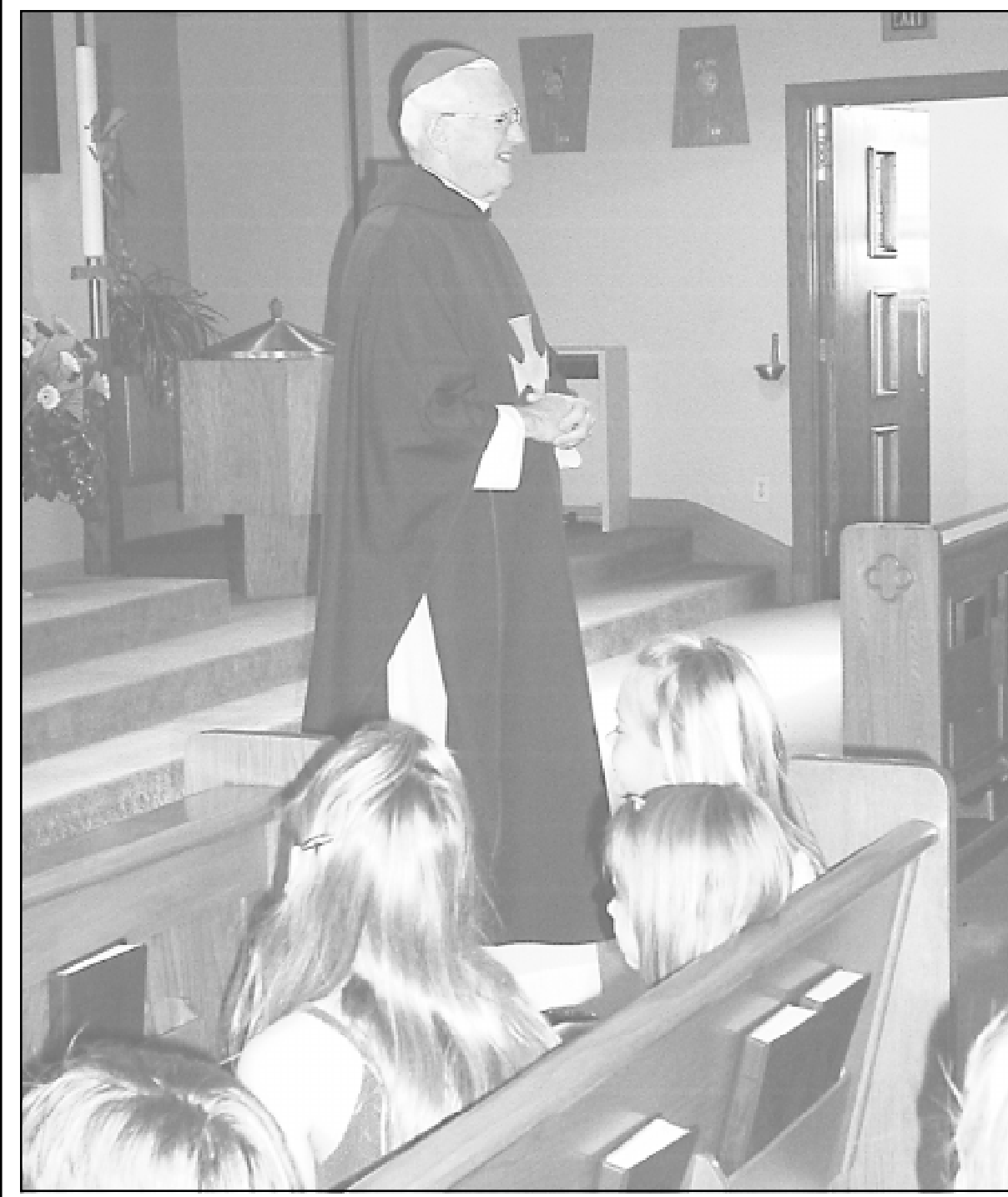




COLBY FREE PRESS

Distinguished visitor



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Sacred Heart School in Colby received a visit this morning from Bishop George Fitzsimons, who presides over the Salina Diocese. Colby is among its 92 parishes, five high schools and 12 elementary schools. "The bishop is the spiritual leader for our diocese," said Sacred Heart principal Dave Evert. "He is a very dynamic individual whose presence is always inspiring. We in the Catholic Church believe the Bishop to be a successor to the Apostles." The Salina Diocese is the largest diocese, by area, in Kansas and serves 52,000 people with 45 priests. The Bishop, in this photo, addressed young people at a students' mass this morning.

Sheriff reveals identity of woman in car chase

By JAY KELLEY

Colby Free Press

The woman partner in a duo who led police on a chase through Thomas County and held a 17-year-old rural Colby girl was identified today by the Thomas County sheriff as 23-year-old Tina Janice Pearce.

Pearce and her partner, Kristopher Aaron Lambert, 21, have been charged with aggravated burglary, aggravated assault, kidnapping, one count each of felony theft and misdemeanor theft and two counts of misdemeanor criminal damage to property.

