



COLBY FREE PRESS

10 pages

The Senator lands in Colby



MICHELLE L. HAWKINS/Colby Free Press

Dr. Mikel Ary, president of Colby Community College and his wife, Dolores were among a group of local and area residents who greeted U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback this morning at the Colby Municipal Airport. Brownback discussed many issues facing Kansas farmers and cattle producers as well as the approaching war with Iraq. From Colby, Brownback was scheduled to visit Hoxie, Quinter, WaKeeney and Hays.

Rally for rain

Saturday's event draws interest from many areas of the country

By TOM (TD) DREILING

Free Press Publisher

The "Northwest Kansas Pray for Rain Rally" is getting requests from other parts of the country also suffering from the drought.

The rally, which spread like wildfire after it was announced in the *Free Press* on Feb. 6, was picked up by numerous news organizations across the state and nation. It even found its way onto the Internet.

The prayer for rain rally will be held Saturday in the 4-H building on the Thomas County Fairgrounds from 3-6 p.m.

"We've had calls from all over the state and the nation," said Zelma Kinkade, who, along with her husband, Leonard, are organizing this first-ever event in northwest Kansas.

"Calls came from Houston, Texas, California, Colorado, and many communities in Kansas," Mrs. Kinkade said this morning.

"A talk show on a Kansas City radio station also called and did a live broadcast with Leonard from the house," she said.

"Many callers are asking us to

remember their communities, their areas as we ask the Lord to end the drought," Mrs. Kinkade said. "I had prepared a map of northwest Kansas on which those attending can stick a pin to show their locations, but since the calls started coming in from other areas I have obtained a road map for those people from outside northwest Kansas to also pin their communities," she said.

"There are a lot of areas that want us to remember them when we pray for an end to our drought in northwest Kansas," she said.

Mrs. Kinkade said she and Leonard have no idea as what to expect in terms of turnout. "We just don't know. We have no ideas," she said.

She said the gentleman who called from Houston said Texas has been in and out of the drought for years and indicated if his schedule had permitted he would have joined in the rally in northwest Kansas.

"The people who called from Colorado said they get their water supply from the mountain snows and they haven't had that much and are concerned," Mrs. Kinkade said.

The rally will include prayers and scripture readings. "People are welcome to come and go as their time allows," Mr. Kinkade said in an earlier interview.

"We need to break this drought...It affects everyone...If I get 2-3 inches of rain at my place (3 miles southwest of Brewster on the Thomas-Sherman County line) and nobody else gets any rain, only I benefit. The drought continues."

He stressed the need to ask the Lord to break the drought, which, he says, has forced a number of our own farmers and ranchers to be driven from their farms.

"The drought is not just a rural problem, it is also felt in all our towns in northwest Kansas, too," he said.

Kinkade said he got the idea for the prayer rally some months ago while traveling and listening to the radio in Colorado.

"They (the people on the radio) were talking about doing this and that sparked my interest," he said.

"I guess I am the person the Lord selected to carry out the project in northwest Kansas," he said.

Changes in ER coverage draws several hundred to meeting here

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

Changes in emergency room coverage at Citizens Medical Center prompted nearly 300 people to attend Wednesday night's Area Citizens for Health Care meeting.

In addition to hearing from Brian Unruh, a physician assistant at Colby Medical and Surgical Center, on how the emergency room changes could affect delivery of health care, former hospital employees talked about their varying experiences at the facility.

"All we know is that our contract (through Medical Arts, Inc.) was terminated and, beginning Saturday, physician coverage will be contracted with *Docs Who Care*," he said.

Unruh said that all they received was notification the contract was being terminated and everything else he said he learned through newspaper articles, referring to statements made by *Docs Who Care* that the other physicians could apply with them through their contract.

"In my opinion, there are a lot of concerns," he said. "First, the money is going to an Olathe-based group, which is money out of Colby."

There's also a negative impact to the Colby clinic by terminating the contract not only financially, but with respect to patient care.

"Local doctors know most everyone and this has been an important

service to patients," he said, which is unlike new doctors who have no history.

As for making application with *Docs Who Care* for emergency room coverage, Unruh said, it's offensive that local doctors, who have served the area for 29 years, are being asked to contract with an outside firm.

Unruh said he believes the work environment at Citizens Medical Center is hostile, but not because of the medical staff.

When asked if this "hostile" feeling affects patient care, Unruh said even under the difficult circumstances, the nursing staff is "talented and deeply committed" to the patients.

He also confirmed that the doctors at Colby Medical and Surgical Center have hospital privileges in Oakley and Goodland, in the event privileges are denied to any of the doctors by the Colby hospital.

Joan Albers, a Colby resident, said during the meeting that she has no problem with *Docs Who Care* and as with most people attending, she believes it's important everyone has a choice of physicians.

"As I told someone the other day," Albers said, "I don't run down your doctor, so don't run down mine."

Along with Unruh's presentation, there were four former hospital employees who spoke about their experiences with the administration.

