



COLBY FREE PRESS

8 pages

Teacher's lose local voice

Union office closes its doors in Colby

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

For almost 28 years, the Northwest Kansas UNISERV office in Colby has been providing services to area teachers, but this week the facility closed.

According to Bruce Lindskog, director, the state affiliates of the National Education Association held an assembly in April to vote on whether or not to close the Colby office.

"Delegates from the 14 state offices around the state decided on closure since membership in the eastern part of the state is increasing and there's lower membership on the west side of the state," he said.

When the office first opened here in 1973, Lindskog said, there were more than 625 teachers in the association.

"At one point, there were over 700 members, but then the numbers dwindled to 500 teachers, which is about half the teachers in the area we served," he said.

While the office has closed in Colby, teach-



Linda Oard, assistant, and Bruce Lindskog, director of the Northwest Kansas UNISERV office in Colby, reviewed a few last things before closing permanently.

ers will still receive services through the next closest office in Hays with Bob White as their director.

"I think the service delivery will be more difficult due to distances now that the office has closed," he said, "and that's sad, but the association needed to place emphasis on equalizing representation so the closure became necessary."

On a personal note, Lindskog said he has made a lot of friends during his tenure in Colby.

"I took over as director on Dec. 1, 1985 and there's a lot of good teachers and community people that I will miss here," he said.

Lindskog will continue in the same position that he held here, only it will be in an office already established in Ottawa.

"The state's association will have 13 offices now rather than 14 and in Ottawa, I will be in charge of the Sunflower Unit, which is being divided from the Freestate Unit to better distribute the workload," he said.

The counties Lindskog will serve include

Douglas, Miami and Franklin. While in Colby, Lindskog's service area went from Ness City to St. Francis and Alma to Tribune.

The purpose of the association, he said, is to provide various services to teachers, along with assisting them in contract bargaining, training, instructional improvement, labor representation, dismissals and grievances.

Although Lindskog said there have been some "unpleasanties" while he was the UNISERV director in this area, he believes the teachers and board here have made many steps forward.

"There has been the recognition that teachers and school boards must work together to be successful," he said. "The state association is on the verge of moving into heavy emphasis on improving instruction in the classroom and instructional advocacy."

One of the biggest disappointments that Lindskog sees in leaving the area is that he won't be here to take part in the forthcoming changes.

"I think one of the major accomplishments here has been helping boards, teachers and the association work together," he said.

As the legislature continues to look at incentive programs for teachers, Lindskog had some cautious remarks.

"There are many systems being looked at that could be beneficial for enhancing teacher pay, but unless financing is greatly improved and until the public is willing to pay for those incentives...this will be hard to sell to boards, communities, teachers and also the legislature," he said.

"Our teachers are being asked to become more specialized than a master's degree and that takes money. We can't continue to do what we have always done and expect things to change dramatically."

Linda Oard, Lindskog's administrative assistant is also leaving Colby. Oard plans to accept the same position she held here in Dodge City after the assistant there retires later this summer.

Weighing in



JAY KELLEY/Colby Free Press

Carla Sloan and Sarah Downing checked wheat for weight and moisture content at the Hi-Plains Co-op in Colby this morning. Volume is light, but officials expect harvest to be in full swing by Saturday — if weather holds.

Pentagon says no danger of closing Wichita air base

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Bush administration intends to propose base closings, but the Pentagon says that does not mean Wichita's McConnell Air Force Base is in danger of closing or even losing jobs.

The military plans to eliminate McConnell's B-1B long-range bombers.

But Pentagon Chief Financial Officer Dov Zakheim said Wednesday the Air Force is working on a plan to adjust McConnell's mission so that the people affected do not lose their jobs.

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld wants to retire 33 of the planes, 18 of them flown by Air National Guard units in Georgia and at McConnell.

The fleet is to be consolidated at Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota and Dyess Air Force Base in Texas.

Coming one day after news of the B-1B cuts, the Pentagon's reassurances did not deter lawmakers who intend to fight the reductions.

"Secretary Rumsfeld himself indicated that future military strategy will require more long range precision strikes," said Sen. Pat Roberts, R-Kan. "And the B-1B is the perfect aircraft for that kind of mission."

Roberts and his fellow Kansas Republicans sent a letter with Georgia and Idaho lawmakers to Rumsfeld urging him to reconsider and pointing out he

had not consulted Congress.

"We respectfully disagree and plan to oppose the decision," the lawmakers said. Idaho's Mountain Home Air Force Base is also losing B-1Bs.

A change in mission that would retain at least some jobs was the prediction Tuesday of Maj. Gen. Greg Gardner, adjutant general for the Kansas Air National Guard.

That was the case in 1992, when McConnell gave up its F-16 fighters and took over the B-1B bomber fleet.

The Kansas unit has about 1,200 support personnel, more than half of which are full-time, according to Col. Ed Flora, commander of the 184th Bomb Wing.

Most full-time employees live in Wichita and Derby, but the other Guard members come from across Kansas.

At present, there are 40 B-1s at Dyess; 26 at Ellsworth; seven at Mountain Home; and nine each at McConnell and Robins.

Two are at Edwards Air Force Base in California, where they are used for testing purposes, an Air Force spokesman said.

