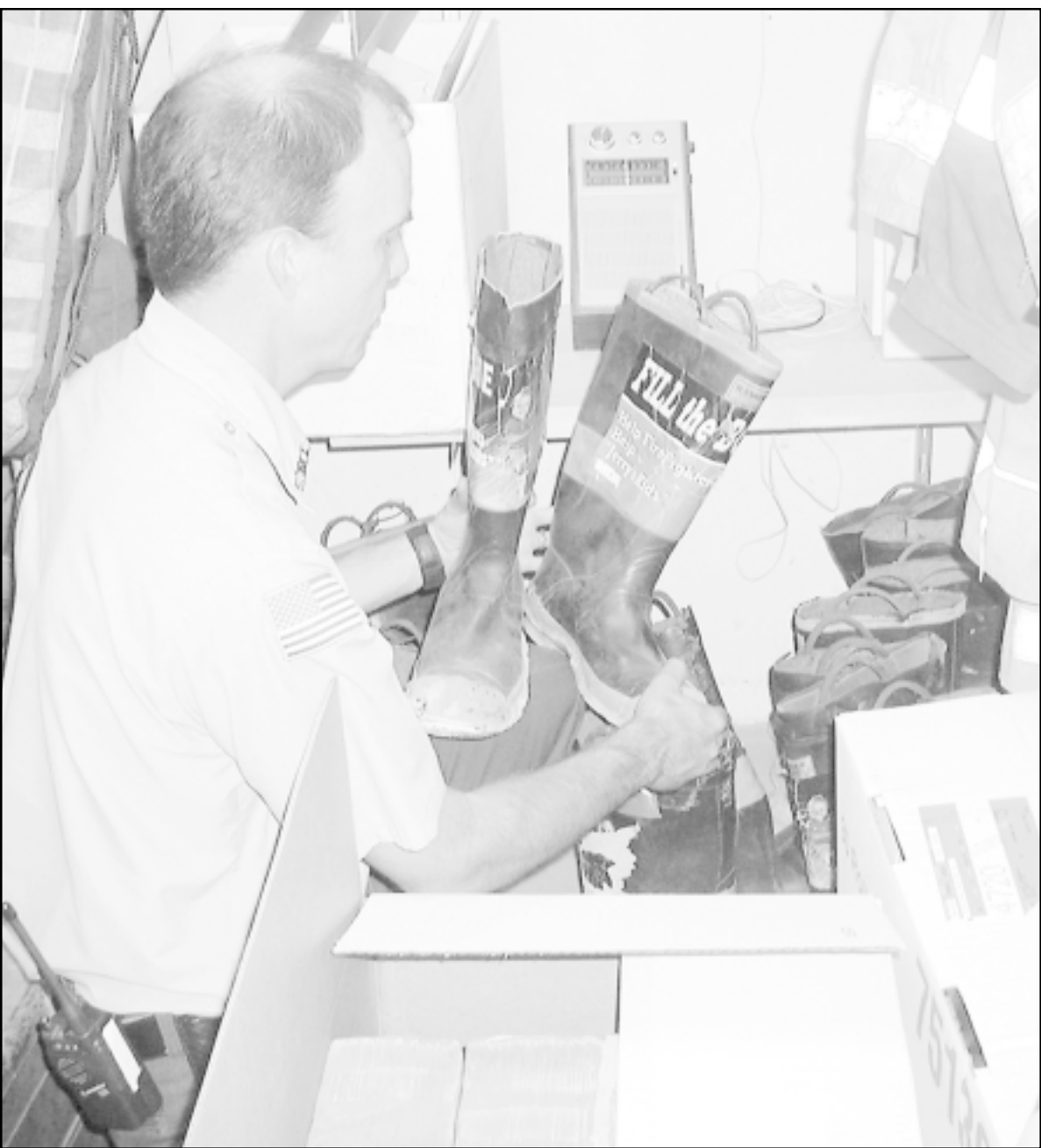




COLBY FREE PRESS

Here come the boots



MICHELLE L. HAWKINS/Colby Free Press

Sean Hankin, Colby firefighter, was busy this week getting ready for Saturday's annual drive, "Fill the Boot," to assist the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Firefighters will be at Dillons, Wal-Mart and on the corner of Fourth and Franklin between 9 a.m. and noon during this year's drive. For more than 20 years, Colby firefighters have volunteered to collect money for the Arc Valley Chapter of Muscular Dystrophy. "All the money collected during the Colby drive goes to help buy wheelchairs or send children to summer camps or furthering research in central and western Kansas," said Rick Dickman, assistant fire chief and coordinator of the drive. Currently, he said, the Arc Valley Chapter helps more than 530 families.

Routine stop yields \$155,000 in cash

By MICHELLE L. HAWKINS
Colby Free Press

Another routine traffic stop in Thomas County on Tuesday afternoon proved to be a big payoff. Thomas County Sheriff Tom Jones said that approximately \$155,000 in cash and a "fair" amount of narcotics were recovered from the vehicle driven by Carl Raymond Crabb Jr.

Crabb, 54, of Seattle, Wash., was driving westbound on I-70 when he was pulled over by a Thomas County deputy sheriff near mile-marker 54.

While talking with Crabb, the officer

had reasonable suspicion of illegal activity, said Jones. Crabb granted the officer's request to search the vehicle.

Upon searching the trunk, the officer came across several pieces of luggage. One bag, which was located in the back of the trunk, was locked.

Crabb, Jones said, denied the luggage was his, and said he was unaware of its contents.

The vehicle was towed to the Law Enforcement Center where it was searched by K-9. Once the dog alerted on the locked bag, officers opened it to find a large sum of cash and hashish.

Jones said the money was counted by Donita Applebury, county treasurer, and members of a local bank. Crabb did exercise his right to witness the counting and tabulation process of the approximately \$155,000.

The money was turned over to the county treasurer's offices and then transported to a local bank.

