



COLBY FREE PRESS

Learning young



JAY KELLEY/Colby Free Press

Colby elementary school student Konnor Kriss got a little help from teacher Sonja Kough in the school's computer lab. School officials say they are looking at ways to continue to improve computer literacy among all students to prepare them for the workplace.

Colby youth faces March sentencing for burglary, theft

By **PATTY DECKER**

Free Press Editor

A young Colby man was arraigned in Thomas County District Court on nine counts of burglary and theft following an incident that occurred in early December involving four cars in the Wheatridge/Maize neighborhoods. After waiving his rights to a preliminary hearing, Joshua J. Cook, 18, pled guilty to one count each of burglary and theft at his arraignment on Monday, Jan. 28.

The burglary counts involved a 1988 Plymouth Voyager and a 2001 Pontiac Grand Prix taken without the permission of the registered owners.

Following his plea of guilty on the two counts of burglary, Thomas County District Court Judge Glenn D. Schiffner arranged for the pre-sentencing report with sentencing scheduled for Wednesday, March 6 at 10 a.m.

In addition, Cook was released on his own recognizance bond in the amount of \$10,000 and would be required to have supervision by court services.

In his ruling, Schiffner also placed Cook on house arrest, except when seeing his attorney, meeting with court service officers, at court proceedings or in case of medical emergencies.

During the arraignment, Thomas County Attorney Allan Taylor dismissed the other seven charges, which included five theft charges and two other burglary charges. The five theft counts dismissed included the taking

of a cell phone and black vinyl CD holder worth more than \$500 on one count; a green wallet and various identification cards, along with \$4 in cash on the second theft count; one 8-track tape cassette and \$5 in cash in the third theft count; a second cell phone in the fourth count and Panasonic CD player, CD cigarette charger adapter, cassette tape and adapter and one CD in the fifth theft count.

Dismissed in the burglary counts were a 1993 Mercury Cougar XR7 and a 1995 Chrysler. There were no objections to dismissing the other charges, according to the journal entry filed at the courthouse on Thursday, Jan. 31.

Colby Police officials learned of the thefts and burglaries after residents in the Maize and Wheatridge neighborhoods called in to report the theft of vehicles and services.

Within days after learning about the incident, officials arrested Cook in connection with the burglarizing and theft of the four vehicles.

In addition, Jeremy Crandall, 23, of Colby, was also charged with one count of theft of services and one count of possession of stolen property. To date, no new information was available on this case, according to court records.

The vehicles were alleged to have been stolen from those neighborhoods during the late evening and early morning hours of Sunday and Monday, Dec. 2 and 3, said Gary Shull, public information officer with the Colby Police Department today.

Researcher says board's ruling on plagiarism will lead to more cheating

PIPER (AP) — Former high school teacher Christine Pelton wasted no time after discovering that nearly a fifth of her biology students had plagiarized their semester projects from the Internet.

She had received her rural Kansas district's backing before when she accused students of cheating, and she expected it again this time after failing all 28 accused sophomores.

Her principal and superintendent agreed: it was plagiarism and the students should get no credit. But after parents complained, the Piper school board ordered her to go easier on the guilty.

Pelton and experts worry that the board's ruling — reflective, they say, of a national decline in integrity after corporate accounting scandals and alleged plagiarism by prominent historians — will prompt more teachers to look

the other way and even more students to cheat.

"This kind of thing is happening every day around the country, where people with integrity are not being backed by their organization," said Michael Josephson, founder and president of the Josephson Institute of Ethics in Marina del Rey, Calif.

Josephson pointed to the Enron bankruptcy scandal, in which an executive whistleblower had warned superiors about potential consequences from the energy trader's dubious partnerships aimed at hiding losses.

Also in recent months, some of the nation's top historians, including best-seller Stephen Ambrose, have been accused of borrowing passages from other authors without proper credit.

Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Joseph Ellis was suspended without pay for a year from

Mount Holyoke College after he lied about serving in Vietnam. Notre Dame University football coach George O'Leary resigned after he falsified his athletic and academic achievements on his resume.

