



# COLBY FREE PRESS

## Finishing touches



JAY KELLEY/Colby Free Press

Colby High School secretary Laura Cook, left, got a little help from Megan Blatt, Erin Schafer, Jessie Brenn, Jamie Quenzer, Megan Augustine and Dominique Palser filling courtesy bags for Orange & Black

Classic teams. The 17th annual basketball gala began today. The bags include T-shirts, snacks, schedules and general information about the community.

## Menlo teens face burglary, theft, damage charges

By **PATTY DECKER**

Free Press Editor

Three 19-year-old Thomas County men have charges pending on burglary, theft and criminal damage to property, C.D. Hopper, investigator with the Thomas County Sheriff's office, said today.

In addition, he said, two of the men have charges pending in Sheridan County for allegedly stealing more than 10 roads signs.

Paperwork was forwarded to the Thomas County attorney's office on Wednesday, Hopper said, recommending charges of be brought forward for burglary, theft and criminal damage to property on Travis Durham, Michael Giesenhagen and Todd Dible, all of Menlo.

Durham and Giesenhagen also have charges pending for tampering with traffic signal signs and aggravated tampering with traffic signal signs in Sheridan County.

The burglary, theft and criminal damage charges stem from an incident in early November, Hopper said, when Donald Saddler's unoccupied farm and two Quonsets were broken into nine miles east of Colby.

Missing from the house and two out-buildings were tools, air compressor, battery charges and many other miscel-

laneous farm equipment items that totaled more than \$3,000, he said.

"The investigation into the burglary revealed information that gave us probable cause to search a house in Menlo where the men were residing," he said, "and it was at that time we found the traffic signs as well."

About 95 percent of the items taken from the buildings were recovered from the search, he said. The two other charges, pending in Sheridan County, involving the traffic signs are serious offenses, Hopper said. During the past several months, in other separate incidences, there have been traffic signs stolen near Oakley and the area.

"When someone steals yield signs, stop signs, railroad signs and other similar-type traffic warning signs, that action could result in an accident or affects the control of traffic," Hopper said. "People who remove signs for any reason are making a serious mistake and we will file felony charges when possible," he said.

The three men were released on their own recognizance Wednesday from the Thomas County jail.

It will now be the decision of the county attorney, Allan Taylor, after reviewing the complaint, whether or not to submit a filing in district court, Hopper explained.

## Saturday to bring changes to Colby's postal facility

By **MAXINE NELSON**

Colby Free Press

Full service retail window hours on weekdays at the Colby Post Office will begin an hour-and-a-half later effective Saturday, said Postmaster Jim McDonald. The hours are being changed to 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. instead of 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. McDonald said Saturday hours of service will remain the same, 9 a.m. to noon.

Post office box mail will be ready for pick up at the latest at 9 a.m. "although it may be ready earlier," McDonald said. Box mail had previously been available by 8:30 a.m. He said the change in service was due to a change in equipment.

"The sorting machine has been expanded and we're not sure exactly what the impact will be," McDonald said.

He said it would probably be a rare occasion when the mail goes into the box section later than usual, but the latest time has to be posted. "Most days it will be there considerably earlier," he said.

"Negative economic trends require the Postal Service to re-examine our current costs and make minor modifications in our operating processes to ensure that we maintain equitable postage rates," McDonald said.

Anyone having questions can contact McDonald at 785-462-7904.

## Fired Enron auditor blames Andersen lawyers

WASHINGTON (AP)—The auditor fired for destroying documents in the Enron Corp. affair is laying the blame squarely on his accounting firm, Arthur Andersen LLP, telling congressional investigators he was just following advice from its lawyers.

The auditor was questioned for several hours Wednesday at the White House disclosed that President Bush's chief economic adviser, Lawrence Lindsey, was asked to study the impact of an Enron collapse after presidential aides were alerted to the problem last fall. The energy-trading concern, once the seventh-largest U.S. company, entered the biggest bankruptcy in the country's history on Dec. 2.