Crabb was arrested and charged with possession of marijuana or hashish with the intent to distribute. He is currently in the Thomas County Jail pending the formal filing with the county attorney's office of criminal charges.

County takes TV spotlight

By PATTY DECKER
Free Press Editor

Ever wonder where Showalter Cemetery is located or what the Stitch and Chatter Club does?

It was surprising to learn how few Thomas Countians actually know much about these things.

For those curious to learn more, officials at Smoky Hills Public Television are encouraging everyone to watch the first episode in a new series featuring Thomas County. The inaugural broadcast of "Our Town/A Day in Thomas County," airs at 7 p.m., Saturday, on cable channel 3, said Kristy Nyp, director of communications and marketing for the television station.

Helping make this first episode possible, Nyp and other public television staff thanked the 20 volunteers from Colby and surrounding towns, who did the filming, with a special preview presentation last week.

"Everyone did a wonderful job of finding and capturing many of those special events that make this community unique," she said.

With the broadcast only days away and not wanting to give away too much, the following tidbits are being offered for curious television viewers in the area. For example, some Thomas County television watchers might enjoy the colorful cameo appearances starring local celebrities such as Thomas County Sheriff Tom Jones, Jeff Hartwell, Shirley Bourquin, Marci Gilbert, the Jeff Wagoner family, Lula Theiler or Sada Munkres — and that's naming only a few people featured.

History buffs might be inclined to pay closer attention to the early beginnings of Colby and Thomas County, complete with background information on how each got their name.

Many public entities, longtime, larger or unique businesses are also

highlighted. One portion of the program focuses on agriculture, which is the backbone and heart of Thomas County. Local celebrities in this segment will include farmers, bank officials, implement dealers and more.

"The program will share all of these stories in a rather non-traditional way because they are being produced by community residents who know them best," Nyp said.

