



COLBY FREE PRESS

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Round table discussion, luncheon on Friday Director of new children's initiative to Colby

By **PATTY DECKER**
Free Press Editor

There's a new initiative in Kansas that wants to do more for its 700,000 children in need and, on Friday, the organization's director will be in Colby for a round table discussion and Chamber of Commerce luncheon.

Known as the Kansas Children's Campaign, Melly Karst Schmidt, the director and former mayor of Hays, was invited to Colby for the round table discussion by SmartStart of Northwest Kansas, said Cindy Schafer, project director. More than 60 people were invited to the round table meeting at Colby's Ramada Inn from 10 to 11:30 a.m.

Attendees will be representing a myriad of organizations ranging from the medical community and schools to city and county governments, religious groups, law enforcement and

the court system. The luncheon is open to all Chamber members and guests, also at the Ramada, beginning at noon.

"Kansas can either invest money in quality pre-natal and early childhood and school readiness services, a good education and vocational training systems and effective intervention programs, or we can invest money addressing school failure, broken families, unemployment and juvenile crime," said Schmidt.

SmartStart, which has similar goals and affiliations with this new program, was interested in learning more about how it and other agencies could become involved in helping the state's kids, she said.

Although Thomas County is not listed as one of the six target counties that would be polled in the initial year of the children's campaign, it is still vital in the statewide listening tour.

SmartStart's interest was prompted by one of the leadership committee members, Sheila Frahm of Colby, who through her conversations with the local group sparked their involvement.

Even though the county is not in the initial phase, the plan does provide for the development of a consensus platform through public opinion polls, surveys and citizen input during statewide listening tours.

Initial targeted counties are Johnson, Wyandotte, Shawnee, Riley, Sedgwick and Finney. Five counties will be added the next year and ten in the third year.

After the platform of issues is put together by March of 2002 for the first year, Schmidt said, the focus will move from conference tables to kitchen tables.

"All politics are local and though the cam-

aign won't endorse candidates, representatives will ask candidates to answer questions and participate in debates with questions asked by young people," said Darryl Johnson, campaign coordinator. "It will make the candidates go on record and pledge what they will do for Kansas children."

The end result would not only determine a "Who's for Kids and Who's Just Kidding," list, it would empower communities to form a consensus vision on how they can improve the quality of life for its children and families.

"Yesterday's, today's and, much to my dismay, tomorrow's headlines will point out the problems of children dropping out of school, using drugs and alcohol, getting pregnant and being both victims of abuse and violence and threats to public safety," Schmidt said. "These problems with Kansas' children didn't happen

overnight.

The seeds begin with not meeting the needs of young children, then by ignoring early signs of trouble or not responding to them effectively."

Along with Frahm, who is a former U.S. Senator, others serving on the Children's Campaign committee include Judge James Buchele and Robert Bugg both of Topeka; Rochelle Chronister, former cabinet member for Gov. Bill Graves; Emerson Lynn Jr., Iola; Robert Stephen, former Kansas Attorney General; Jill Docking, Wichita; Tim Emert, retired state senator; Steve Kearney, Topeka attorney; and Pat Hurley, lobbyist.

Funding for the campaign is provided through the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation in Kansas City, Mo., and the Kansas Health Foundation in Wichita.

Wheat dry, but it's not time to panic, area specialist says

By **MAXINE NELSON**

Colby Free Press

The area wheat crop would like some moisture, but we need not panic yet, said Roger Stockton, K-State Extension specialist crops and soils for Northwest Kansas.

"It (the wheat) would like to have a drink of water. In this area I am hoping the temperature will stay cool enough for the wheat to remain dormant until we can get some precipitation," he said.

"We had pretty good wheat establishment in the fall, some rain in September, but with the extended warm fall, the wheat growth has used up that moisture and so we are in — what some people would call a drought — at least the wheat is needing moisture," he said.

"The plus side is that there is enough growth in most fields to cover the soil so that erosion shouldn't be a big con-

cern. But if it is warm enough for the wheat to grow, which generally is above 40 degrees, it will be trying to use moisture and it certainly needs some now," Stockton said.