David Duncan, the former chief auditor for Andersen's Enron account, said the Big Five accounting firm's lawyers suddenly began emphasizing Andersen's policy allowing destruc-

tion of some documents.

Duncan told investigators with the House Energy and Commerce Committee that in September general discussions began at Andersen of what Enron-related documents to discard.

"It was unusual" to emphasize the document-destruction policy, Duncan told the investigators, according to congressional sources familiar with what he said. The sources spoke on condition of anonymity.

An Andersen spokesman declined comment. According to the sources, Duncan told investigators that an Oct. 12 memo from one of Andersen's lawyers was the beginning of an effort to discard many records.

Andersen has said Duncan organized a two-week document destruction effort that began in late October. The accounting firm fired Duncan on Tuesday, put three other Enron audi-

tors on administrative leave and stripped management responsibilities from four partners in its office in Houston, where Enron is based.

At the White House, spokesman Ari Fleischer said Lindsey concluded last year that Enron's collapse would not hurt the U.S. and global financial markets. That's the same finding reached by Peter Fisher, the Treasury undersecretary in charge of financial markets who opened a review after two phone calls from Enron CEO Kenneth Lay to Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill on Oct. 28 and Nov. 8.

Lindsey, a former member of the Federal Reserve board of governors and a private economic consultant at the time, received \$50,000 from Enron in 2000 as a member of an Enron advisory board.

Enron has been Bush's biggest campaign benefactor over the years.

In another development Wednesday, it was disclosed that Enron executive Sherron Watkins told a friend and former colleague at Andersen on Aug. 20 that she had concerns about Enron's accounting practices. It was revealed this week that Watkins warned Lay about her concerns, which focused on outside partnerships used by Enron executives to keep hundreds of millions of dollars in debt off the company's books. A hurried meeting at Andersen's Houston office took place Aug. 21 and Duncan participated. The meeting occurred the day before Watkins detailed her serious concerns in a meeting with Lay. "It's now clear to us that key players at Andersen as well as Enron knew of the growing problems months before the company imploded," said Ken Johnson, spokesman for the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

## Gov. Graves not laughing over 'Tax Me More' voluntary collection fund

By **JOHN HANNA**

Associated Press Writer

TOPEKA (AP)—Conservative legislators have an alternative to Gov. Bill Graves' plan to increase taxes, a "Tax Me More" fund to collect voluntary contributions to state government.

Graves refused to ignore or brush off their facetious suggestion Wednesday. He called it nonsense and criticized conservatives for not being serious enough about solving the state's budget problems.

About a dozen conservatives, led by Sen. Tim Huelskamp, R-Fowler, held a Statehouse news conference to unveil their proposal, promising a bill would be introduced in both houses next week.

They passed out envelopes provided by the Kansas Taxpayers Network, an anti-tax group with its headquarters in Wichita, and said Kansans could start

sending contributions to the Department of Administration immediately.

Huelskamp mocked a suggestion Graves made in his State of the State address that Kansans would accept a tax increase to prevent cuts in some government programs.

"Obviously, there are some differences of opinion, a different understanding and reading public opinions," Huelskamp said. "We'd like to introduce a means which would allow Kansans to speak for themselves."

Graves had his own news conference immediately afterward, in his office one floor up. He labeled the conservatives' event "theater made up of bad actors."

"Whoever those folks were downstairs would be better off staying home and just mailing in their no votes," he said. "The next group can have their theatrical road show, and I'll be happy

Whoever those folks were downstairs would be better off staying home and just mailing in their no votes."

Gov. Bill Graves, during news conference

to respond as well."

The exchange showed how much some of Graves fellow Republicans oppose increasing taxes to help close a projected \$426 million gap between expected revenues and spending commitments for the state's 2003 fiscal year, which begins July 1.

