



COLBY FREE PRESS

Contains drastic changes

Colby City Council approves health insurance bid for employees

By **PATTY DECKER**

Free Press Editor

The Colby City Council held its final meeting of the year today approving a health insurance bid for its employees, but with some drastic changes from the previous year.

The council stayed with the same insurance company, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas, Inc., based in Topeka. However, the benefit package changed, along with the type of tiered system, said Carolyn Armstrong, city manager.

The city's total cost for this benefit

is approximately \$285,296 with about 75 full-time employees paying an additional \$122,271, depending on their particular plan.

In previous years, Armstrong said, there were only two types of plans available — either single or family. With the new tiered system, employees can choose from either a single, single and spouse, single and children or full family plan.

The benefit cost to the city will also be less than last year's budgeted amount by \$25,000. The major changes, Armstrong said, are in cover-

age. For example, the new plan will not cover office visit co-pay, and deductibles are now at \$500 for an individual and \$1,000 for the family with a 50 percent co-insurance pay.

As for prescription drug cards, there will be a \$100 single deductible and \$200 family deductible with a 50 percent reimbursement rather than 80 percent.

The city's share on the insurance benefit will remain at 70 percent regardless of which tier an employee chooses. The insurance plan also does not include a dental plan.

There were four different insurance plans the council reviewed before choosing to stay with Blue Cross and Blue Shield.

One of those companies, Armstrong said, was Corporate Benefit Services of America, which is an administrator agency based in Denver. According to the council's insurance committee, which reviewed all the plans, Corporate Benefit offered a partially self-funded plan, which was not something the council wanted to do, and in its second bid, the company only offered two tiers of coverage and would not under-

write the different tiers as in the case of the Blue Cross insurance plan.

A third bid was from Preferred Health of Wichita, which was also rejected by the committee.

Along with approving health insurance coverage, the council also directed Armstrong to clarify a couple of items in a contract with Kyle Railroad and the State of Kansas regarding the viaduct project for the spring of 2003.

"The agreement is primarily with the state and the railroad," Armstrong said, "but the city is also asked to sign off on this to allow the state to do the work."

The items that needed clarification, she said, included wording that said the city would maintain highway improvements and the railroad would be responsible for signal crossings and other railroad maintenance.

Bids for the viaduct project itself are planned for February or possibly March of 2003, she said.

At the same time the viaduct project begins, the city will also be reworking the intersections of Fourth and Franklin and Fourth and Range Avenues, along with work north on Range Ave. from Sixth St. to the viaduct.

Budget headaches top story

By **The Associated Press**

Here is a list of the top 10 stories in Kansas for 2002, as voted by Associated Press member newspapers and broadcasters.

1. Legislators approve \$252 million in new taxes, which proves to be not enough to keep the fiscal 2003 state budget balanced. In August, Gov. Bill Graves cuts \$41 million from the \$4.4 billion budget — just to keep the books at zero. On Nov. 26, Graves announces \$78 million in more cuts, plus a road map for closing the rest of the gap.

2. Democrat Kathleen Sebelius defeats conservative Republican Tim Shallenburger in the most expensive campaign in Kansas history.

3. The rescue of Gracia Burnham of Wichita in the Philippines, an operation in which her husband, Martin, was killed.

4. The Carr brothers receive death sentences for the killings of five people during a crime spree two years ago in a highly publicized, 6-week trial.

5. Despite tame unemployment and low interest rates, the Kansas economy struggles to show signs of growth in 2002. Layoffs are announced at Sprint in Overland Park and throughout the aviation industry in Wichita.

6. Insurance Commissioner Kathleen Sebelius rejects the proposed insurance merger of Blue Cross-Blue Shield of Kansas with Anthem Insurance Companies of Indiana.

7. (tie) Westar's failed merger, tumbling stock price, an indicted CEO and a directive by the Kansas Corporation Commission all add up to a tumultuous year for the state's largest electric utility.

7. The Legislature struggles with redrawing congressional districts, finally settling on a plan that puts Junction City and Fort Riley in different districts and splits the city of Lawrence down the middle.