He said he had just returned from southwestern Kansas which is much dryer. "There are a whole lot of wheat fields down there where the wheat never came up. They are blowing now and into the Oklahoma panhandle. They are in much more desperate condition than we are here."

He reminded that we do live in a semi-arid environment. "It seems like we kill the wheat crop two or three times a year, and still wind up with an average yield. Although we do need the rain I am not in a panic mode yet," he said.

Stockton said it has been pretty dry the last couple of years in western Kansas in general.

Kriss Schroeder, who farms south

and north of Colby in Thomas County and also in Logan County, said there is more moisture north of Colby, but conditions south are pretty dry.

"From about Colby north, the wheat is looking pretty good. We got some moisture last fall and it rooted down a lot better. If you get down south of Colby a ways, it's been a lot dryer since planting, and it didn't root down very well and some of it may winter kill this winter. We have good potential if we get moisture before it dies. We could sure use some snow," he said.

Schroeder has been farming since 1991 as his sole occupation, but bought his first ground in 1980. He said he was a practicing veterinarian, before he went into farming, "but not for the money," he said.

His father, Dan Schroeder, farms in northeastern Thomas County and has ground in Logan county, and his grandfather was the late John Kriss.

First Lady makes Topeka library stop

TOPEKA (AP) — First lady Laura Bush spent her day with the kids and her evening with the grown-ups as she helped celebrate the renovation of a public library.

About 300 people attended a ceremony Wednesday dedicating the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library's new children's services area. Mrs. Bush's visit was the highlight of a week of activities that marked the completion of a \$23 million expansion. "I actually do have my books in

Dewey decimal order," joked Mrs. Bush, a former school librarian with a master's degree in library science.

Also on hand were Kansas first lady Linda Graves, library staff, donors to the library programs and children representing each of Shawnee County's 54 elementary schools. Mrs. Bush cut a red ribbon strung across the main entrance to the children's services section, then read to a third-grade class from Randolph Elementary.

Mrs. Bush also attended an evening

reception for contributors to the library expansion project, where she was introduced by childhood friend and former Kansas state senator Marge Petty.

"There's nothing quite like a trip to the library," Mrs. Bush said. "Whether you choose a casual stroll down the aisles of books or a speedy trip along the information superhighway, libraries will allow you to journey as far and as wide as your imagination wants to go."

Tasteful conclusion



JAY KELLEY/Colby Free Press

Candra Oesterreich, a first time donor pictured in the foreground, was treated to some juice by Colby High School students Karen Saddler (middle) and Lacey Miller at the Red Cross blood drive held at the high school gym Wednesday. Colby's goal was 120 units, according to spokesperson Donna Finley, and they collected 154. Finley added that supplies are down again after the donations of Sept. 11 and all donors are appreciated.

Terrain hinders efforts to recover bodies of Marines killed in crash

WASHINGTON (AP) — Steep, rocky terrain hindered efforts Thursday to recover the bodies of seven marines killed when their tanker plane crashed into a mountain in Pakistan, defense officials said.

It was the worst U.S. casualty toll of the Afghanistan campaign, and included the first woman killed since U.S.-led Afghan bombing began in early October.

Residents in the region reported seeing helicopters flying over the site early Thursday.

In Kandahar, Afghanistan, where the Marines have established a base, spokesman 1st Lt. John Jarvis said the plane was on its final approach to the Shamsi airfield. It had been on the first

Recovery is going to be tough. . .
1st Lt. John Jarvis
spokesperson for recovery

of what normally would be four refueling stops per mission, so it likely had an almost full cargo of fuel.

A military team was heading from the Marine base at Kandahar to Shamsi to investigate, Jarvis said, echoing statements from the Pentagon that there had been no indication of hostile fire. He had no information on any weather factors, either.

"We're going to do everything we

can to find out what caused the accident," Jarvis said. "Recovery is going to be tough. It's very tight terrain — mountainside, not vehicle accessible. It's going to be tough going up to the point the accident occurred."