"It's so hard to keep sending the message that character counts, when you have officials saying it doesn't count that much," Josephson said.

In Piper, about 20 miles west of Kansas City, Mo., students got that message loud and clear, Pelton said.

"The students no longer listened to what I had to say," she said. "They knew if they didn't like anything in my classroom from here on out, they can just go to the school board and complain."

Piper High School junior Brandon Schmalz, 17, agreed. "That was bad. She was right, and they were wrong," Schmalz said of the board.

Pelton, 26, resigned days after the board ordered her to give the students partial credit and to decrease the project's value from 50 percent of the final course grade to 30 percent.

Board president Chris McCord did not give a reason for the Dec. 11 decision, which was made behind closed doors in executive session. He denied that it was prompted by parents' complaints.

"If I had known all the publicity that would have come with this, I would still make the same decision," McCord said.

One of the complaining parents was Theresa Woolley. She did not return phone calls from The Associated Press, but told The Kansas City Star that her daughter did not plagiarize. Rather, her daughter was not sure how much she needed to rewrite research material.

But Pelton said the course syllabus, which

she required students to sign, warned of the consequences of cheating and plagiarism.

Rutgers University professor of management Donald McCabe, who has researched academic dishonesty in high schools and colleges, said the board's decision illustrated why many teachers ignore cheating.

"Parents are going to complain to principals and the school board, and teachers feel there's no reason to believe they'll get support," said McCabe, whose study of high school students in 2000-2001 found that 74 percent had cheated or plagiarized during the prior year.

"So this just reinforces that message," McCabe said. "It's going to help convince a lot of teachers that are already leaning in that way."

What's worse, McCabe said, is that tolerance of dishonesty disheartens other students, who compete with cheaters to get into college.

House advances security bill for state workers

By **JOHN MILBURN**

Associated Press Writer

TOPEKA (AP) — House members tentatively approved a bill Wednesday giving state officials greater authority to protect against terrorism.

The bill, approved on voice vote, authorizes the secretary of administration to fingerprint all workers who have unescorted access to the state data center, telecommunications facilities and other security sensitive areas.

Fingerprints would be submitted to the Kansas Bureau of Investigation and the FBI for criminal background checks and verification of identity.

Final action was set for Thursday on the bill, the first legislation from the Special Committee on Kansas Security to make its way through the House. The

committee was formed after Sept. 11 to identify and mitigate potential threats to Kansas' economy, governments and civilian population.

Democrats raised concerns that the measure would give Secretary of Administration Joyce Glasscock broad powers in the name of security.

"She's locked seven of eight doors to the Statehouse.

Under this bill, she could have everyone in the building fingerprinted in the name of security," said Rep. Rick Rehorn, D-Kansas City.

Rep. Joe Shriver, D-Arkansas City, a member of the security committee, did not object to limiting fingerprinting to data and telecommunications workers but said the House Judiciary Committee's addition of "security sen-

sitive areas" was too vague.

House Judiciary Chairman Mike O'Neal, R-Hutchinson, responded that the bill simply codified the KBI's decades-old practice of performing background checks on state employees.

O'Neal said to limit the bill to data and telecommunications would retreat from the existing security practices. Other Republicans agreed.

Also Wednesday, the Senate unanimously passed and sent to the House a measure making it a felony to knowingly expose plants to infectious diseases.

The bill is designed to protect plants, raw agricultural products, processed feed or food products. Advocates of the bill say it puts Kansas in the forefront by protecting the \$34 billion agricul-

ture industry from economic ruin.

A state law enacted last year made it a crime to intentionally infect livestock and spelled out procedures for dealing with a disaster. This year's measure extends the protection to plants.

—Chancellor Robert Hemenway said the University of Kansas faces possible layoffs and larger classes unless the state finds new revenue.

—A bill was introduced in the Senate Commerce Committee to extend bonding and tax financing authority to Johnson County to redevelop the former Sunflower Army Ammunition Plant near DeSoto.

