



# COLBY FREE PRESS

10 pages

## For local facility, it's an

# A+

By **PATTY DECKER**

Free Press Editor

It could be called an A+ grade card.

Prairie Senior Living Complex in Colby was recently notified by state officials that it received its second "zero deficiency" report for two consecutive years making it among the top 2 percent of facilities in the state to attain such an accomplishment.

Of the 378 facilities across the state, which represents stand-alone nursing homes, long-term care units of hospitals and mental health institutions, only 8 had no deficiencies when surveyed by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, said Wade Baker, administrator of Prairie Senior Living Complex.

"In the purest sense, this was possible only because of a total team effort," he said regarding the zero deficiencies.

"It took all of us at the facility to get this (perfect scores) and it would only take one of us to bring about a deficiency," he said. As for the recognition, Baker, who became the administrator in May of 2002, said it's a "wonderful feeling" that he believes says a lot about the staff.

With more than 150 regulatory standards that a nursing home must meet at all times, state in-

spection teams will evaluate facilities normally on an annual basis and if even one specific regulation is not considered to standard, that facility is issued a deficiency citation, Baker explained.

In helping to understand how this inspection process works, Baker offered some background information provided by Medicare with regard to nursing home inspections.

During the review process, according to the federal information, inspectors will look at facilities to see if each and every resident's needs are met individually, whether or not the nursing home is safely constructed, along with checking on all aspects of the resident's life.

For example, those standards would include such things as safe storage and preparation of food to protecting residents from physical and mental abuse or inadequate care practices.

In the event the citation is serious enough, state inspectors, who are contracted by the federal government's Department of Health and Human Services, could take action against the facility by fining the nursing home, denying payment, assigning a temporary manager or even installing a state monitor.

Should the facility not correct the problems, the federal government's Centers for Medicare and Medicaid



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Wade Baker, administrator at Prairie Senior Living Complex, looked over the new state-of-the-art van, which replaces one of their older vehicles. The newer model allows for two wheel chairs and a total of 10 others for use in getting residents to and from appointments, social activities, or just enjoying a leisurely drive around town, he said.

Services could even terminate its agreement with that specific site, which would result in the nursing home no longer being certified to provide care to Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries. The end result would mean that those beneficiaries in the facility at the time of termination would be transferred to another certified facility.

The success during these surveys, Baker said, has been a direct reflection on the care provided to the residents.

"When recruiting and retaining quality employees," he said, "the result is quality care for the people served at the facility."

Prairie Senior Living Complex is at 90 percent of its capacity. The

facility can accommodate 68 residents in three areas which includes 39 in long-term standard care, 15 dementia patients and 14 residential, which is similar to independent living with some assistance needed from the staff. Baker said that the medical director of the facility is Dr. LaDonna Regier.

## Schools switching to S & T

By **DARREL PATILLO**

Colby Free Press

Another telephone number switch is on the horizon for the Colby Public Schools system. Around the end of April, according to Superintendent Kirk Nielsen, the school district will switch to S & T Communications, which out-bids Southwestern Bell for telephone service to the schools.

"It will be worth the trouble of switching just to have 'Caller ID,' Nielsen said. "It would be nice to be able to tell who's calling the schools. And, people in town will be able to tell when we call them."

The new phone prefix will be 460. That is the only part of the telephone number for each facility in the school district that will be changed, he said.

Colby switched a couple of years ago to the 465 numbers when the digital system was installed. The reason for switching to 460 is cost efficiency, Nielsen said. He informed the board at Monday's school board meeting that while the school district could switch to S & T without switching prefix numbers, there would be a savings if the prefix was changed to 460. Most of the board winced when they recalled the furor that the first switch caused, but agreed with Nielsen that it had been a valuable lesson and the cost savings this time made it worthwhile.

The school district's phone service is funded by E-rate, a federal program which pays about 60 percent of the phone bill for schools and public libraries.

"Because of the switch," said school district technology director Phil DeYoung, "we'll be supporting a local business, and that's something that the school district is always happy to be able to do."

## Bill would help soften fiscal punch

TOPEKA (AP) — A bill approved Thursday by the Senate would allow school districts to incur debts without having the money to pay them off immediately if the state was late in making aid payments.

