



COLBY FREE PRESS

Skiing Mount Colby



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Ashton Cave of Colby said he was having a great time sledding on Sunday afternoon with his friend, Eric Ohlrogge (not pictured). The boys said they had been on the slopes, located in the vacant lot on the corner of Plum St. and S. Franklin Ave., for six hours. Throughout the day, many youngsters visited the site to take advantage of an old-fashioned snowball fight or slide down one of the many sides of "Mt. Colby."

Sick bug bugging Colby, area residents, officials say

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

There's been a lot of illness in Colby and Thomas County with much of it being attributed to both respiratory and gastro intestinal flu, said Cindy Carmichael, RN, director of nursing at Citizens Medical Center.

While hospital admissions are up, averaging about 20 patients over the last couple of weeks, it's not all flu though, she said.

"We have been seeing a steady influx of patients and a mixture of different things," Carmichael said today.

"About a week and a half ago, the hospital was filled to capacity with 28 patients on the medical/surgical floor (which serves the general patient population and excludes areas such as intensive care and obstetrics)," said Michael Boyles, chief executive officer at the hospital. Officials at both Colby Medical and Surgical Center and Family Center for Healthcare agree the flu virus is definitely causing havoc.

Although it's not uncommon that flu strikes this time of year, physicians at both facilities noted that people are a

lot sicker than in year's past and those who had flu shots seem to be doing better on the whole than those who didn't get the shot.

One explanation physicians have given for the increase in flu this season has been weather-related. Unseasonably warm and then cold temperatures, along with the lack of moisture, has in many instances propagated the disease in this area.

Thomas County Health Nurse Kathy Ryan substantiated that concern last week by saying this year's virus has prompted many to go directly to their physicians rather than visiting her office first.

"Most of the time, people use our office as an option for screening an illness," she said. "We don't make a diagnosis here, but we can offer help to a patient who thinks they may need to be referred on."

In Ryan's opinion, people have been feeling bad enough that they have gone directly to their doctors, rather than using the county health nurse's office.

The flu virus also seems to be affecting many younger to middle-aged

people than in some past years, said one spokesperson at Colby Medical and Surgical Center.

There is some good news, though. Ryan said that as January came to a close, so does the peak of the flu season in this area.

"The virus should start tapering off during the month and people who have chronic medical problems should avoid community events when possible for now," she said.

For others, Ryan suggests adequate rest, taking extra vitamins and not pushing too hard, which could result in lowering the body's natural immune system.

"Don't get too tired or run down and if you are already feeling a bit tired take it easy," she said. The same goes for children. "If your child complains he or she is not feeling well, keep them at home until they are feeling better."

Another way to avoid catching or spreading germs is by washing hands frequently, she said.

For information or questions, Ryan encourages people to stop by her office at 350 S. Range or call 462-4596.

Senators expected to make key state budget decision this week

By JOHN HANNA

Associated Press Writer

TOPEKA (AP) — In good or even average financial times, legislators typically start making important budget decisions in late March or early April. But this is a bad year, and the Senate already faces a critical debate on state spending.

Republican leaders will find out whether their 30 senators can stomach immediate reductions in agency budgets. Democratic leaders expect none of their 10 to back any such plan.

Senate Republicans plan to caucus Tuesday morning on a bill revising the current budget, with Senate debate scheduled Tuesday afternoon and final action set for Wednesday.

If Tuesday morning's meeting reveals a shortage of GOP support, the afternoon's debate will be canceled and the Senate will take up other budget-fixing proposals, including tax increases, said Senate President Dave Kerr.

"We're not going to waste people's time," said Kerr, R-Hutchinson. "This will not come back up. This is a one-vote opportunity."

The bill before the Senate would cut \$54 million from the general fund budget of \$4.5 billion in fiscal 2002, which ends June 30. Many Republicans also want to freeze spending in fiscal year 2003. The measure would spare public schools while trimming funds immediately for higher education, social

services, the prison system and administrative agencies. The lowered appropriations would form the starting points for the new budget.

State Budget Director Duane Goossen said if the debate over immediate cuts continues too long, any effort is merely symbolic.

"It's almost that way now," he said.

Immediate cuts would be only part of a package necessary to balance the budget for the next fiscal year, when state revenues are expected to trail spending commitments by \$426 million. Kerr also helped draft a plan to allow the state to dip into its rainy day funds and has endorsed a plan to increase taxes on tobacco and alcohol by \$87 million during the next fiscal year.

Top honor to Sharon Springs woman Awards dinner recognizes many Boy Scout leaders and youth

By MAXINE NELSON

Colby Free Press

Boy Scout and Cub Scout leaders were honored at the Buffalo Bill District Awards dinner Saturday night at the Colby Community College Student Union.

The purpose of the annual dinner is to recognize the achievements of both adult and youth scouts, along with honoring one adult volunteer who was exceptional in their efforts to help scouting, said Ed Evans, district executive of Hays.

This year's winner was Virginia Popp of Sharon Springs, who received the Buffalo Bill District Award of Merit.

"Her name was chosen because of her meritorious service to scouting," Skip Sharp, district chairman, said. He then spoke about the many things that Popp has done to help make scouting so successful. "

She is registered as cub master for Pack 145, having served in that capacity for the past three and-a-half years," he said.

"She served five years as den leader for the pack, and four years as commit-

tee chairman for Troop 145 in Sharon Springs," he said.