Everyone involved in the production is hoping that viewers will "tune in" Saturday night and watch this debut production.

Sponsors for "A Day in Thomas County," included the Colby Free Press, Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce, KXXX/KQLS, Colby Community College, F&M Bank of Colby, Commercial Sign, Farm Bureau Financial Services, along with partial funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

State employees being shorted in pension system, lawmakers told

TOPEKA (AP) — The long-term health of the pension fund for state government workers and public school employees is in jeopardy, legislators were told Wednesday.

Officials from the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System said the state is not contributing enough money to KPERS to fully finance all benefits due retirees and current participants over the next 30 years. KPERS officials said the underfunding will worsen if nothing is done.

A report from KPERS to the Joint Commit-

tee on Pensions, Investments and Benefits said it would cost \$101.2 million to bring the state's contribution to KPERS up in one year to where it needs to be to preserve the retirement system's long-term financial health.

It would then take an additional \$33 million the following year, with annual increases of varying sizes after that.

A big problem for KPERS is the volatility of financial markets. Investment losses have almost wiped out any gains made during the past three years, according to KPERS figures.

KPERS officials stressed that retirees are not in danger of seeing their existing benefits reduced for years. The issue is making sure the pension fund has enough money in the future.

"This obviously deals with big numbers," said Senate President Dave Kerr, R-Hutchinson, the committee's chairman. "It's a very real problem, and it's going to have to be dealt with immediately in the years ahead."

The gap between what the pension system needs to raise over the next 30 years and what it would expect to raise under current Kansas

law is about \$1.8 billion. KPERS said the figure will exceed \$4 billion by 2011 if nothing is done.

The market value of the pension system's assets was \$8.6 billion on June 30.

"We just need to increase the state's contribution," said Rep. Vaughn Flora, D-Topeka, another committee member.

The goal of legislators and KPERS officials is for contributions from KPERS participants, state and local governments, and investment earnings to provide enough money to cover all

benefits due for the next three decades.

In 2001, state and local governments contributed about \$206 million to the pension system, most of it for the retirement plan for state and school employees. The state's contribution is equal to 4.38 percent of its payroll.

Under a 1993 law, the state's contribution was to increase up to 0.2 percentage points per year until it was high enough to guarantee the fund's long-term health. But KPERS officials told the committee that the contribution should have been increasing more.

WeatherWatch Colby-Oakley areas

The numbers
Wednesday's high, 93
Low this morning, 65
Year ago today, 89 and 60
Temperature at 11:15 a.m. today, 81

Colby's 24-hour rainfall, 0.00
Oakley's 24-hour rainfall, 0.15
Soil temp at the 4-inch depth, 79
Records for Aug. 22, 106 in 1938 and 39 in 1904 (August's coolest ever)

The forecast
Today, look for temperatures to climb near 90. Tonight, partly cloudy, a 40 percent chance for showers or thunderstorms, lows 60-65, east winds near 10 mph. Friday, partly sunny, a 30 percent chance for showers or thunderstorms, highs in the mid-80s, southeast winds 10-15 mph. Friday night, mostly cloudy, a 50 percent chance for showers or thunderstorms, lows near 60. Saturday, cloudy, a 30 percent chance for thunderstorms, highs in the lower 80s. (Temperatures and precipitation are from the Northwest Research-Extension Center, unless otherwise noted. Forecast is from the National Weather Service.)

Colby Water Usage
• Aug. 21 = 2.890 million gallons
Levels of Concern
Watch Level 3.5 million gallons
Warning Level 4.0 million gallons
Emergency Level 4.5 million gallons
(Three consecutive days)

'Everything looks great,' says Colby superintendent

By DARREL PATTILLO
Colby Free Press

The Colby School Board took a tour of the district's facilities as part of Monday night's meeting.

