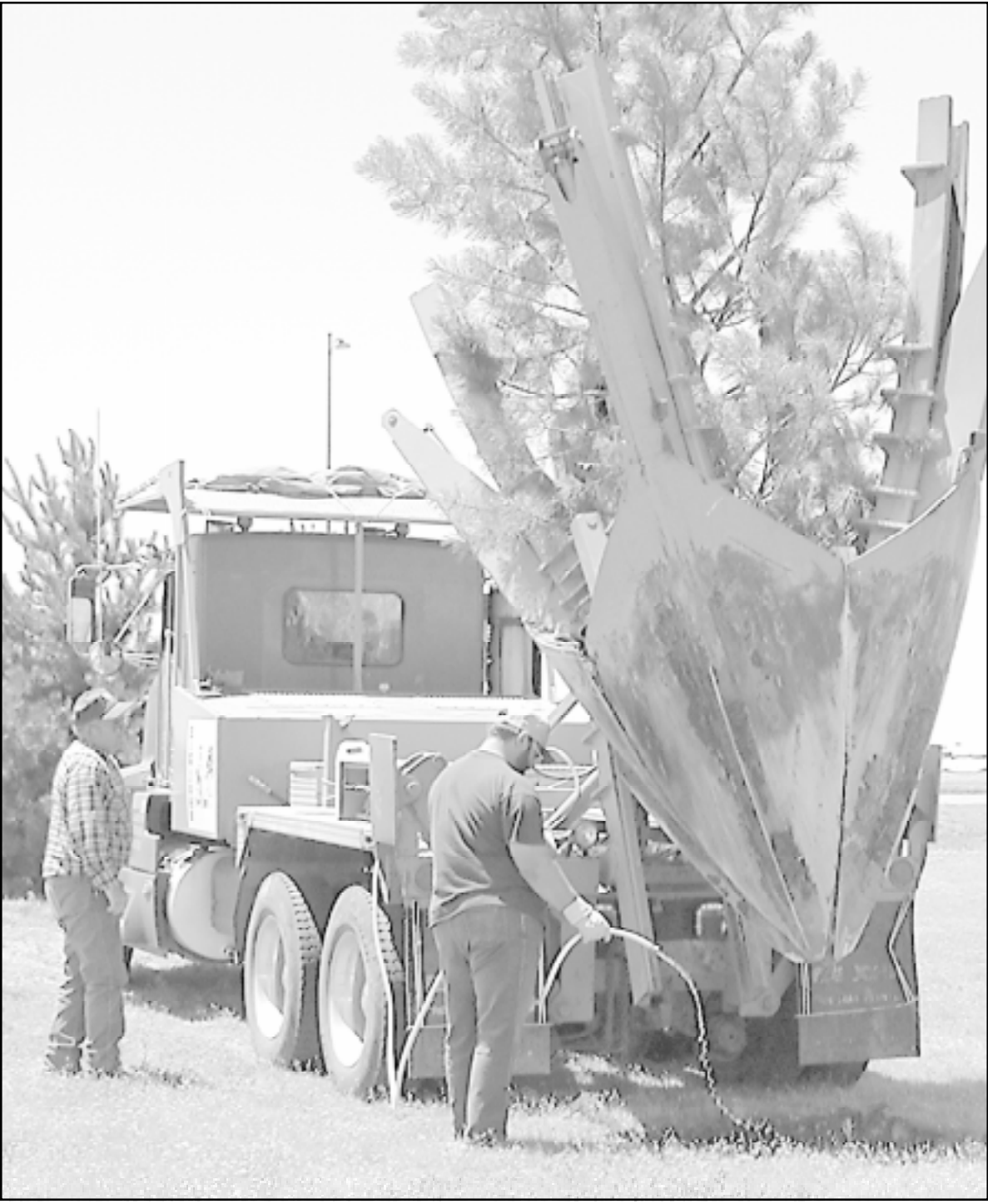




# COLBY FREE PRESS

8 pages



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Kirk Cheney watered the hole in preparation to transplant one of the 25 Austrian Pines donated to Prairie Senior Living Complex in memory of his lifemate, Shirley Blocker. David Pabst with Blue Ribbon Tree Farm is in the foreground checking the unloading process. The trees came from Hill City and are approximately 10 to 12 years old.

## Woman's memory lives on in trees at living complex

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

Shirley Blocker always felt there weren't enough trees at Prairie Senior Living Complex in Colby.

Unfortunately, before she could see that dream fully realized, she died at age of 30 from cancer on Jan. 14, 2001.

But the dream didn't die with her, thanks to her lifemate, Kirk Cheney.

Cheney, who now resides in Hill City, donated some 25 Austrian Pine trees in her memory and together, he and David Pabst with Blue Ribbon Tree Farm, planted the trees last week.

The trees measure 18' to 20' in height and were strategically placed around the facility to offer shade and some-



S. Blocker

thing pleasant for the residents to see, Cheney said. "The project all started with Kirk," said Alva Horn, social service designee at the complex. "It looks so good and now changes the place in a way that Shirley had always envisioned."