9. A lingering drought causes heavy losses in the state's wheat crop, followed by a dismal harvest of spring-planted crops like sorghum, corn and soybeans.

10. (tie) The Legislature enacts a new law creating a "no call" list so that consumers can avoid many telemarketing calls.

10. More than two years after the discovery of two women's bodies stuffed in barrels on his Linn County property, John E. Robinson Sr. is convicted of two counts of capital murder and is sentenced to death.

'Here I am'



Daniel Tucker, 6, of LaJunta, Colo. was on the slide at Fike Park this morning. Daniel, his brother Justin, and mom Michelle Ford were in Colby spending the holidays with Michelle's parents, Dave and Peggy Ford.

DARREL PATTILLO/Colby Free Press

Three U.S. missionaries killed in Yemen

JIBLA, Yemen (AP) — A suspected Muslim extremist shot and killed three American missionaries and seriously wounded a fourth at a Southern Baptist hospital in southern Yemen, security officials said.

The Southern Baptist International Mission Board identified the dead as hospital director William E. Koehn, 60, of Arlington, Texas who had planned to retire next year after 28 years of service; purchasing agent Kathleen A. Gariety, 53, of Wauwatosa, Wis.; and Dr. Martha C. Myers, 57, of Montgomery, Ala. The statement identified the pharmacist as Donald W. Caswell, 49, of Levelland, Texas.

The three dead were shot in the head,

Yemeni security officials said. Caswell was shot in the abdomen and hospital officials said he was in critical condition and struggling for his life. The hospital was cordoned off as forensic experts gathered evidence.

The suspected attacker, a Yemeni, was later arrested, the officials said on condition of anonymity.

Americans have been repeatedly warned to take care in Yemen, a largely lawless country known as a haven for Muslim militants and the ancestral homeland of al-Qaida chief Osama bin Laden. The country has been a key front in the U.S.-led war on terrorism.

Officials said the gunman entered the complex of Jibla Baptist Hospital

in the town of Jibla hiding a semiautomatic rifle under his jacket to make it resemble a child. He then opened fire, killing three people instantly.

A statement from the Richmond, Virginia-based Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board, which runs the hospital, said the three were holding a morning meeting.

The gunman then headed to the hospital's pharmacy and opened fire, wounding the pharmacist, the Yemeni officials said. Jibla is in Ibb province, 125 miles south of the capital, San'a.

"We are devastated by this news," International Mission Board spokesman Larry Cox was quoted in the statement as saying.

Health care jobs Available here through program

By **PATTY DECKER**

Free Press Editor

Citizens Medical Center, Inc., is once again participating in a loan program for students interested in a health care career, said Jeanene Brown, director of education at the facility.

The scholarship loan program, which is known as Health Careers Foundation, encourages students to consider a career in health care by providing these loans.

"There is a strong emphasis placed on candidate selection for non-traditional students, older students, single parents and underemployed individuals as they reach for their dream of a career in health care," Brown said.

Fields of study that are eligible for a scholarship loan, she said, include di-

etetics, medical records/transcription, medical technology, nursing, occupational therapy, pharmacy, physical therapy, radiology, respiratory therapy and speech therapy.

Citizens Medical Center participates in the program by providing awareness about the scholarships, supplying information and applications to those interested and by signing counter signatures on the application.

Awards generally consist of one-half scholarship and one-half loan, she said.

The application deadline for the 2003-04 school year is April 1, 2003 with applications needing to be obtained from Citizens Medical Center by March 28.

For more information, call Brown at (785) 462-4850.

Sheriff of Wallace County doubles the size of his force

SHARON SPRINGS (AP) — Sheriff Larry Townsend is so serious about tackling the drug problem in Wallace County that he doubled the size of his force.

"It was pretty simple," Townsend said. "If this county wants to control drugs and drug traffic, it's more than a one-man job."

So Townsend, the county's only full-time law enforcer, made it two. He hired one of his on-call deputies to serve as undersheriff, a full-time position that begins Wednesday.

The two will patrol the county's 970

square miles, plus provide the only full-time law enforcement — other than a night officer who patrols Sharon Springs — in the county's three towns.

