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Increase in taxes possible

TOPEKA (AP) — Two years ago, Gov. Bill Graves told legislators in his State of the State address that Kansas taxes were too high.

In this year's address, Graves all but called for a tax increase to raise additional dollars for public schools.

The contrast didn't go unnoticed.

"The difference between '99 and now is night and day," Karl Peterjohn, lobbyist for the Kansas Taxpayers Network, which opposes tax increases in state and local government, said Tuesday. Graves endorsed all-day kindergarten programs for the state's 304 school districts and having the state pay all the extra costs associated with special education programs.

He outlined a package — without those two items — that would increase education spending by more than \$68 million but told legislators it wasn't adequate. He said they should consider any means necessary to get money for public schools.

Many legislators saw his comments as a declaration that he would sign a tax increase if legislators sent him one.

But many of Graves' fellow Republicans say support for a tax increase in the Legislature is minimal.

"I don't think the people of the state of Kansas are ready for that," said Sen. Ed Pugh, R-Wamego, who opposes increasing taxes.

During board tour

Ary makes pitch for improved wrestling facility

By MAXINE NELSON

Colby Free Press

The Colby Community College Board of Trustees toured the swimming pool and wrestling room Monday night during their regular meeting.

Dr. Mikel Ary, college president, pointed out the need for more space for the wrestlers and said it was a 'near-miracle' that the college has produced championship wrestlers with the facilities they have. He credited the dedication of coach Steve Lampe.

The wrestling room is accessed by going through the swimming pool area and up the stairs, and is located above the dressing rooms which the wrestlers share with the swimming public.

Poster peepers



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Maxine Jones, Luciel Taylor and Frances Roesch, RSVP volunteers, looked over 56 posters today to decide which ones will be the winners in the Thomas County Conservation District's annual poster contest. This year, Lynette Koon, district manager, said entries were lower than in year's past. "Most years we have had close to 300 poster to judge," she said. The winners in the contest will be announced during the annual district meeting, Monday, Feb. 12, at the 4-H building in Colby.

Big grant awarded to expand services for area children

By MAXINE NELSON

Colby Free Press

The Birth to Success Coalition, Smart Start Northwest Kansas Project, has been awarded a \$270,352 grant to improve early childhood care, health, and education in the 11 counties of northwest Kansas, according to Sue Evans, Regional Prevention Center, who made the announcement at a press conference Tuesday afternoon in Colby.

The Kansas Children's Cabinet is awarding \$2.75 million of the Master Tobacco Settlement moneys to seven community partnerships.

The grants will be used to initiate, enhance, or expand services affecting early childhood care and education in Kansas.

According to Evans, the project is unique because the goals and mission were set up before the grant was obtained.

Evans said, as director of the Northwest Kansas Regional Prevention Center, she had known for a long time that prevention of substance abuse should begin early, instead of concentrating on older adolescents and adults.

When she was invited to a community collaboration group of early childhood educators, she found her ideas fit right in.

The group agreed that more needed to be done to provide early childhood care and education to ensure that all children enter school healthy, ready to learn and in fact, do succeed.

"Every dollar we invest early is going to save so much in the long run," Evans said.

Members of the Kansas Children's Cabinet believe an investment in children can produce lasting benefits that will significantly improve the quality of life for Kansans for years to come. Benefits include significantly reduced crime rates; reduced need for special education; increased high school graduation and school achievement rates; and better health overall.

The Northwest Kansas Smart Start Project will focus on improving the quality of child care and early education and increasing the availability of child care and early education, according to information provided.

The project is designed around 10 programs which reflect research-based

best practices, expand and enhance the scope and quality of the existing region network of early childhood care and education services, and are linked to measurable benchmarks and data indicators.

By providing professional development to early childhood providers, serving children ages 3 to 5 in an expanded *Parents As Teachers* program, and engaging the business community in the care and education needs of our youngest citizens, the project will make a difference in children's development at a time when it matters most and when there is an opportunity to prevent rather than to correct problems, according to those associated with the organization.

The project will serve 11 rural counties, including Cheyenne, Rawlins, Decatur, Sherman, Thomas, Sheridan, Wallace, Logan, Gove, Trego and Graham.