Blocker was employed at the facility from September of 1997 to January 2001 and graduated as a registered nurse in the spring before her death.

The memorial, Cheney said, is named the "Garden of Life," in remembrance of Blocker.

According to Cheney, the trees were raised by Gene and Betty Johnson in Hill City and he and Pabst moved them from there to Colby.

Many of the residents watched the transplanting process from their rooms or outside last week, adding that they couldn't wait to enjoy the shade they will now have.

"Shirley was such a bubble of life," Horn said, "and everytime we look out and see those trees, we will remember her and her love for life."

## Colby student attends first-ever youth forum

By MAXINE NELSON

Colby Free Press

Karen Davis, Colby, attended the first-ever Kansas Youth Leadership Forum at the University of Kansas last week. The conference allowed the 34 participants to explore leadership, career options, disability rights laws, and innovations in assistive technology. All attendees had disabilities.

"My roommates had the same kind of learning disabilities as I did," said Davis. "It was kind of nice to know that I am not alone in my disability."

She said she stayed in Burge's Union (dormitory). The girls were on the third floor and the boys were on the fourth floor, she noted.

"There were a variety of people with disabilities, some like me with learning problems, some albinos and some who were in wheelchairs," she said. "There were also people who had Downs syndrome, and we also had a mime talk to us who was deaf. He did a few skits."

Davis continued: "We had 90 events, including a talent show, and everybody had a talent. It was neat for those who have disabilities to show off their talent. For the talent show, I did a couple of skits from Saturday Night Live, one from Mary Catherine Gallagher, and one from motivational speaker Chris Farley."

Most of the forum's speakers, trainers and mentors were successful Kansans with disabilities, Davis said. Brenda Eddy, coordinator of the forum, said one of the major goals was

to provide role models for students with disabilities.

"Exposing kids to adults with disabilities is an opportunity to provide leadership by example," Eddy said. "We want them to see that they can achieve great things and that the disability does not need to limit their dreams. Gainful employment is the primary path to living a life of dignity and for contributing to the betterment of our society."

During their stay at the forum, the students participated in workshops to develop their leadership skills, explore career options, interact with adults with disabilities, and develop self-esteem.

"We went to the state Capitol on June 21, and I was voted president of the Senate and got to sit in front of everybody and do a mock bill passing," Davis said.

The mock debate was on House Bill 2162, a measure that would require private insurance companies to raise their caps on coverage of assistive technology. "We wanted to give them an idea of how a bill becomes a law," Eddy said. "It's a way to educate them on how the political process works."

The group was divided into two parties. The Individualist Party advocated the people with disabilities or corpo-

rate sponsors should pay for their own assistive technology like wheelchairs and hearing aids. The Federalists argued that the government should pass legislation to require insurance companies to undertake the responsibility and help people with disabilities gain more independence.

The actual bill was created in 1968 by the Assisted Technology for Kansans Project, a federally funded, statewide initiative. The bill was introduced during the 2001 legislative session but died because it was not assigned to a subcommittee for appropriations.

"We also got a tour of the Capitol, had a luncheon and we had two really good speakers," said Davis. "They were deaf, and had someone interpret what they were saying."

Davis will be attending Colby Community College this fall. She plans to apply what she learned in leadership conference to advocate for herself while she is going to college.

The forum, based on a highly successful California model, will be an annual event in Kansas, provided that the organization can secure future funding. Kansas received the grant this year along with in-kind donations from various state and local organizations, according to information provided by organizers of the forum.

An additional \$80,000 was given by the Resource Center for Independent Living Inc. of Osage City, with the understanding that the forum would seek public and private funds to cover the event in the future.



Karen Davis

## SRS releases review of services

By JOHN MILBURN

Associated Press Writer

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP)—A review of child and family services shows Kansas is making steady progress since privatizing foster care and adoption services in 1995, but areas of concern still remain, state officials say.

The report, summarized during a news conference Tuesday, shows Kansas strengths include collecting data, making staff training available and placing 85 percent of the 3,748 children in foster care in family homes rather than group homes.

Janet Schalansky, social and rehabilitation services secretary, said the review is the first real comparison of data since privatization was implemented.

"This review is another tool for us to use as we strive toward continuous improvement of the child welfare system," Schalansky said. "I think it shows Kansas is moving in the right direction on child welfare issues."

However, the review shows work remains, she said, including making the data on child and family services more accessible and easier to use for

providers.

The review, which compared Kansas to other states, indicated the frequency of abuse or neglect is higher than the national standard.

Assistant SRS Secretary Joyce Allegrucci said the state's rate of abuse among foster children of 1.55 percent was higher than the 0.4 percent federal mark that state's are trying to achieve.

But she said the data was collected from 1997 to 1999 before the state started moving children out of group homes and into more secure family settings.

## Custom cutters scramble for work

WICHITA (AP)—With an anticipated 1 million acres of wheat abandoned in Kansas, custom cutters are scrambling to find work as the harvest moves into full swing in northern Kansas.