"The staff has the grounds looking very good," Superintendent Kirk Nielsen said. Nielsen, along with board members John Cranston, Gerry Fulwider, Tracy Rogers, Cathy Gordon, Wilburn Holloway and Stan Molstad (board member Bill Miller was absent), toured the grade school,

middle school, high school, and bus barn, as well as the vo-ag building.

Nielsen also showed the board the computer lab at the middle school, which is currently upgrading its computers.

"These aren't brand new computers," Nielsen said.

"But they are more powerful than the old ones, and the kids will be able to do more with them."

"The tour went well," Nielsen said. "Everything looks great."



DARREL PATTILLO/Colby Free Press

Members of the Colby School Board, along with teachers and principals, took a tour of the school facilities Monday evening. Pictured left to right are board members Gerry Fulwider, Tracy Rogers, high school principal Don Barta (behind Rogers), head of maintenance Gary Barton, Bernice Skiles, Pat Turrell, grade school principal Terrell Harrison, high school assistant principal Jeff Quenzer, board member John Cranston, middle school principal Robb Ross, Superintendent Kirk Nielsen, and board president Stan Molstad.

Briefly

Leadership nominations due Friday

Applications are now being accepted for the 2002-03 Leadership Thomas County program, said Leilani Thomas, one of the coordinators. The purpose of the program is to develop future leaders for the county and application requests can be made by businesses, civic clubs, organizations or by individuals, she said. Completed forms must be returned to the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce by 5 p.m., Friday, Aug. 23. For questions, call (785) 462-3401 or stop by the office at 350 S. Range, Suite 10 in Colby.

Eagle yearbooks arrive

The Colby High School yearbooks for the 2001-02 school year are now available and can be picked up tonight at the high school in room 502 from 7 to 8 p.m., said Donna Henry, journalism teacher and yearbook advisor.

Actors sought for fall production

The Colby Community College drama department will be conducting auditions for the fall production of *Scapino!* by Frank Dunlop and Jim Dale on Wednesday and Thursday, Sept. 4-5.

Auditions will begin at 7 p.m. in the Cultural Arts Center on the Colby College campus. The auditions are open to students and the community, said Walter Yuhre, drama instructor, and will consist of reading from the script. "Actors who have prepared monologues are invited to perform their audition pieces," he said. The play will feature roles for both men and women between the ages of 18 to 65 with performance dates of Nov. 7, 8 and 9. Those selected from the audition will begin rehearsing on Tuesday, Sept. 17. For questions or information, call Yuhre at 462-4783.

Meeting planned to recruit EMTs

The Thomas County Emergency Medical Services will have an informational meeting on Thursday, Aug. 29, beginning at 7 p.m. for the purpose of recruiting interested people in becoming emergency medical technicians. Everyone is invited to attend. For questions or information, call Kathi Wright, director, at 462-4585.

Democrats invited to meeting

The Thomas County Democratic Central Committee will meet on Thursday, Aug. 29 at 7:30 p.m. in the Thomas County Office Complex. All interested Democrats are invited to attend. This is

the re-organization meeting and plans for fund raising will be discussed, said Rosalie Seemann, a coordinator of the event.

'Meet the Teachers' event Sunday

The Parent-Teacher Student Association in Colby is sponsoring a "Meet the New Teachers" in the Colby Public School system. The event is planned from 3 to 5 p.m., Sunday, Aug. 25, at the Comfort Inn Convention Center. Organizers are encouraging everyone to stop by for a "come and go" casual and relaxed atmosphere in and effort to show support for public schools. For questions, call Toni McAdams, president of the association, 462-6248 or Connie Davis, secretary-treasurer, at 462-7188.

Farm meeting planned next week

A farm program training and informational meeting will be held on Monday, Aug. 26, at 1 p.m. and again at 7 p.m. in the Cultural Arts Center on the Colby Community College campus. The meeting is sponsored by the Thomas County Farm Service Agency and everyone is invited to attend one of the sessions, coordinators said. For questions, call 462-7671.