Graves has proposed \$228 million in tax increases. They include raising the tax on a pack of cigarettes 65 cents and

on a gallon of gas by a penny. The state's sales tax would increase by a quarter-cent on the dollar.

The governor contends the tax increases are necessary to avoid cuts in education and some social service programs. Senate Republican leaders have drafted a plan that relies more heavily on budget cuts and would dip into rainy day funds — but not increase taxes.

The conservatives said they got the

idea for their fund from one Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, a Republican, set up in November when legislators and others in his state started pushing for tax increases to help solve budget problems.

In Kansas, Rep. Peggy Long, R-Hamilton said, "I haven't talked to one person who's interested in a tax increase."

An annoyed Graves responded: "There isn't a day go by that constituents in those folks' districts aren't depending upon or counting on government services in their lives. I am just fed up with how legislators try to minimize how critically important this business is."

He saved some of his harshest words for Huelskamp, a frequent critic of Graves' policies. In 1996, Graves campaigned for then-Sen. Marian Reynolds, of Dodge City, whom

Huelskamp defeated in the GOP primary.

"It's hard to know where to begin," Graves told reporters. "We're only three days into the session, and the foolishness and shenanigans have already begun, and why am I not surprised that it's Huelskamp?"

Graves also said Huelskamp voted against 1999 legislation creating the state's 10-year, \$13.7 billion transportation program, then showed up at a local bill signing.

Huelskamp replied: "He begged me to come."

Some legislators took the conservatives' proposal in stride.

"I don't think anyone is serious about that proposal," said Rep. Rocky Nichols, D-Topeka, a member of the House Appropriations Committee. "It doesn't take away from the fact that it's funny."

## Briefly

### Weather: Chilly

Cloudy to partly cloudy and continued chilly temperatures — but no precipitation — is the forecast for the Colby region. Tonight, cloudy, lows around 10 and northeast winds up to 10 mph. Friday, cloudy, highs in the upper 20s to near 30 and east winds up to 10 mph. Friday night, mostly cloudy, lows in the teens. Saturday, Sunday and Monday, partly cloudy, lows in the teens and highs generally in the 30s to around 40. Colby's high Wednesday was 35 and the overnight low this morning was 19. The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth is averaging 31 degrees. Precipitation remains at a mere 0.10 inches for the month. The records for Jan. 17: 71 in 1950 and —17 in 1930. Today's high was

expected to be in the low to middle 30s. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

### Water meeting planned here

Colby Community College will be the site for a meeting on the final report of the the Kansas Water Authority's fiscal year draft of the 2004 state water plan. The meeting is set for Thursday, March 14, at 4 p.m.

"This is but the first step in ultimately determining if any or all of these ideas will survive the next year's scrutiny and formally end up in the state water plan," said Wayne Bossert, Groundwater Management District No. 4 manager.

"The next step, and perhaps the most important, are the public hearings.

"Each basin plan is different, so it would be best if you can read the specific plan(s) where you live and work before attending any hearing or otherwise expressing your views," Bossert added. For a copy of a specific basin plan, or the entire state water plan, call Bossert at 462-3915.

### Group sets annual banquet

Pheasants Forever will hold its annual banquet on Friday, Jan. 25, at the Comfort Inn Convention Center in Colby. Social Hour will be 7-7:30 p.m. with the dinner at 7:30 p.m. The auction, drawings and raffles will follow. Paid regis-

trations received by Jan. 18 will be eligible for an early bird drawing for a Pheasants Forever jacket ordered to their size. Membership is \$25.

Dinner tickets are \$15 each. Return to Kansas Pioneer Chapter Pheasants Forever, PO Box 205, Colby. For more information call Mike at 462-3391, days, or 462-8806, evenings; or Daryl, 462-3704, evenings.

### Soup's on at Methodist Church

The United Methodist Church will have a soup dinner on Sunday from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Chicken noodle soup, chili, and vegetable soup will be served. Free-will donations will be accepted.

