replacing all underground wiring to the runway lights with PVC conduit, which should protect the wiring from the elements and rodents, officials said.

To better serve the people



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Doug Lewis, with the City of Colby Public Works department, worked on siding for a new communications building east of the Thomas County Law Enforcement Center on Monday. According to Colby Police Chief Randy Jones, the new building will house the city and county radio equipment currently in the generator room at the center. The new

building will be climate controlled and protect the sensitive equipment better, Jones said. The project is a joint city-county project, with the city supplying labor and the county materials. Jones hopes to be up and running in the new building in two weeks, with no interruption of services.

Insect guide revisions take over a decade

MANHATTAN (AP) — When then-Kansas Secretary of Agriculture Sam Brownback authorized the first update to the state's insect guide since 1946, he thought it might take a year to complete.

That was in 1990.

It took 10 years of painstaking work for state entomologists Stephan White and Glenn Salsburg to update "Insects of Kansas," now being distributed

through the Kansas State Extension Service.

"This is an incredible book," said Robert Brooks, who oversees the massive insect collection at the University of Kansas' Natural History Museum. "Anybody with a copy of 'Insects in Kansas' in their hands is going to be able to identify — or get real close to identifying — any insect they come across in Kansas or, for that matter, the

Midwest."

An inch thick and spiral-bound, "Insects in Kansas" has 920 color photographs of 875 species, ranging from the tiny sunflower aphid to the giant cecropia moth. The first edition was first published in 1943 by the Kansas State Board of Agriculture. The state extension service printed a second edition in 1962. Within a few years, the second edition was out of print. But the exten-

sion service and the agricultural board kept getting calls from farmers, 4-H leaders and naturalists wanting to buy a copy. So in 1990, Brownback — now a Republican U.S. senator — figured the time was right for a third edition.

Since the book's initial printing in December 2000, the state extension service has sold about 1,600 copies of "Insects of Kansas." A second printing is in the works.

New water truck purchase approved by county commissioners

By MAXINE NELSON

Colby Free Press

The Thomas County Commissioners approved the purchase of a new water tanker truck for the road department at their Monday meeting.

Chris Bieker, road supervisor, said he had been to Kansas City to look at tankers, and recommended the purchase of a 1987 Heil stainless steel tanker which holds 6,500 gallons. The cost of \$16,886 includes installation of baffles and delivery to Colby.

The baffles are needed to keep the contents from sloshing around, Bieker explained.

In other business:

- The commissioners discussed concerns expressed by property owners next to the proposed detour to be built while the viaduct on Highway 25 is being removed.

- The commissioners said the project is being done by the State Department of Transportation which will make all decisions. The state will tell the county how the detour is to be built.

- Thomas County Extension agents D'Ette Scholtz and Dennis Chandler brought their reports.

- Scholtz said Mila Bandell, Cheyenne County agent, will be presenting *Living on the Bright Side of Life*, at 1:30 p.m. Friday, April 20, in the Thomas

County Office Complex meeting room. The lesson is open to the public.

- Chandler said 4-H Camp will be June 5-8 at Camp Jackson at Rye, Colo. He said 11 people graduated from the Master Gardener class held in Hoxie. They are helping with the butterfly garden at the Selden Elementary School, and will establish an heirloom garden at the Prairie Museum of Art and History in Colby.

- Both reported the regional and county club days went well in their new locations.

- The after-school 4-H group has chosen the name Colby Comets and has received a charter, and will convert to

a regular club.

- The commissioners approved tax abatements in the amounts of \$595.95 for a vehicle double assessed; \$20.61 for personal property gone from the county; and refunded \$845.81 paid on a truck never owned by the taxpayer.

- They appointed Maxine Nelson as the county representative on the National Organization on Disability.

- The commissioners said they had canvassed the votes on Friday and found no errors in the recent election.

- Thomas County Highway Department gave the following March work report: Water was pumped out of Fulwider Pit before producing and

stockpiling 2717 cubic yards of sealing sand.

- One hundred seventy-six yards of fine sand were hauled to the City of Colby. Work in East Hale Township consisted of dragging the streets of Levant, hauling gravel to Levant, blading roads, and repairing a washout. In North Randall, a washout was patched with millings, roads were bladed, and their motor grader was serviced and worked on.

- Other work: Helped the weed department replace their driveway; poured a concrete driveway at the Household Hazardous Waste building; installed signs for Smith Township;

swept the landfill road; hand patched throughout the county; repaired intersections on County Road 391 north of Brewster with millings; repaired a culvert pipe on County Road 364 west (in the north part of the county); built a sand blaster; built a fence at the shop; built shelves for the office; marked culvert pipes; removed wash checks on County Road 364 east; bladed roads; checked and put up traffic signs; checked and put up 911 signs; serviced and repaired vehicles and equipment.

The commissioners will meet next at 9 a.m. Monday in their conference room in the courthouse. The meeting is open to the public and input is urged.

Briefly

Weather: Rain/snow mixture

The National Weather Service is talking today about a rain/snow mixture for the Colby area tonight. They are calling for cloudy skies, lows around 35, northwest winds 15-25 mph and an 80 percent chance of rain, possibly mixed with snow.

Wednesday, cloudy, cool, a 50 percent chance for rain, highs 45-50 and north winds 20-30 mph. Wednesday night, partly cloudy, continued cool with lows around 30. Thursday, dry, highs 55-65. Monday's high in Colby was 68 and the overnight low this morning was 40.

There was no additional precipitation, leaving the month's total to date at 1.82 inches. The records for April 10: 90 in 1899 and 5 in 1989.

(The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

Highway patrol arrests three

An Indiana trio will be spending some time in the Thomas County Jail after a traffic stop Monday afternoon again turned into a drug bust on I-70.

According to Sgt. Rick Langdon, spokesman for the Kansas Highway Patrol, a trooper stopped a westbound 2001 Mercury near milepost 48, or about five miles west of Colby, for speeding. The driver, 20-year-old Curtis Ray Edwards, from Indianapolis, Ind., had a suspended license, so the trooper arrested him and contacted Budget Rentals, the owner of the car.

Langdon said troopers found about 1 1/2 pounds of marijuana in the car while it was being unloaded for the rental company. Edwards and his passengers, Adrian Conger, also 20, and Harold Howard, 30, were booked into the Thomas County Jail and charged with possession of marijuana with intent to sell.

Edwards is also charged with driving on a suspended license.

Fair's meeting date changed

The Thomas County Free Fair Board will meet at 8 p.m. Thursday, April 19, in the 4-H building to make plans for the coming fair. The meeting date has been changed from April 12. The meeting is open to the public.

Blood drive Wednesday

The Thomas County Bloodmobile will be hosting an American Red Cross blood drive, from 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, at the American Legion, 1850 W. 4th, Colby. To schedule an appointment, call 1-888-719-8929.

Carnival set, volunteers needed

Colby Elementary School's Parent-Teacher Organiza-

tion is sponsoring a carnival, Sunday, April 22, from noon to 4 p.m. at the Colby Community Building. In addition to bringing back the egg toss, many other games and prizes are planned. People are still needed to help. For information, call Julie Price at 462-3506.

Free compost available

The Thomas County landfill has compost to give away free to whoever will come and get it. If there are any questions, call Larry Jumper, landfill director, at 462-8139.

Senator will stop in Colby

U.S. Senator Pat Roberts will visit Thomas County on Wednesday, as part of his annual 105 County Tour. Roberts will be the guest speaker for the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce luncheon at noon at the Ramada Inn, 1950 South Range. The event is open to the public.