Harvesters are sitting idle at the state harvest office in Colby or driving the country trying to find someone that needs their wheat cut, said Roger Hale,

the harvest coordinator for the area.

Each of the offices in the region has at least six harvest crews looking for acres to cut, he said.

In Haskell County, 17 harvest crews were looking for work and in Oberline there was a surplus of 10 combines, according to the harvest offices.

"That is a big problem ... especially when you start to figure up their ex-

penses just to sit," Hale said.

Harvest offices in Garden City, Greensburg, Oberlin, Sublette and Tribune were all reporting a surplus of custom cutters.

Poor planting conditions during last fall, followed by a cold winter, are being blamed for the unusually high number of acres abandoned in Kansas, sources said.

## Court affirms injunction on Kansas ticketing vehicles with tribal tags

DENVER (AP)—A federal appeals court has upheld a decision preventing Kansas authorities from ticketing Prairie Band Potawatomi Tribe members for having tribal license plates instead of ones from the state.

The ruling Monday by the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed a preliminary injunction ordered two years ago by U.S. District Judge Dale Saffels.

The appeals court had stayed the injunction until it could rule.

The case now returns to Saffels for a final ruling.

The dispute began in 1999 as an assertion of the tribe's sovereignty.

In Kansas, cars registered in other

states are not required to have Kansas plates. The tribe had hoped state officials would recognize their plates as it would those from any other government, but several drivers with tribal plates were ticketed.

The tribe has not issued any titles or registrations since the stay was granted Nov. 9, 1999.

Lawyers for the state had argued that granting the injunction would effectively let tribal titleholders drive unlawfully through Kansas without state license plates.

The three appeals judges, however, said the temporary hold on tickets for drivers with tribal tags was appropriate because the tribe would have suf-

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**This (case) is an important issue for tribal sovereignty and tribal rights to self-government."**

David Prager III,  
Potawatomi general council

ferred irreparable harm without the injunction.

"Motor vehicle registration and titling is a traditional governmental function," Judge Robert Henry wrote for the panel. "The state's refusal to

extend recognition, therefore, causes an obvious harm to the tribe: interference with or infringement on tribal self-government."

That harm outweighed safety concerns by the state, which had argued

that tribal registrations pose a threat because they do not appear on national crime databases, Henry wrote.

The decision cited a statement from Master Trooper Gary Thiessen saying, "this issue was not one of safety, but one of revenue."

Both sides said the decision is a setback for the revenue department and highway patrol beyond the limited effect of the injunction. The agencies lost some of their basic arguments, attorneys said.

"There were significant questions of state sovereignty versus tribal rights," said revenue department lawyer John Michael Hale.

He said "big chunks of the case"

would have been resolved if the appeals court had decided those questions rather than returning the case to Saffels.

David Prager III, Potawatomi general counsel in Mayetta, said Kansas recognizes the plates of other states and other countries, so the tribe, as a sovereign entity, wants its plates recognized.

"This (case) is an important issue for tribal sovereignty and tribal rights to self-government," he said.

"The tribe offered to provide its registration information to the state of Kansas for inclusion in its motor vehicle records, but the state refused to enter it on its computers."

## Briefly

### Weather: More hot days

The National Weather Service doesn't see any relief from the heat, at least through Sunday, for the Colby region. Tonight, partly cloudy, a 20 percent chance for thunderstorms, low 65 and south winds 5-15 mph. Thursday, partly sunny, high 90-95 and southeast winds 5-15 mph. Thursday night, partly cloudy, low 65. Friday through Sunday, partly cloudy, slight chance for thunderstorms, low 65 and high 90-95. Tuesday's high in Colby was 98 and the overnight low this morning was 64. The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth is averaging 84 degrees. There was no addi-

tional precipitation, leaving the month's total to date at 0.41 inches. The records for June 27: 106 in 1971 and 39 in 1904. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

### Class establishes memorial

Donations are being sought for the purchase of a tree in memory of JR Mattson. The memorial from his classmates of the Class of 1998 will be located at Colby High School. Trudi Hansen will serve as the contact person. Donations

can be sent to or dropped off at 935 Brookside, Colby. Hansen can be reached at 462-2710 for more information.

### Nine-Run-Run deadline nearing

Now in its sixth year, the Thomas County Emergency Medical Services is again sponsoring its Nine-Run-Run beginning at 8 a.m. on Saturday, Aug. 4 in Colby. Early registration is underway, said Kathy Wright, one of the organizers with openings in all age groups for the 10K and 5K run, 2K fun run and 2K walk.

The cost of the event for early registration is \$10 for

walkers and \$13 for runners and after Monday, July 23, the cost will increase to \$12 and \$15 respectively, she said. All proceeds go to benefit the local service. To register, stop by the facility at 1245 S. Franklin or call any EMS member.

### Hazardous waste day Saturday

The Thomas County Household Hazardous Waste Committee is sponsoring a collection day Saturday, June 30, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., according to Sandy Swob, director of the facility. For information, call Swob at 462-4525.

