



# COLBY FREE PRESS

## Filing deadline nears

# Little activity seen among candidates, challengers

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

Every two years, half the positions open up on city council and school boards across Thomas County, giving way for incumbents to re-file and challengers to toss their hats in the ring.

The date to file is noon, Tuesday, Jan. 23, with the general election scheduled for Tuesday, April 3, according to the Thomas County Clerk's office.

As of today, the following positions will be open. In the Colby City Council, Wards I, II, III, and IV have terms expiring in 2001.

Currently, Herb Sunderman is the councilman in Ward I; Hal Kistler in Ward II; and Eugene Wieland in Ward III. None of those have refiled. In Ward IV, Mark Beringer re-filed last week.

Citizens interested in filing for one of these positions must do so by the Jan. 23 deadline and pay a filing fee of \$10, along with completing a petition or statement of candidacy, said Beverly Stieben, city clerk.

In addition, all candidates running for a Colby council position must file directly at Colby City Hall, 585 N. Franklin.

In the event that more than two people file for a specific ward within the city, a primary election would take place on Tuesday, Feb. 27, county officials said.

Four Colby School Board members will also be completing their terms in 2001 to include Gerald Fulwider, Wilburn Holloway, Cynthia Kriss and Gary Walker.

Thus far, none of the four have refiled and no challengers have stepped forward.

Since the school district positions are elected "at large," a primary election would only occur if more than 8 people filed for positions, officials said.

Charles Moore, Cleona Flipse and Kenton Krehbiel are also up for re-election with the Colby Community College board of trustees. According to Tracey Perkins, county clerk, Krehbiel is the only one of the three who has to date refiled. In the event more than six people file for college board positions, a primary would be held.

Those interested in filing for school and college board positions will need

to complete the necessary paperwork and pay a \$5 filing fee prior to the deadline at the county clerk's office.

Golden Plains School District has positions 4, 5 and 6 expiring in 2001. In position four is Dennis Rogers; position 5 is Robert Dible and position six is vacant. Thus far, none of the current board members have filed, nor any challengers.

The Brewster School District also has three positions open. They are currently held by Neal Rush in position 4; John Horney in position 5; and Rod Arnberger in position 6. According to the county clerk's office, the incumbents or any challengers have not filed as yet.

Along with city and school council positions, the mayors in two cities, Menlo and Gem, also have terms expiring. In Gem, Del Dack is up for re-election and in Menlo, Brent Ginther. Mayor Warren Hixson of Colby and Mayor Mike Baughn of Brewster will not be up for re-election until the year 2003, since both terms run four years rather than every two.

For information on filing, call the county clerk's office at 462-4500.

# Residents have to pay higher gas bills despite being near gas field

ULYSSES (AP)—Residents in this southwest Kansas town expected to pay bargain prices for natural gas this winter because the city owns two gas wells and is located near one of the oldest gas fields in the Midwest.

But residents were wrong. "We're sitting right on top of the supply, and it still costs," Ulysses City Administrator Bill Powers said this week. "We hear a lot of rumbling and grumbling."

Much like the rest of the nation, gas bills in Ulysses have almost doubled since last year, Powers said.

In November 1999, Ulysses consumers paid 38 cents per 100 cubic feet. This month's price was 64 cents. Ulysses sells its gas to Greeley Gas of Kansas, which also is the city's supplier. The gas travels from the ground in Ulysses to a processing plant where it is cleaned and dried.

From there it goes to transmission and distribution.

Of Greeley Gas' seven rate areas in Kansas, southwest Kansas receives the cheapest gas of all, said company spokesman Jim Bartling.

Although gas prices have gone up, Greeley Gas has not made more money since the jump, Bartling said, as the

// **The old supply and demand hit . . . that drove the price up more.**

Jim Bartling,

spokesperson for Greeley Gas

company has not increased its gas production.

"The old supply and demand hit," Bartling said. "That drove the price up more."

Rural well owners are also taking a hit from the high prices.

In Grant County, some owners were guaranteed free gas at the wellhead, but decades-old contracts have been changed and are drying up their source of free natural gas.

Darrel and Marilyn Ruth live on the place her parents owned, 15 miles northwest of Ulysses.

In the late 1940s and '50s the wells were drilled and gas companies contracted to provide free wellhead gas for the principal dwelling on each quarter.