The military budget proposal President Bush unveiled Wednesday contains \$329 billion for the coming fiscal year, \$18.4 billion above what Bush asked for in February and \$33 billion more than the current fiscal year.

Other information can be found at: <http://www.af.mil/news/factsheets>

For many Kansans, wheat crop is a mix of bounty and destruction

LINCOLN (AP) — Richard Plinsky steered his combine through a thin patch of wheat and pointed to the exposed ground and weeds unfolding beneath the machine's rotating blades.

"You can cut wheat and see ground — things are not good," he said Wednesday.

About 100 yards later, the wheat was so thick that he slowed the combine. He figured it was a stand that would yield 40 to 50 bushels per acre.

That poor grain he had gone through earlier was likely good for 10 to 20 bushels per acre.

And the really thick stand just ahead, he said, was probably 70 to 80

bushels per acre.

As he unloaded the kernels to a waiting truck at the edge of his field, Plinsky pointed to the next field on his southern Lincoln County spread. Green sprouts of milo were poking through the remains of the 100 acres of wheat he had abandoned in the spring because it was so bad.

For Plinsky and other Kansas farmers, the 2001 wheat harvest brings a mixture of bounty and loss.

About 1 million acres of wheat were abandoned in Kansas this spring because of poor planting conditions and a cold winter. But Kansas Agricultural Statistics has estimated that timely

spring rain helped many farmers come up with some decent quality wheat with what acres they kept.

Lincoln County, in north-central Kansas, suffered through some of last year's drought. But even here, at least some of the wheat has made a respectable comeback.

At the Walker Products Co. Elevator in Lincoln, manager Craig Walker expects the area's harvest to be down 25 percent from normal.

Farmers began cutting in the southern part of Lincoln County 11 days ago, and the wheat coming from that area has been excellent because those fields got rain in May and June.

"What was left turned out exceptionally good," Plinsky said.

It is a more dismal harvest in central and northern Lincoln County, which missed both rains. "Farmers tore up a lot of ground because of winter kill," Walker said.

More than half the wheat fields in northern Lincoln County were so bad that farmers had to replant them in a spring crop.

Those who kept their wheat only started cutting it Monday, and the crop coming in from there and from central Lincoln County is in much poorer condition.

"Yields have been all over the place,

and quality, too," Walker said.

Test weights at the Lincoln elevator have ranged from 20 to 60 pounds per bushel, he said.

Elsewhere, harvest is wrapping up quickly as wheat ripens in the northern-most parts of Kansas.

Kevin Wiens at the Mid-Kansas Co-op in Moundridge said just a few stragglers were still coming in. Farmers have brought in 1.22 million bushels in the Moundridge area, averaging 60 pounds per bushel with yields of 40 to 45 bushels per acre, according to the Kansas Wheat Growers Association's harvest.

Between 15,000 and 20,000 bushels

of white wheat grown in the area were taken to McPherson, the association said.

In east-central Kansas, Mathew Vajnar at the Ottawa Co-Op Association said the harvest was 75 percent complete, with wheat in Franklin County averaging 50 bushels per acre. Test weights had been running as high as 62 pounds per bushel, but dropped to 58 or 59 pounds after the area got 2 inches of rain last week.

Harvest is almost two-thirds finished around Sublette, where Mike Henson at Haskell Grain is reporting test weights ranging from 54 to 65 pounds per bushel.

Briefly

Weather: More of the same

In a nutshell, the National Weather Service says the Colby area can expect winds in the range of 5-15 mph through the weekend, outside chances for thunderstorms, low temperatures in the 60s and highs in the 90 to 95-degree range. And partly cloudy skies. Colby's high Wednesday was 97 and the overnight low this morning was 65. There was no additional precipitation, leaving the month's total at a mere 0.41 inches. The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth is averaging 84 degrees. The records for June 28: 105 in 1933 and 41 in 1985. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

Landfill, offices to close

The Thomas County landfill will be closed on July 4th, according to Larry Jumper, supervisor. All county offices will also be closed, according to Thomas County Clerk Tracey Perkins.

Commissioners set meetings

The Thomas County Commissioners will meet at 1 p.m. Friday, the last business day of the month, to pay bills and conduct routine business. The agenda includes: Josh Buffington and Martin Rinehart will give an EMS update at 1 p.m.; Dale Lyman will give a health insurance presentation on behalf of Intermountain benefits at 1:30; Randy

Dick, of Kaw Valley Insurance, will discuss a health insurance bid at 2:30; Mike Baughn will discuss a lawn sprinkler and sidewalk at 3; a discussion of the tar on the parking lot which is sticking to tires, and people's shoes, tracking into the county buildings will also be discussed. The Commissioners will also meet at 1 p.m. on Monday, July 2 to conduct routine business. All meetings are in the commissioners room of the courthouse.

Hazardous waste day set

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, this service is available to all residents of the county. Acceptable items, she said, include old paints, stains, varnish, thinners, cleaning products, swimming pool chemicals and batteries. "Used motor oil," she said, "should be taken to the county landfill for recycling." For information, call Swob at 462-4525.

No Free Press July 4th

The Colby Free Press will not publish a newspaper on the July 4th holiday. Employees will be given the day off to spend with family and friends. "Normal operations will resume at 8 a.m. Thursday, July 5 — whatever normal is in newspapering," said Tom (TD) Dreiling, publisher.

