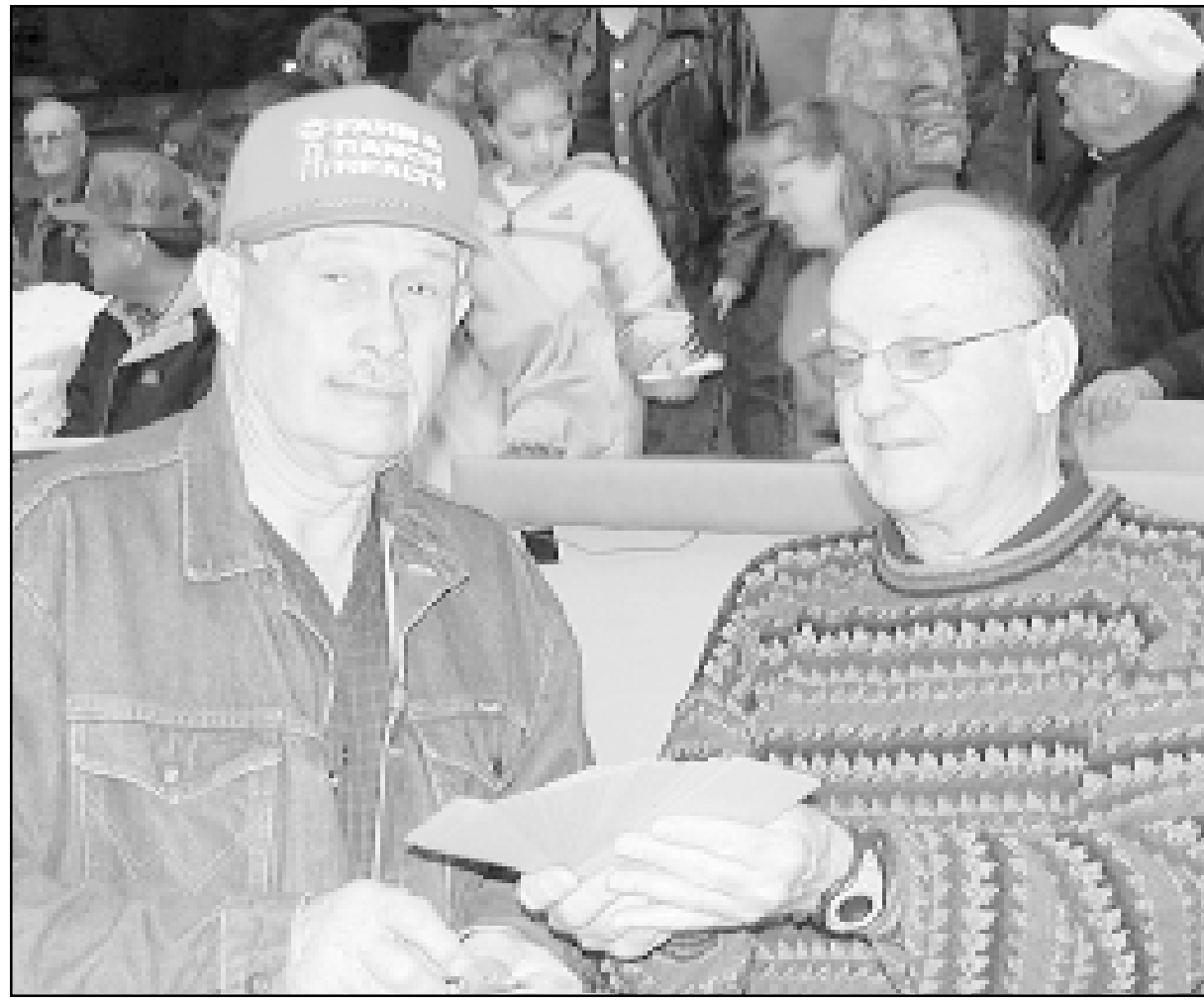




# COLBY FREE PRESS

8 pages

## Here are the Christmas on Us winners!



MICHELLE L. HAWKINS/Colby Free Press

Dan Dennler of Colby (left) accepted the grand prize of \$1,500 in scrip money from Tom (TD) Dreiling, publisher of the Colby Free Press, at Saturday's 'Christmas On Us' drawing which drew more than 500 people to the Colby Community Building. His winning ticket was ob-

tained at Dillons. Pictured at right is Wanda Brown of Colby, who won the second-prize of \$500 in scrip money. Her ticket came from Great Western Tire. Not pictured, Deann Shields, \$50 instant winner. Winners have until March 31, 2003 to spend their winnings.