Smart Start Kansas is a framework of services for early childhood care and education initiatives. The goal is to ensure that all children enter school healthy, ready to learn and in fact, do succeed.

Smart Start Kansas focuses on local control, community planning and collaboration, and developing a comprehensive approach to reach all Kansas children ages birth to 5.

The funding period for the grants began on Jan. 1, 2001. Grants will be awarded for one year and are expected to be renewable for subsequent years. Renewal applications will be subject to availability of funds and contingent upon meeting benchmarks identified within the community partnership's work plan.

The Children's Cabinet plans to expand the Smart Start Kansas initiative in subsequent years.

Kansas is scheduled to receive \$1.6 billion over 25 years as its share of the national settlement with four major tobacco manufacturers.

Smart Start Kansas grants were also awarded to Wichita Smart Start; Success By 6 Coalition, Lawrence; Salina Planning Council for Children and Families; Tri-County Smart Start, Kansas City; Crawford County Smart Start; and Manhattan Community Foundation for Riley County Children, Youth and Families Planning Team.

Ary said it would be possible to extend the wrestling room to the north and put dressing rooms below, with entrance from the north, closing off the swimming pool access.

He said the wrestling room needs a venting system, and the moisture from the swimming pool keeps it humid and encourages the growth of mold and fungus. The wrestling mats are disinfected every day to discourage such growth.

He said another need was for a free standing free-weight room and it would be possible to have the wrestling room with it. He suggested building it in the Living Center North parking lot, near the small city water building east

of the living center.

The board instructed Ary to bring cost estimates on extending the wrestling room, and for building a separate building.

In other business:

- Ary said he was investigating the cost of a highway sign for recruitment and public relations. He suggested a billboard east of Colby on I-70, which would be built with money from the Hansen Foundation grant, not with taxpayers' money. The cost of a 10x30 foot sign would be \$3,700. Cost to lease sign space was estimated at \$150-\$200 a month.
- A contract was approved with Kenneth Mitchell of Washington state to

paint a mural for the Bedker Building. Mitchell will submit some 'cartoons' of proposed scenes for approval. It will be paid for with grant money, not taxpayers' money, Ary said. Mitchell will paint the mural on canvas panels, which can be removed if desired. He will instruct a class with students helping with the mural, and paying tuition.

- Rick Groetzinger of the Faculty Alliance discussed the proposed change in unit definition. He said the alliance would like to change the agreement to eliminate voting of some individuals who are not involved with the college, and to clarify some provisions. The board asked for a written proposal to study.

Poll shows faith in economy slipping as Bush inauguration nears

By WILL LESTER

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Just as the Bush administration prepares to take charge, anxiety is on the rise among Americans about the state of their nation's economy, an Associated Press poll suggests.

Their faith has waned that their own finances will be better in a year's time and that investing large sums in the stock market is a good idea.

—Only a third of Americans expect their family finances to be better in a year, said the AP poll. Last spring more than half felt that way.

—More than half say if they had a thousand dollars, it would be a bad idea to put it in the stock market.

A strong majority said in a poll last spring that they would invest the money in stocks, and the number dropped progressively through the year.

By a 57-39 margin, women now feel that investing the money in stocks

would be a bad idea, while men remain about evenly split, according to the AP survey conducted by ICR of Media, Pa.

"No way, things are too shaky," said Delores Sapeta, a 72-year-old retiree from Middletown, in north-central California.

"I might have been willing to invest it maybe a year or two ago," said Charles Odom, a 32-year-old paint contractor from North Wilkesboro in western North Carolina. "Now the market goes up, then it drops right back down."

Just over two in 10 Americans have a lot of confidence in Bush's ability to deal with the economy, the poll indicated, while just over four in 10 have some confidence and almost three in 10 have no real confidence.

That's similar to the public's confidence in President-elect Clinton eight years ago. The number with no confidence in Bush on the economy is slightly higher than the one in eight who felt that way about President-elect

It looks like my family finances are going to be worse in a year . . . I get that feeling from technology stocks going down."

Kimberly Armstrong, mother in Louisville, Ky.