Supporters said the measure, which went to the House on a 38-0 vote, is a response to the state's budget problems.

The state parcels out \$2.3 billion in aid to its 303 school districts over the year. The state delayed part of its monthly aid payments five times during the seven months from December 2001 to June 2002.

The late payments pinched some school districts because of the state's 1933 Cash Basis Law, enacted during the Great Depression to keep local governments on a sound financial footing. Under that law, a city or school district may incur a debt only if it already has the money to pay it off.

The bill would create an exemption for school districts when the state delays its aid payments.

## Billboard recommendation is approved by council

By **PATTY DECKER**

Free Press Editor

After a brief discussion, the Colby City Council approved the planning commission's recommendation this week to allow a billboard at a height of nearly 55 feet to be positioned in the northwest corner off Interstate 70 for the new truck stop situated near Village Inn and Comfort Inn.

The initial concern centered around zoning regulations in a com-

mercial district that limited the size of a billboard to 30 feet in height.

Carolyn Armstrong, city manager, said the planning commission met on the matter and recommended to the council that the billboard be allowed since the Kansas Department of Transportation had already approved a permit for erecting the sign at the proposed location.

However, she did say that the planning commission will meet

again to further define and clarify a sign versus a billboard with respect to zoning regulations.

In other council business at the Tuesday night meeting:

- Mayor Warren Hixson welcomed members of the Thomas County Leadership Class to the meeting.

- The council approved an amendment to its audit contract with Adams, Brown, Beran and Ball for services. The reason for amend-

ing the contract, according to Armstrong, was due to recent scandals involving big business and by approving this amendment it would simply clarify the scope of the audit.

- An ordinance was approved annexing and rezoning land west of Southwind Plaza. After approving the annexation, the council also agreed to change the zoning from a single family dwelling district to a neighborhood commercial district.

- The council gave its authorization to the vehicle committee to begin gathering proposals for a program vehicle that would be used by Corky Delzeit, director of public power.

- Following a short executive session, the council took no action on a discussion involving real estate and water rights acquisitions.

- An application for a retail cereal malt beverage license at Welk-Um Inn Colby Corners was approved.

## Even Florida is in the deep freeze

By **The Associated Press**

The eastern two-thirds of the nation was at the mercy of a bitterly cold air mass that has endangered Florida's citrus trees, choked northern harbors with ice and left bewildered residents of North Carolina's Outer Banks digging out of up to a foot of snow.

The icy chill was deepening early Friday in the South, where the National Weather Service predicted single-digit temperatures in most locations and an unfamiliar dip below the freezing mark as far south as interior South Florida.

Wind chill warnings and advisories were issued for Thursday night and early Friday in more than two dozen states.

"We couldn't believe how cold it was," said tourist Martin King, who arrived this week in Orlando, Fla., from Bristol, England. "We brought shorts, T-shirt, and I had to go out and buy another coat."

The temperature plunge posed a threat to Florida's \$9.1 billion-a-year citrus crop, most of which is still on the trees. Growers were hurrying to harvest as much of the fruit as possible before it was damaged by cold.

"Time is of the essence in getting fruit to the plant," said Tom Rogers, a Highland City grower who expected to see damage to oranges and grapefruit.

The mercury plummeted in the South on Thursday with the arrival of an arctic air mass that has had the East and Plains shivering for days.

The cold snap brought the North Carolina coast its first significant snowfall in 13 years during the day Thursday. High winds piled the snow in drifts 2 feet deep.

"It's snowing its absolute fanny off," said Bob Eakes, a tackle shop owner in Buxton, N.C., where 40-mph winds created a beachfront blizzard that obliterated views of

the nearby Cape Hatteras Lighthouse. "It's really pretty, if you could see it."

Residents of the area had little luck finding snow shovels.

"We've sold all the snow shovels we had, which was about five," said Nags Head Ace Hardware manager Renee Thompson.

Snow ranging from a dusting to up to 12 inches blanketed the Carolinas, Tennessee and parts of Virginia, closing schools and snarling commutes.

Temperature records were broken for Thursday's date across North Carolina. Record lows included 6 degrees in Asheville, 9 in Charlotte and 17 in Wilmington. More broken records were likely Friday morning.