## Elections for city, school boards near; deadlines to file just weeks away

By **PATTY DECKER**

Free Press Editor

There will be four Colby City Council members whose seats will be up for grabs when elections are held in April of 2003, said Carolyn Armstrong, city manager.

Those councilmen include Ken Bieber, Francis Britton, Darrel Follis and Todd Barrows.

In addition to the four council seats, Colby Mayor Warren Hixson's post will also be on the ballot.

Hixson told the council at its most recent meeting that he did file for re-election earlier this week and reminded them to do so as well if they were interested in serving another four-year term.

There are a total of seven city council members and every two years elections are held on a rotating basis.

The other three members, Eugene Wieland, Herb Sunderman and Mark Beringer, will not be up for re-election until April of 2005.

In addition to the council positions, Tracey Perkins, Thomas County Clerk/Election Officer, said there will also be elections in all three Thomas County school districts and voters in

the Oakley School District will also be voting on board members there.

Willard (Bill) Miller, Wilburn Holloway, Kathy Gordon and Stan Molstad's terms are up in April with the Colby School District.

In the Rexford School District, Mark Miller, Kathy Albers and LeRoy Spreser are up for re-election.

In the Brewster School District, Greg Mills, Joan Jamison, Steven Bear and LeRoy Moore hold seats that are open.

Oakley School District members who will either be seeking another term or running opposed include Jim Keller, Matt Dumler, Tracey Stark and Wade Park.

For those interested in running for the Colby City Council positions, they are asked to call the city office at 462-4410 about eligibility requirements and filing procedures.

In all other races, for those with questions, call Perkins at 462-4500. As of today, none of those holding a school board position have filed to seek re-election.

The deadline to file for the April elections is Tuesday, Jan. 21, 2003, at 12 noon, Perkins said.

## GOP Senators will have new leader by day's end

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican senators are gathering by telephone to elect a new leader they hope will help repair the damage that Trent Lott's racially charged remarks have had on GOP efforts to court minority voters.

Sen. Bill Frist of Tennessee, a White House favorite, emerged last week as the clear choice to replace Lott, who resigned from the leadership under pressure Friday.

Sen. Chuck Hagel, R-Neb., said Frist would be elected — "I suspect unanimously" — by the 51 GOP senators in a conference call this afternoon. Frist would become majority leader when Republicans take control in the new Congress that convenes Jan. 7.

Lott's praise on Dec. 5 of Strom Thurmond's 1948 pro-segregation presidential campaign had put the GOP on the defensive. (See related story on page 3.)

## Sees North Korea as a bigger threat than Saddam Hussein

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Bush administration, alarmed that North Korea is moving to build an atomic bomb, called on Pyongyang to replace U.N. surveillance gear it dismantled at a nuclear reactor and refrain from restarting the facility.

A senior Democratic senator said the United States faced more of a threat from communist North Korea than from Iraq's weapons programs.

"This is a greater danger immediately to U.S. interests at this very moment, in my view, than Saddam Hussein is," said Sen. Joseph Biden, outgoing chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

"If they lift the seals on these canisters (at the plant), they're going to be able to build four to five additional nuclear weapons within months if they begin that reprocessing operation — that's within a year," Biden, D-De., told "Fox News Sunday."

Secretary of State Colin Powell discussed the situation in telephone conversations over the weekend with top officials of China, South Korea, Russia and Japan.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, or IAEA, charged Sunday that

North Korea had broken seals at a spent-fuel facility near the same reactor, a chamber containing some 8,000 irradiated fuel rods.