"When the price was low, it was kind of an accepted practice," he said. "They started putting compressors at

the wellhead. That pulls the gas out of the ground and lowers pressure so much it won't free-flow, so we can't use it any longer."

The gas company has come up with a plan to convert them to propane gas, Ruth said.

The principal dwelling will get 1,250 gallons of free propane each year. Everyone else is on their own.

Increasingly, rural residents are looking for alternate sources to replace the natural gas, said Eric Larson, owner of Garden City-based Comfort Specialist Inc., a heating and air conditioning company.

One option is to convert a home to a geothermal heating and cooling system. Larson said the system can get \$4 worth of heat for \$1.

"Everyone will be forced to address the situation in time," he said.



JAY KELLEY/Colby Free Press

Chandler Wayne Welker, weighing 6 lbs., 6 oz., was the first baby of the year born in Thomas County last Friday at 6:37 a.m. Celebrating his arrival is his mother, Jennifer; his father, Jason; and his sister, Caitlin Hannah.

# Gifts galore for Chandler

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

The arrival of a baby is always reason to celebrate, but for Jason and Jennifer Welker of Colby, that day was made even more special when their baby became the *First Baby of the New Year* in Thomas County.

The little celebrity, Chandler Wayne Welker, was born at 6:37 a.m. at Citizens Medical Center on Friday, Jan. 5.

"We were shocked that our baby was the first baby of the new year," said Jennifer, "and the gifts will really help out."

The due date for Chandler's arrival, his mother said, was not until Thursday, Jan. 11, so the family didn't think they had a chance in the contest.

"It's just great, though, and we are all very excited," she added.

Chandler is the Welker's second child and his older sister, Caitlin Hannah, 3, is ready to help any way

she can with her new brother.

Jennifer, who had been working, said she plans to be a full-time, stay-at-home mom now that the baby is here. Chandler's father, Jason, works as a crop specialist for Servi-Tech.

During the next few weeks, Jennifer said her mother is helping where needed.

"These are the only two grandchildren on my parent's side of the family," Jennifer said.

Maternal grandparents are Herb and Donelda Summers of Wynne, Ark., and paternal grandparents are Karen Welker of Wasola, Mo., and Gary Welker of Carl Junction, Mo.

As the first baby, Chandler was showered with gifts by 18 local merchants. Those businesses and gifts are: Someplace Special, a free floral arrangement; S & T Telephone, a special gift just for the baby; Dillons, a \$25 gift certificate; Thomas County Health Department, a free infant car seat rental; Farmers & Merchants Bank of Colby, a \$20 gift certificate toward a

savings account; Citizens Medical Center, a \$50 U.S. Savings Bond; Gambino's Pizza of Colby, a large pizza and drinks; Wal-Mart, a \$25 gift certificate; Family Center for Health Care, a free set of immunizations; Village Inn, a \$20 gift certificate for mom and dad's night out; First National Bank, a \$50 U.S. Savings Bond; Omicron Upsilon, a rental sign of Sammy Stork announcing the new baby in the family's front yard; Colby Bowl, a \$25 gift certificate; and Colby Photo, \$15 worth of film processing.

Also, Gold Bank, a "Welcome Baby" coin; The Sports Shoppe, a surprise gift for the baby; Wark's Embroidery and Gifts, a gift back that includes a stuffed animal, burp rag and bib; and The *Colby Free Press*, a one-year subscription.

The Welkers said today they wanted to thank everyone for making Chandler's debut such a special one.

# Man commits suicide; kills another in process

SALINA (AP) — A man who jumped from an overpass and crashed through the windshield of a truck, killing both himself and the driver, had a history of psychiatric problems, officials said.

Jim Burkhead, 33, of Wilson, was taken to the Salina Regional Medical Center on Wednesday by the Ellsworth County Sheriff's Office, but later left the hospital.

Around 10:30 p.m. Thursday, Burkhead jumped from an overpass in Salina and landed on the truck driven by Lyndon Gurtner, who had just spent the evening delivering Schwan's frozen-food products. Gurtner had turned 37 on New Year's Day. Police have determined that Gurtner's death was second-degree murder although Burk-

head might not have intended to kill Gurtner. It appeared that Burkhead, who weighed 300 pounds, timed his jump to land on the truck, officials said.