She is described as a white female, 5'6" inches tall, 135 pounds, with brown hair. Lambert is a white male, 5'11" tall, 150 pounds with sandy hair.

Both are described by law enforce-

ment officials as dangerous. Thomas County Sheriff Tom Jones said anyone seeing the pair should stay clear and contact authorities.

"Any information leading to the arrest of the two fugitives would be greatly appreciated by law enforcement agencies," said Jones.

The incident began about 11:30 a.m. Aug. 8 when a couple suspected to be Lambert and Pearce were stopped by deputy Ken Patton on the I-70 on-ramp at Range Avenue in Colby because the Mazda pickup they were driving matched the description of a vehicle from a gas skip in Grinnell.

They managed to elude Patton by driving off the road, through a fence and into a corn field. While deputies, Colby police officers and state troop-

ers, along with a plane from Shalzy Field in Colby searched for the pair, they ditched their vehicle and escaped in a stolen 1998 Escort after holding the young owner hostage for about 30 minutes.

The car was found the next morning at the Hoxie Grain Co., who also reported a 1991 white Jeep Cherokee with Sheridan County license IOB 370 missing.

Jones said Lambert and Pearce were both identified through the combined efforts of the Thomas County Sheriff, Colby Police Department and Kansas Bureau of Investigation.

Jones also said the charges are "merely accusations and the defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty."

Wildlife and Parks plan first youth skills day in September

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

Kansas Wildlife and Parks is trying something new in the area by coordinating a youth outdoor skills day and involving many area clubs to assist with instruction.

"We think this will not only be educational, but also a lot of fun for young people," said Leonard Hopper, district wildlife biologist in Colby.

The only requirement to participate in the skills day planned on Saturday, Sept. 22, Hopper said, is to have completed the hunter education course. For those wanting to take that class, the next session will be on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, Sept. 11, 13, and 15.

The idea of having an outdoor skills day was prompted by Hopper and Bennie Young, area game warden, and

includes activities such as shotgunning, archery, compass and map reading, gun care, and more.

"We are encouraging young people to attend events like this to learn more about gun safety and have fun," said Hopper. Many groups are helping to make this first-ever event possible by providing their expertise in specific fields.

For example, Young said, the Kansas Pioneer Chapter of Pheasants Forever will be there with clay targets to teach shooting using a wobble thrower. Also, the Colby Archery Club will teach participants how to follow a blood trail, along with techniques and target shooting with bows.

The day is free and Hopper said all equipment and materials will be available at the site, located six miles north-

east of Colby on Thomas County Sheriff Tom Jones' property.

"We had quite a few young people sign up for the event during the fair, but there's still room for more," he said.

Hopper said he also wanted to thank the many people who have made this event possible. Those include Pheasants Forever, Colby Archery Club, WalMart, Pirates Den, the Thomas County Sheriff's office and county attorney's office, Kansas Wildlife Officers Association, Colby Recreation and the area hunter education instructors. For those who want to attend the skills day or take the upcoming hunter education course, call Hopper at (785) 462-3367 or Young at (785) 462-7602.

In the Goodland area, call Mike Hopper, Wildlife and Parks game warden, (785) 899-5199.

Governor meets privately with foster care representatives on Wednesday

By JOHN HANNA

Associated Press Writer

TOPEKA (AP) — Gov. Bill Graves met privately with representatives of the nonprofit groups that provide foster care services for abused and neglected children.

The two-hour session Wednesday came as legislators continued to have questions about the state's decision to turn foster care programs over to private groups and the financial problems the groups have faced.

Participants said the meeting didn't result in any specific plans from

Graves, but the governor did express his support for continuing to have them provide services. Also, they agreed they needed to say more publicly about how services for children have improved.

"The conversation was very collaborative and very genial," said Carl Martin, interim president of United Methodist Youthville, of Newton, which filed for bankruptcy in June to obtain time to reorganize.

Private organizations began providing services for the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services in

1997. SRS turned over adoption services to private organizations in 1996.

The governor and SRS officials have said repeatedly that foster care services, once the subject of a lawsuit over conditions for children, have improved since the groups took over.

However, Graves has acknowledged that some providers have faced financial difficulties.

"I left the meeting with a better understanding of what our not-for-profit agencies do on a daily basis, and I think they can now better appreciate the situation from the state's point of view,"

Graves said in a statement.

Democratic legislative leaders have proposed creating a state commission to oversee foster care services. Senate Minority Leader Anthony Hensley, D-Topeka, described Graves' meeting as his administration "just going through the motions."

"It's just a public relations stunt to make people feel good," Hensley said.

The state has about 3,700 children in foster care, and five organizations oversee those services under contracts signed last year. The state can renew those contracts each year for up to four

years.