That action "raises further serious concerns and belies North Korea's announced justification to produce electricity," State Department spokesman Lou Fintor said.

"The 8,000-odd spent fuel rods are of particular concern because they could be reprocessed to recover plutonium for nuclear weapons. They have no relevance for the generation of electricity."

North Korea on Saturday disabled the equipment installed at a reactor in Yongbyon, said officials of IAEA, a U.N. agency.

Fintor urged North Korea to respond to repeated requests by the agency "to consult on arrangements for safeguarding" the facilities at Yongbyon and allow IAEA to replace or restore the seals and cameras.

"A move to restart them would fly in the face of the international consensus that the North Korean regime must fulfill all its commitments and in particular dismantle its covert nuclear weapons program," the spokesman said.

## No surgery at hospital for next six days

By **PATTY DECKER**

Free Press Editor

Effective today and for the next six days, there will not be a physician available to provide general or Caesarean-section surgical coverage at Citizens Medical Center in Colby, hospital officials confirmed today.

"The primary impact will be on C-sections," said Kevan Trenkle, chief executive officer at Citizens Medical Center and acting administrator while Michael Boyles, chief executive officer, is on vacation.

Any of these types of cases, he said, would be transferred to the closest facility, which would probably be in Hays.

The reason the hospital here and in

Goodland is without surgical coverage is because both Dr. Duncan Davis, a general surgeon, and Dr. David Younger, who does Caesarian sections, are both away for the holidays.

"We tried to get a locum (replacement) for about two months to cover surgical procedures for this week, but because it was during the holiday season, we couldn't find anyone," Trenkle said.

Although both Colby clinics agree that this isn't a good situation, opinions on the seven-day absence of a surgeon differed. Dr. LaDonna Regier, who is the hospital's chief of staff and a physician at Colby Medical and Surgical Center, said she believes it is a very bad situation for both obstetric patients and

emergency room patients alike.

"It's unfair to these (obstetric) patients and it definitely places them and anyone with an emergency in jeopardy," she said.

Although Regier does not handle obstetrics, she did say that her associate, Dr. Victor Hildyard, also at Colby Medical and Surgical Center, does handle these types of cases.

Hildyard said his office was notified about the lack of surgical coverage on Friday and he agrees with Regier that this situation is not a good one.

The lack of surgical coverage has already prompted one obstetrics patient to be transferred to Hays this morning, he said. "I will not compromise a patient's care," Hildyard said

today. Conversely, Scott Focke, who is the manager of the Family Center for Health Care, said while this is not the best situation, he disagreed that the situation is dangerous.

"If we have an emergency situation, Dr. Scott Russell (one of the rotating physicians with Docs Who Care) has the education and experience to handle a problem in the event a patient couldn't be transferred out," he said.

There are a lot of other hospital facilities up and down the Interstate without surgical coverage, he said.

While Focke agreed it would be best to have a surgeon available, situations like this come up now and then. Russell was with patients and unavailable for comment today.

## Lawsuits are not uncommon in bad budget years

TOPEKA (AP) — Faced with a looming budget deficit, Gov. Bill Graves ordered cuts in state spending and the withholding of funds to local governments.

But cities and counties have gone to the Kansas Supreme Court to get their money released, and advocates for the disabled are promising to sue to block cuts in social services. The lawsuits are more examples of why the state has so much trouble cutting its spending when faced with an obvious crisis and little desire on the part of citizens for

tax increases.

"In bad years like this one, lawsuits become more of the rule, more of the norm," said Rep. Rocky Nichols of Topeka, the ranking Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee. "The more you cut essential services and programs, the more it's going to motivate constituencies to take action."

The reason Graves acted in November are not hard to understand, though the choices he made may puzzle or frustrate the people affected by his de-

isions. A Sept. 11-damaged economy, already slowing before the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, led to layoffs, particularly in aviation. Kansans have less income and are buying less, causing state revenues to slump.

Volatile financial markets wiped out the investment earnings that caused state tax collections to bulge in the late 1990s, and changes in federal tax laws, designed to stimulate the economy, have cut into states' revenues as well.