—The House Federal and State Affairs Committee heard testimony from an Indiana professor supporting a ban on human embryonic cloning.

Four Wamego firemen quit after recent DUI incident

WAMEGO (AP) — The Wamego Fire Department is looking to neighboring fire districts for help after the resignations of four volunteer firefighters allegedly involved in a drunken driving incident.

The resignations have left the department short-handed. The four volunteers reportedly were aboard a city fire truck when it was pulled over after leaving the Wamego Country Club sometime after 10:30 p.m. on Jan. 25. Former fire chief Richard Varnadore was arrested for driving under the influence, authorities said.

Varnadore, Gerald Cole, Gary

Houser and Paul Dekat have since resigned from the fire department. Cole is a Wamego city commissioner. Wamego Fire Chief Phil Stultz has expressed concern about how the incident will affect the department's ability to respond to fires on weekdays.

"We only have about six members who are available during the day through the week, and this involved four of them," he said. Stultz said he has been in contact with volunteer departments in St. Marys, Louisville, St. George, Belvue and Blue Township about providing mutual aid under the circumstances.

Pasta dinner Sunday

The Junior United Methodist Youth Group is sponsoring a pasta dinner at Colby United Methodist Church, 950 S. Franklin, on Sunday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Free will donations will be accepted with a portion of the proceeds going to the Mission and Ministry fund. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Hospital limiting visitors

Citizens Medical Center is limiting the amount of visitors to the hospital until further notice, officials said earlier this week. The restrictions were prompted because of the increase in illness and high patient census at the facility. Visitors are encouraged to telephone friends in the hospital rather than make personal visits. Hospital officials said they are further requesting that only close family members visit patients.

Briefly

Weather: Snow out, wind in

Wind will be the big problem for the Colby region Friday night and into Saturday morning, advises the National Weather Service at Goodland. The weather service was not quite ready to predict wind speeds as the system is forming and is still some 36 hours removed from this area. Tonight, partly cloudy, lows in the upper 20s and west winds 10-20 mph. Friday, partly cloudy, highs in the mid-60s and west winds 10-20 mph. Friday night, partly cloudy, lows in the lower 20s and windy conditions. Saturday, partly cloudy, highs in the upper 30s and very windy early. Sunday, clear, lows in the middle 20s and highs in the middle 50s. Colby's high Wednesday was 52 and the overnight low this morning was 19. Precipitation remains at 0.19 inches and snowfall at 2.5 inches for the month. The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth is averaging 32 degrees. The records for Feb. 7: 72 in 1943 and —20 in 1895. *(The daily temperatures,*

precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

Scholarship opportunities noted

Colby High School recently released new scholarship opportunities to include humanities and fine arts auditions and interviews on Friday and Saturday, March 8 and 9. Other scholarship offerings that could be of interest are: Conclave 2002 Music Industry, Conclave 2002 Radio Industry, Kansas University Creative and Performing Arts, Northwest Kansas Corn Growers, Kansas University Freshman Summer Institute, Pete Henry Foundation, Kansas Association of Sanitariums, High Plains Phi Delta Kappa, T.O. Haas Tire FFA College, and Blue Cross Blue Shield Healthy Competition contest. In addition, high school juniors interested in learning more about law enforcement officers might want to consider the Annual Ca-

det Law Enforcement Academy planned for June 9-14. To inquire about any of these scholarships, call Joni Clark-Leiker at 465-5300.

String recital scheduled

A string recital for Jan Wolf's students will be held at 4 p.m. Sunday in the fellowship hall of the United Methodist Church in Colby. All are welcome to attend.

Rotary putting the soup on

The Colby Rotary Club is sponsoring a soup supper from 5 to 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, Feb. 12, at the Colby Community Building. The supper is in conjunction with the Colby-Goodland basketball game and for many years has been one of the club's larger fund-raising events. The cost for adults is \$4, children (12 and under) \$2 with all proceeds going to help community projects.