"His act was the direct cause of Mr. Gurtner's death," Police Chief Jim Hill said Friday. "This tragic loss of life was no accident."

Both men apparently died on impact. The truck swerved into an embankment and then veered back across the road into a muddy median, Lt. Mike Sweeney said.

No other injuries were reported. Officers were called to the scene when a motorist reported a smoking truck in the median. No witnesses reported seeing Burkhead jump.

Burkhead, who was single and had no children, was a truck driver who

recently lost his job, said his sister-in-law, Jill Burkhead.

Burkhead was charged in 1987 with stabbing his brother several times. He pleaded guilty to lesser charges and was given probation, Wilson Police Chief Tim Heard said.

Years later, he rammed his pickup into a wall in Lorraine, apparently in an effort to kill himself. He then agreed to psychiatric treatment at the medical center in Salina, Heard said.

After a short time at the hospital, Burkhead left the Salina facility, Heard said.

When Burkhead was found, he had a sack of dead cats. He was recently convicted of cruelty to animals, Heard said.

He was then taken to another psychi-

atric ward, but walked away again.

Jill Burkhead said her brother-in-law recently had slipped into deep depression, and "when he lost his job this last time it got worse."

Burkhead was taken to the Salina health center on Wednesday, at his own request, but once again he left the hospital.

"It was unfortunate he didn't just take his own life," Jill Burkhead said.

Gurtner was returning to the Schwan's depot Thursday to head home to his wife and four children.

"We just all think it was so senseless," said Carolyn Lundin, the mother of Gurtner's wife, Traci Gurtner. Lundin and other family members gathered Friday at the Gurtner family home.

## Wellness Watch 2001

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

Everyone is encouraged to make plans for this year's Wellness Fair from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 13, at the Colby Community College Student Union.

Registration for the fair is \$5, said Jeanene Brown, one of the committee members, and includes a variety of free or greatly reduced screenings.

One of many activities during the day will be community education programs on breast and prostate cancer.

"The importance of early identification of breast and prostate cancer will be the topic of brief talks by

physicians from the Family Center for Health Care," she said.

Among the physicians speaking will be Drs. Grillot, Kasselmann and Jacobsen.

In addition, men participating in the wellness fair will have the opportunity to sign up for a free prostate cancer exam.

Women can sign up for discounted mammograms at Citizens Medical Center and a discounted women's health exam (including a breast exam and PAP smear) at either the Family Center for Health Care or at Colby Medical and Surgical Center.

Watch for more details and highlights about the fair throughout the week.

## Briefly

### Weather: Nice week

The National Weather Services is calling for a nice week of weather for the Colby area, with no precipitation expected through Friday. Tonight, clear, lows around 20 and light southwest winds. Tuesday, sunny, highs 55-60 and southwest winds 5-15 mph. Tuesday night, partly cloudy, lows 20-25. Wednesday, continued dry, highs near 50; and Thursday and Friday, dry, lows in the 20s and highs in middle 40s. Colby's weekend temperatures: highs, 65 on Friday, 56 on Saturday and 49 on Sunday; lows, 24 on Saturday, 24 on Sunday and 13 this morning. There was no

precipitation over the weekend and only a trace for the month. The soil temperature at the four-inch depth is averaging 32 degrees. The records for Jan. 8: 71 in 1965 and -18 in 1988. (The temperature and precipitation reports are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

### Open house upcoming in Rexford

Everyone is invited to an open house tea at the Rexford Community Building, Saturday, Jan. 13, from 2 to 4 p.m. The purpose of the event is the presentation of a check from

the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks for Rexford's playground equipment improvement project, officials said. "We welcome all our neighbors in Thomas County to help us celebrate," said Kathi Hapke, one of the organizers.

### Free throw contest upcoming

The Knights of Columbus will be hosting its annual free throw contest on Sunday, Jan. 14 at the Colby Elementary School gymnasium on W. 3rd Street in Colby. Registration begins at noon and the contest will commence promptly at 1 p.m. According to organizers, the event is open to boys

### Brewster school board to meet

The Brewster School Board will meet today at 7:30 p.m. in the high school library. Items on the agenda include senior class trip, vo-tech report, school uniforms, spring sports update, along with executive sessions, if needed, regarding personnel, student concerns, or negotiations.