Popp is also a member of the Wallace County Foundation, and a member of the Site Council for the Wallace County School in Sharon Springs.

"She shares her expertise by helping with hair for high school plays (she owns a cosmetology business), and helping with costumes," Sharp said, "and she is a member of the Catholic Church where she has served as president of the Altar Society, and CYO leader and teacher."

Previous award of merit recipients since 1976 include: Don Harding, Goodland; Bill Horton III, Atwood; Elmer Kellner, St. Francis; Ralph Hansen, Colby; Buck Fischer, Colby; Don Beamgard, Atwood; Leon Merklin, St. Francis; Keith Nelson, Colby; Bill Hartzler, Goodland; Bill Weishaar, Colby; Robert Wallsmith, Brewster; Claude Herren, Colby; Steve Alwin, Colby; Glen "Skip" Sharp, Colby; Larry Dible, Colby; Mike Schmidt, Colby; Pat Rose, St. Francis; Lynn Higerd, Colby; Marc Smith, Colby; Dennis Riggs, Colby; Jett Fromholtz, St. Francis; Jim

Robison, Colby; Maxine Nelson, Colby; and Randy Smith, Colby.

The Buffalo Bill District is in the Coronado Area Council, headquartered in Salina.

The district is roughly bounded by St. Francis, Atwood, Sharon Springs, and Oakley. About 36 people attended the event.

In addition, Popp received training awards as den leader, cub master and cubscouters. Others receiving this award were Phil Erickson, cub master; Gary McClung, Webelos; Rick Stramel and Bill Fulcher, Tiger cub leader; and Ken Erickson, Boy Scout Training Award.

Boy Scout Week, which started Sunday and will conclude Saturday, is a nationally-recognized event. As part of the celebration, the dinner also honored other people as well for their hard work.

Deanna Oesterreich, Colby, was recognized with a leadership award for her service in organizing and leading scouting events for both younger and older scouts.

Troy Bielser, Colby, was recognized on behalf of the 2001 Eagle Scout re-

cipients in the district during 2001. Other Eagle Scouts honored for their advancement in 2001 were: Jeffrey Finley and Benjamin Vrbas of Atwood; Andrew Magley of Oakley; Max Saint and David Russell of Goodland; and Christopher Griggs, Troy Bielser, Jory Friesen and Christopher Barnum of Colby.

Sharp, district chairman, gave the state of the district report.

He said Buffalo Bill District is a Quality District for the second year in a row. This is a national award which means each of the units in the district is a Quality Unit, based on membership, popcorn sales, fund-raising, registration and other criteria.

The new scout executive, Matt Devore of Salina, was a special guest. He said he was raised in Burlington, Iowa, but came to Salina by way of Texas where had worked for 15 years for the Boy Scouts.

He said his goals include raising enough money for an endowment fund to provide scholarships, such as for Eagle Scouts, or to send troops to camp at Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico.



MAXINE NELSON/Colby Free Press

Virginia Popp of Sharon Springs, center, received the prestigious Buffalo Bill District Award of Merit at the Scout Recognition dinner Saturday night in Colby. Presenting the award were, from left, Jon Felver of Goodland, district commissioner, and Skip Sharp, Colby, district chairman.

Briefly

Weather: Warmer later

Temperatures could move into the 50s for the Colby area around mid-week, the National Weather Service said today. Tonight, cloudy, lows in the upper teens and northwest winds 10 mph. Tuesday, cloudy early, then becoming partly cloudy, highs in the middle to upper 30s and north winds 5-10 mph. Tuesday night, partly cloudy, lows near 20. Wednesday and Thursday, sunny on Wednesday with highs around 50, and cloudy Thursday with lows around 20 and highs in the middle 50s and rain showers likely in the afternoon. Colby's high Sunday was 42 and the overnight low this morning was 11. The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth is averaging 31 degrees. Precipitation for the month stands at 0.19 inches; snowfall for the month remains at 2.5

inches. The records for Feb. 4: 75 in 1962 and —23 in 1899. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

Council meets Tuesday

The Colby City Council plans to purchase a new unmarked police car at its regular meeting beginning at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, in the council chamber of City Hall, 585 N. Franklin. Other items on the agenda include possible approval of a contract for traffic signal at Davis/Zelfer and Range Ave.; approval of specifications for a hydraulic articulating aerial device; proposals for a new sanitation truck; sale of jet machine to Atwood and approval of cash

farm lease with Vernon and Karen Flanagan.

Site council meets tonight

The Colby Elementary School Site Council is meeting tonight at 6:30 p.m. in the grade school's cafeteria. All meetings are open to the public.

School board to meet

The Colby School board will approve the calendar for the next academic year and validate the continuing education points for district teachers at a meeting in the Administration Building, 215 S. Range, tonight at 7 p.m. Also on the agenda are discussions of teacher contract negotiations and a presentation at the high school.

Soup supper to benefit school nears

Kappa Upsilon, a local sorority, is sponsoring a soup supper from 5 to 7:30 p.m., Friday, at the Colby Community Building during the Colby/Quinter basketball game. All proceeds from the event will benefit Puddle Duck Preschool, said Bonnie Dinkel, one of the organizers. On the menu will be chili, chicken-noodle and vegetable soup with free-will donations accepted. Call Dinkel at 462-7247 or Amy Jennings, director of Puddle Duck at 462-8388.

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.