Forecasters said temperatures wouldn't get well above freezing until Saturday afternoon.

"This is going to be around all weekend," weathermen said.

## Drought meeting set

A drought response meeting will be held in Colby on Thursday, Jan. 30, starting at 9 a.m. at the Quality Inn meeting room, Roger Stockton, Kansas State University agronomist at the Northwest Kansas Research Extension-Center office, said today.

Stockton is encouraging those planning to attend to RSVP by

Tuesday, Jan. 28 so they can plan for food and materials.

However, the \$30 charge, which will cover the meal and materials doesn't need to be paid until the morning of the meeting, he said.

More details will appear next week. For questions, call him at 462-6281.

## New Regents confirmed

TOPEKA (AP) — The Senate on Thursday confirmed the appointments of three new members of the state Board of Regents, including former Senate President Dick Bond.

The three were appointed last year by then-Gov. Bill Graves to the nine-member board, which oversees state universities, community colleges and technical colleges.

By votes on 38-0, the Senate confirmed the appointments of James R. Grier III of Wichita, and Donna Shank of Liberal.

The vote to confirm Bond was 36-0, with Sens. Stan Clark, R-Oakley, and Tim Huelskamp, R-Fowler — who had criticized the appointment last year — both passing when Thursday's vote was taken.

## Briefly

### Rexford soup supper is Saturday

The Rexford Lions Club is sponsoring a soup supper from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., Saturday, at the Rexford Community Hall on Main Street. The menu will include chicken and homemade noodle soup, chili soup, desserts and drinks. The cost will be a free-will donation and all profits will go toward a portable public address system to be used at Golden Plains schools. For questions or other information, call Deann Dible, at (785) 687-4861.

### SHARE ready for distribution

This month's SHARE distribution is scheduled for 9 a.m., Saturday at the Sacred Heart School gymnasium, 1150 W. 6th, Colby. The menu for this month includes sirloin tips, summer sausage, shrimp, ham, chicken breasts, celery, lettuce, onions, potatoes, veggie medley, apples, oranges, grapefruits, pears and pudding. For questions or information, call Anna Fyfe, coordinator, at 462-3733.

### Play auditions are Tuesday

Auditions for the Colby Community College spring production "Angel Street" and the college's touring children's show will be held Tuesday, Jan. 28, at 7 p.m. in the Cultural Arts Center on the campus. Actors interested in "Angel Street" are asked to prepare a one- to two-minute monologue. Those interested in the children's tour will read from the script.

For questions, call Walter Yuhre at 462-3984, ext. 783.

### Cemetery board changes noted

The Colby Cemetery District board meetings will be held on Thursdays instead of Mondays for the next couple of months, said Relda Galli, board member. The meetings, however, will still be held at the Thomas County Courthouse beginning at 2 p.m. Board members should note that Thursday meetings include Jan. 23, Feb. 20, March 20 and April 24.

For questions, call Galli at 462-3670.

### Blood drive is next week

The Thomas County American Red Cross blood drive coordinators report that there will be a blood drive in Colby on Wednesday, Jan. 29, from 7:30 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. at the Comfort Inn and organizers are encouraging your participation. Questions can be directed to either Jackie Stephens at 462-8122 or Jo Frahm at 462-2082.

### Kids to shadow employers

Second through fifth grade students at Colby Grade School will be job shadowing in area businesses on Friday, Jan. 31, from the opening of that business until 10:45 a.m., said Terrell Harrison, principal.

### Extra money is available

The Colby Booster Club is looking for any school group or team interested in earning extra money for their group, to work at its concession stand during home wrestling matches and basketball games, said Shawn Stephens at 462-6929.

## WeatherWatch Colby-Oakley area

**The numbers**  
Thursday's high, 17  
Low this morning, 5

Records for this date: 68 in 1981, -26 in 1894

**The forecast**  
Tonight, cloudy, lows in the mid 20s, southwest winds 5-10 mph. Saturday, partly sunny, highs in the lower 50s, southwest winds 5-10 becoming north late. Saturday night, cloudy, 30 percent chance for snow, lows around 20. Sunday, cloudy, a 20 percent chance for snow in the morning, highs mid 30s. Monday, partly cloudy, highs in the mid 50s.