The providers are: Youthville; The Farm Inc., of Emporia; Kaw Valley Center Inc., of Kansas City; the Kansas Children's Service League, of Wichita; and St. Francis Academy Inc., of Salina.

Youthville officials have said the agency's bankruptcy won't affect services for children and Martin said the agency is working on a new business plan. Last year, Lutheran Social Services, of Wichita, the state's sole adoption contractor from 1996 to 2000, threatened to file for bankruptcy.

It avoided doing so by paying subcontractors 74 cents on the dollar on outstanding debts.

But participants in the meeting said they need to return the focus to services for children and how, for example, children are spending less than half the time on average in foster care than they did before the private groups took over.

"If anyone would ask a new service system to be developed overnight, you would anticipate that the organizations would struggle on the financial side," said Bob Hartman, the KCSL's executive director.

Labor negotiations close at Farmland refinery in Coffeyville

WICHITA (AP) — With gasoline prices soaring at the pump, rumors of a possible labor strike at Farmland's refinery in Coffeyville has raised fears that a shutdown there could spur even higher gas prices.

But negotiators for Farmland and the unions said Wednesday there has been

no talk of strike — and negotiations are progressing so well that there is a possibility of a contract vote as early as Friday evening.

Plant manager Keith Osborn said Wednesday a strike is unlikely.

"We continue to talk and we don't see it going that far at this point in

time," Osborn said in a telephone interview in between negotiation sessions. That assessment was echoed by the union's negotiator Mike Blake, who said no strike authorization vote has even been taken, nor have negotiations broken down to the point that a federal mediator has been called in. He

said they are a long way from a strike, and may actually be close to an agreement. "I'm not saying that it is a done deal, I'm saying that is a possibility," said Blake, an electrician at the facility and the president of the metal trades council.

The refinery, which employees 306

workers, is negotiating with its six unions through their metal trades council. About 200 workers are represented by one of those unions, and their contract expires at 11:59 p.m. Friday.

If no contract agreement is reached, negotiators will extend the contract to the next negotiation meeting.

Legislators seek understanding of school spending and special ed

TOPEKA (AP) — Legislators are asking auditors to study the numerous methods the state's 304 school districts use to report how they spend their nickels and dimes.

State auditors will spend the next three months digging into school dis-

trict budgets, hoping to determine a common method for comparing expenditures among the districts. Auditors will compare budget documents of three large districts and three small districts and report to legislators after the 2002 session begins in January.

The audit approved Wednesday was requested by Senate President Dave Kerr, R-Hutchinson. Legislators expressed concern during the 2001 session that there were no documents readily available that allowed them to compare expenditures and track school

spending.

"We want a budget that people can understand," said Rep. Dean Newton, R-Prairie Village and member of the Legislative Post Audit Committee. "We need a valid comparison between schools that is more accessible to the

public."

The state spends more than \$2.3 billion on public education. School districts had until Aug. 25 to certify their budgets with the state, detailing how federal, state and local revenues are spent.

operating Monday, Sept. 3 for the Labor Day weekend. Yard

waste will not be picked up on Monday, but will be picked up on Tuesday, Sept. 4, along with the regular yard waste route, said Gerry Bieker, public works director. For questions, call 462-4410.

Checks awaiting winners

Anyone with a premium check for an open class or 4-H entry at the Thomas County Fair needs to pick it up at the Thomas County Extension Office in the county office complex at 350 S. Range, Colby. Fair board secretary Laura Cook said checks will not be mailed. The office phone is 462-4582.

In this issue:



Briefly

Weather: Heat losing out

The Colby region forecast through Labor Day continues to call for some thunderstorm activity, lows in the 55-60 range, highs in the 80s, partly cloudy conditions and winds generally light. Colby's high Wednesday was 91 and the overnight low this morning was 60.

Precipitation for the month, with one more day left, remains at 1.71 inches. The soil temperature at the four-inch depth is averaging 80 degrees.

The records for Aug. 30: 104 in 1922 and 40 in 1915. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

Commissioners meet Friday

The Thomas County Commissioners will meet at 9 a.m. Friday in the commissioners room of the courthouse. No appointments were scheduled at press time. The commissioners will meet next on Tuesday, Sept. 4, because of the Labor Day holiday on Monday, their usual meeting day. No appointments are scheduled for that meeting, either. The courthouse will be closed in observance of Labor Day.

Office closed, no paper Monday

The Colby Free Press office will be closed on Monday, Sept. 3, and no newspaper will be published that day in

observance of the Labor Day holiday. Deadlines for the Tuesday, Sept. 4 edition are as follows: classified word ads, Friday, Aug. 31 at noon.

Tailgate party Friday

The Colby High School Booster Club will hold a tailgate party at Dennen Field on Friday, Aug. 3, beginning at 5 p.m., prior to the football game against Atwood, which starts at 7:30 p.m. Hamburgers, hot dogs, baked beans, chips and a drink will be served, booster officials said.

No yard waste pickup Monday

The City of Colby Sanitation Department will not be