Some legislators and political scien-

tists also blame cuts in Kansas taxes enacted during the late 1990s; others, usually conservatives, blame profligate spending during the same period. It's likely a combination of both — the usual spend-down-to-the-last-dime shortsightedness plaguing much of American politics for decades — made the budget problems worse.

Whatever the causes, Graves faced a \$312 million deficit on June 30. The \$4.1 billion general fund is what legislators worry about in a budget that approaches \$10.8 billion.

## Message on door says it all

ELIZABETH, N.J. (AP) — The family of a U.S. soldier killed during a firefight in Afghanistan mourned privately Sunday, with a note taped to their front door saying, "Please respect our privacy." Neighbors described Sgt. Steven Checo as a good son.

The 22-year-old paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne Division was shot Saturday during a gun battle in the east-

ern Afghanistan town of Shkhin.

Checo died during surgery at a field hospital, according to an Army statement from Fort Bragg, N.C., the home of the 82nd Airborne.

Checo was the first U.S. combat death in Afghanistan since August, and the 17th American killed in a hostile situation there since the war on terror began late last year. Checo's uncle,

Gilbert Checo, said relatives were devastated by the death of the young man, who was living his dream of serving in the armed forces.

A Mass was performed for Checo on Sunday morning, said the Rev. Ronald Newland of St. Mary's of the Assumption Roman Catholic Church, where the family attends services.

## Briefly

### Food bank to close for holiday

The Genesis Food Bank will not be open on Wednesday, Dec. 25 and Wednesday, Jan. 1, 2003 due to the holidays. The food bank will be open its regular hours on Wednesday, Jan. 8, 2003, 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.

### Reminder for recyclers

The Thomas County Recycling Center is reminding everyone that Christmas wrapping paper, gift bags and cookie tins can be recycled at the facility, 720 E. College Dr. (located under the City of Colby's blue water tower). Recycling officials are also asking

that people depositing wrapping paper and gift bags, use the chip-board bins and for cookie tins use the tin bins. For questions, call Lynette Koon, (785) 462-7482 (Ext. 39).

### College pool hours noted

The Colby Community College swimming pool will close after today and reopen again on Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 26-29 for open swimming from 4-6 p.m. The pool will then close until further notice beginning on Monday, Dec. 30. For questions, call the college at 462-3984.

### Landfill hours announced

The Thomas County landfill will be closed on Christmas day and the day after, said Larry Jumper, supervisor. The landfill will be open at its regular hours of 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Tuesday and Friday of this week. The landfill will also operate on its regular weekend schedule of 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday. For questions, contact Jumper at 462-8139.

### City announces holiday schedule

The City of Colby sanitation department will not be operating on Tuesday and Wednesday, Dec. 24 and 25 due to the Christmas holiday. For residents whose normal trash day is Tuesday or Wednesday, it will be picked up on Thursday along with the Thursday route, said Gerry Bieker, public works director. For questions call the Public Works Department at 462-4420.

### Wellness Fair drawing near

With the Wellness Fair nearing, businesses are being asked to take part in promoting community health and wellness by covering the cost of the fair registration and or health screenings for their employees who may want to participate. The fair will be held on Saturday, Jan. 18, 2003, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the student union on the Colby Community College campus. Blood work will be done on Saturdays, Jan. 4 and 11. The registration fee is \$5, with the addition fees for some of the tests. For more information about business coupons for the Wellness Fair call Wanda Davis at (785) 462-4797.

### WeatherWatch Colby-Oakley area

**The numbers**  
Sunday's high, 48  
Low this morning, 15  
Year ago today, 38 & 10  
Temperature at 11:30 today, 29  
Soil temperature, 33  
Records for Dec. 23: 74 in 1901, -30 in 1989  
December's all-time low reading was -32 set on the 22nd in 1989

**The forecast**  
Tonight, cloudy, lows in the teens, north winds up to 10 mph.  
Tuesday, cloudy, highs in the mid 30s, winds north up to 10 mph.  
Tuesday night, cloudy, lows near 10 above. Christmas Day, sunny, highs at or near 40.