Marine staff in Kandahar observed a moment of silence.

Earlier Thursday a Pakistani military official at the base where the plane was headed told The Associated Press

by telephone, speaking on condition of anonymity, that "U.S. officials are examining debris at the site of the incident and we are extending them full support."

Marines and Pakistanis approached the site within hours after the crash about three miles from the airport, but no bodies were recovered immediately, Maj. Ralph Mills, a spokesman with the U.S. Central Command, said late Wednesday evening in Florida.

"They made it to the crash site on foot," Mills said. "But they were unable to remain there. It is a very steep grade and they were unable to get footing. The site is secure."

He said early Thursday the team pulled back after seeing no evidence of

bodies and then returned at first light to continue the search.

Meanwhile, Mills said, the war goes on, with one B-52 bomber and one B-1B bomber attacking a complex of caves, tunnels and buildings used as an al-Qaida training camp at Zawar Kili in the mountains of eastern Afghanistan at about 10:30 p.m. EST Wednesday.

The site has been struck several times in recent days and Mills said the bombing there would continue until all terrorist "infrastructure" at the location has been destroyed.

President Bush said the crash was a reminder of "how serious the times are today."

"Our hearts and prayers go out to the

families of the soldiers," Bush said at a fund-raiser for the re-election of his brother Jeb as governor of Florida.

"But I want to remind them that the cause that we are now engaged in is just and noble.

"The cause is freedom and this nation will not rest until we've achieved our objective."

The crash occurred late Wednesday night local time, and a search-and-rescue mission continued into the next morning.

The plane crashed as it approached a military airfield called Shamsi in southwestern Pakistan. That air base is about 180 miles southwest of Quetta, Pakistan, according to U.S. Central Command.

Briefly

Weather: No changes

Nothing major looms on the horizon as far as weather is concerned for the Colby area, reports the National Weather Service. Tonight, partly cloudy, lows in the upper 20s and northwest winds up to 10 mph. Friday, mostly sunny, highs in the lower 50s and northwest winds 10-15 mph. Friday night, partly cloudy, lows in the middle 20s. Saturday and Saturday night, partly cloudy to cloudy, highs in the upper 40s and lows in the lower 30s with a 30 percent chance for rain or snow showers late Saturday. Sunday, cloudy early then becoming partly cloudy, a slight chance for snow or rain showers up to around 6 a.m., lows in the upper 20s and highs in the lower 50s. Colby's high Wednesday was 56 and

the overnight low this morning was 30. The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth is averaging 33 degrees. Colby recorded 0.10 inches of precipitation during the past 24 hours. The records for Jan. 10: 73 in 1928 and -10 in 1988. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

Recycling center takes phone books

The Thomas County Recycling Center is taking old telephone books at its collection site, 720 E. College Dr. in Colby. Those wanting to drop off the books should use the magazine bins, coordinators said.

Genesis annual meeting scheduled

The annual meeting of Genesis-Thomas County, Inc. will be held Thursday, Jan. 17 at 6 p.m. in the Thomas County Office Complex. The regular meeting will be held immediately following, said Rosalie Seemann, board member.

Blood testing continues Saturday

Time is running out for those wanting blood tests for the Jan. 26 Wellness Fair. According to the Colby Wellness Committee, blood will be drawn for the last time at the Citizens Medical Center laboratory from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. on Saturday. Those participating are required to fast for 10-12 hours prior to the test. Results will be available at the

fair from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The fair will again be held at the Colby Community College Student Union.

Fair board meets tonight

The Thomas County Free Fair Board will meet at 8 p.m. tonight, at the Thomas County 4-H Building, to conduct business and make plans for the coming fair. Audrey Hines will be welcomed as the new fair board secretary. The agenda includes: Rosalie Seemann will talk about Genesis; Brent Wiedeman, Farmers & Merchants Bank, will discuss sponsorship of the free barbecue; along with confirmation of the parade grand marshal, audit contract, and estimated cost of 2002 premiums. The meeting is open to the public.