Reagan in 1980.

The confidence shown in Bush's ability to handle the economy closely follows partisan lines. Just over half the Republicans said they have a lot of confidence in Bush on the economy, while almost half the Democrats had none.

Just under a fourth of independents said they have a lot of confidence, half said they have some confidence and a fourth said they have no confidence in Bush to handle the economy.

Economic reports that could cause

nervousness have been mounting:

—Retailers just announced they had their weakest holiday sales in a decade.

—Worries about future job growth and the economy pushed consumer confidence in December to its lowest level in two years.

—The Federal Reserve unexpectedly lowered a key interest rate this month.

Those developments have not gone unnoticed by the public.

"It looks like my family finances are going to be worse in a year," said Kim-

berly Armstrong, a 25-year-old mother of two from Louisville, Ky. "I get that feeling from the news reports, from technology stocks going down."

Entering this uncertain economic climate will be Bush, who has cautioned several times that he's seen signs of economic trouble on the horizon.

As he prepares for the presidency, just over half in this poll, 52 percent, said they approve of the way he's handling the transition, while about a third, 31 percent, said they do not approve. That's slightly lower than the two-thirds of Americans who approved of President-elect Clinton's transition at a similar point eight years ago.

"In the sense that he seems to be picking people, with a couple of exceptions, who are qualified to take the Cabinet positions, I think he's doing a fairly good job in the transition," said Cliff Reynolds, a 53-year-old high school science teacher from Parker, Colo., just southeast of Denver.

A plurality in the poll, 46 percent, said they felt the country is on the wrong track, while 41 percent said it is headed in the right direction. Late last year, the situation was about reversed.

Republicans felt the country was going in the right direction by a 2-1 margin. Democrats felt at least as strongly that it was on the wrong track. Only 38 percent of independents felt the country was headed in the right direction, with 47 percent saying it was on the wrong track.

That public response can reflect varying concerns, from anxiety about the country's economic health, to troubles overseas to the moral direction of the country.

Armstrong, the Louisville mother of two, said having young children influences her concern that the country is not on track.

"Things are definitely headed in the wrong direction, morally speaking," she said. "Things are just out of control."

Briefly

Weather: Continued mild

There could be some precipitation coming our way on Saturday, but otherwise the National Weather Service sees generally dry and mild temperatures for the Colby area. Tonight, partly cloudy, lows in the mid-20s and west winds 5-15 mph, turning to the northwest. Thursday, mostly sunny, highs 50-55 and northwest winds 5-15 mph, turning to the west. Thursday night and Friday, clear, lows 20-25 and highs right around the 50-degree mark. Saturday, chance for precipitation, rain or snow, depending on the temperatures, with lows in the middle 20s and the highs in the lower 40s. Sunday and Monday, dry, lows in the 20s and highs 35-40. Tuesday's high in Colby was 55 and the overnight low this morning was 13, climbing rapidly to 32 by 8

a.m. The soil temperature at the four-inch depth is averaging 32 degrees. There was no precipitation during the past 24 hours. The records for Jan. 10: 73 in 1928 and -10 in 1988. (The daily temperatures and precipitation are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

Wellness Fair planned Saturday

The Wellness Fair Committee is reminding everyone to make plans to attend the event, Saturday, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., at the Colby Community College Student Union. In addition to many of the familiar annual events, new tests and programs have been added, sources said. For information, call Jeanene Brown, committee member, 462-4850.

Open house Saturday 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 of the open house.

Fair board meeting Thursday

The Thomas County Free Fair Board will meet at 8 p.m. Thursday, at the 4-H Building, to make plans for the 2001 fair. The county commissioners are expected to be in atten-

dance, and election of new fair board officers will take place. The meeting is open to the public.

Square dance lessons offered

The Golden Buckle Square Dance Club of Colby is offering beginning square dance lessons if there is an interest in the community, sources said. For information, call (785) 462-2958 or (785) 462-7996.

Kick the habit

A support group to help people who want to quit using tobacco will meet today from 7-8 p.m. in the cafeteria at Citizens Medical Center, 100 E. College Dr. For information, call 462-8152.