"In some ways, we look like we are 50 years behind," Townsend said. "I knew we had a drug problem here, but once I got into it, it was bigger than I thought. Just because this is Wallace County doesn't mean we don't have drugs."

In addition to the new undersheriff, Townsend has five deputies and a dispatcher whom he said does the work of three people.

Town puts in its own gas pump

WETMORE (AP) — Some cities have their own convention center. Plenty of others have golf courses or community theaters or swimming pools.

Wetmore has a city-owned gas pump.

"It's not unusual for a community of any size to arrange for the needs of its citizens," said Mayor Bob Carson. When the city couldn't convince a private enterprise to build a gas station in

the tiny northern Kansas town of 362, "We decided to put it up ourselves," Carson said of the aptly named "City Pump."

Initially, the venture didn't sit well with some state and industry officials who worried that towns might start competing with individuals on other endeavors.

The city fought and won a case in the Kansas Supreme Court to keep its gas station in operation.

No Free Press on Wednesday

The Colby Free Press will be taking the New Year's Day holiday off, thus no paper will be delivered to your doorstep. "We'll be back at work on Thursday, Jan. 2 at 8 a.m.," said Tom (TD) Dreiling, publisher. "We wish all of you a Happy 2003," he said. Dreiling also said that the newspaper will be operating on its normal schedule on Tuesday, New Year's Eve.

WeatherWatch Colby-Oakley area

The numbers

Sunday's high, 58
Low this morning, 24
Year ago today, 30 & 8
Temperature at 10:45 today, 44
Soil temperature, 32
Records for Dec. 30: 73 in 1921, -19 in 1911

The forecast

Tonight, clear, lows in the lower 20s, southwest winds up to 10 mph. Tuesday, partly sunny, highs in the mid 50s, south winds up to 15 mph. Tuesday night, partly cloudy, lows in the mid 20s. New Year's Day, sunny early then becoming mostly cloudy, breezy, highs in the upper 40s.

Briefly

Feed to benefit amusement group

The Colby Knights of Columbus will hold a pancake feed in the basement of Sacred Heart Church on Saturday from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. All proceeds will go to the Thomas County Amusement Association. The public's support is appreciated.

Commissioners to meet Tuesday

The Thomas County Commissioners will meet Tuesday at 9 a.m. at the courthouse to discuss budget amendments in the general fund associated with roads and bridges and East Hale Township. In addition, Jon Starns will meet with the commissioners to talk about the Kingery Township road issue. For questions, call the county clerk at 462-4500.

Treasurer's office closed Tuesday

The Thomas County Treasurer's office will be closed Tuesday, Dec. 31, so employees can do end-of-the-year inventory and

auditing of motor vehicle records, said Donita Applebury, treasurer. Although that office will be closed, those who need to conduct business are encouraged to do so no later than noon, she said. In addition, the Clerk of the District Court's office will be closing Tuesday at noon to the public in order to complete their end-of-the-year books. All other offices in the courthouse; however, will be open normal business hours.

Landfill to close Wednesday

The Thomas County landfill will be closed Wednesday Jan. 1 for the New Year's Day holiday, said Larry Jumper, supervisor.

No trash pick up on Wednesday

The City of Colby sanitation department will not be operating on Wednesday due to the New Year's Day holiday, said Gerry Bieker, director of public works. For those whose normal trash day is Wednesday, it will be picked up on Thursday, along with the regular Thursday route, he said. For questions, call 462-4420.

Senior Center to close Jan. 1

The Senior Progress Center, located at 165 Fike Park in Colby, will be closed on New Year's Day. There will be no meal delivery, and the transportation van will not run. The center will reopen on Thursday.

Food bank schedule noted

The Genesis Food Bank will not be open on Wednesday, New Year's Day. The food bank will be open its regular hours on Wednesday, Jan. 8, from 10 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m., said Rosalie Seemann, president of Genesis.

CPR class planned in January

The American Red Cross will be sponsoring a CPR Class on Thursday, Jan. 16 at the Colby Community College Student Union. To register or for information, call Mary Smith, Red Cross Chapter manager at 462-7161.