Kathi Hapke, who was recently fired, told the group that unless someone has worked at the hospital, they cannot understand what is going on up there.

Jim Mentlick, a maintenance employee and who was also fired, said he was shocked when he learned he had lost his job. He said he was fired for alleged inappropriate behavior. He said he was neither given probation, suspension, counseling or a fine prior to being terminated.

Marlyce Campbell, a respiratory therapist, said she resigned, but there were many incidents that led up to finally leaving the facility.

As a point of clarification, Sandy Hill, a nurse practitioner, was the fourth to speak Wednesday night about her employment at Colby's hospital. She said she was neither forced to leave nor was she fired, but rather left voluntarily to accept another position. In Thursday's article, the wording could lead the reader to believe that she didn't leave voluntarily. Speaking before the group, Hill did say that, "We had a good hospital and it's going down the tubes."

Other former hospital employees at the meeting, but who did not talk, were Joy Griffin and Monique Eaton, both nurses.

John Kern, president of Area Citizens, also reminded those attending to consider writing letters of support to Drs. Victor H. Hildyard, LaDonna Regier and Raymond Ketting during this difficult time.

Boyles clarifies ER change

Following Wednesday night's meeting of the Area Citizens for Health Care, Michael Boyles, chief executive officer at Citizens Medical Center, called the *Free Press* saying he wanted to clarify a particular point with respect to changes in the emergency room beginning Saturday.

"Patients can request a specific doctor," he said, "even if that doctor is not under contract with the hospital."

In that situation, Boyles said, the physician could bill directly. He also said that unless a patient in the emergency room absolutely refuses to allow the on-call

doctor to look at them, emergency room physicians are obligated to make an evaluation; however, even in that situation, if the patient wants another doctor, the billing would be separated out.

For example, if an emergency room doctor did the evaluation, but the patient requested another doctor during that time, the doctor requested would bill that portion.

However, the emergency room call itself would be billed by Citizens Medical Center.

For other questions, call Boyles at 462-7511.

Clinic announces change

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

Colby Medical and Surgical Center is extending its hours of operation beginning Monday in order to provide better accessibility to its patients, said Dr. Raymond Ketting, a board certified pediatrician and one of the three doctors at that clinic.

"Since we will not be able to equally participate in the emergency call rotation with *Docs Who Care* after Saturday," he said, "we as providers at Colby Medical will remain open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday until 10 p.m."

Ketting added that appointments will still only be made for time slots up until 5 p.m. each day, so that the medical staff can attend to the "recently ill" during the evening hours.

Brian Unruh, with Colby Medical and Surgical Center, said during a meeting earlier this week that the doctors were looking into other options following news their contract was terminated effective Saturday.

"We are not going to let the Citizens Medical Center board of trustees and the administration keep us from taking care of our patients," he said today.

Briefly

College schedules special meetings

Colby Community College will be having special meetings on Monday, Feb. 24 and Tuesday, Feb. 25. Both of these meetings will begin at 5 p.m. in the board room of Thomas Hall. Trustees will be listening to presentations by architects for the new wellness center. The meetings are open to the public and college officials are encouraging attendance.

Sacred Heart carnival set

Sacred Heart School's annual carnival begins at 11 a.m. and concludes at 3 p.m., this coming Sunday. The event will feature lunch with bierocks and sloppy Joes, along with games and other prizes. For questions, call 462-2813.

Sacred Heart plans enrollment

Sacred Heart School will be holding kindergarten and pre-school enrollment on Wednesday, March 5, from 9 a.m.-3

p.m. in the school lobby at 1150 W. 6th St. School officials ask that parents or guardians bring a copy of their child's birth certificate, immunization records, social security number, and physical. For questions, call 462-2813.

Kindergarten pre-enrollment near

Kindergarten pre-enrollment for the 2003-04 school year at Colby Grade School is from 7:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Friday, Feb. 28 in the conference room at the school. For questions or what paperwork is necessary, call 465-5100.

Video discussion planned Saturday

The Community Awareness Team is sponsoring a video discussion group beginning at 10 a.m., Saturday, at the Colby Community Building downstairs, said Janet Worthy, coordinator. "This week's film is *Mother/Daughter*," she said, "and it's about a mom and her 16 year-old daughter who trade places for 24 hours." Muffins, juice and coffee will be served

during the video. For questions, call 462-8152.

Childbirth education series to begin

The next Colby Childbirth Education series will start on Thursday, March 6 will subsequent classes scheduled on March 20 and 27, and April 3. They will be held in the Health Science Building on the Colby Community College Campus. More information is available at 462-6845, ask for Tina Schrick.

Sweet Thunder sign-up announced

Sweet Thunder will hold its annual sign-up/informational meeting on Sunday, March 9 in Room 106, Student Union, Colby Community College, at 3 p.m. Players and parents, and others interested, are urged to attend. Call Barb Wieland, Manuel Rubio, Susan Wark, Donna Augustine or Tanya Staats for additional information. Registration forms or additional information is available on their website at www.colbysweetthunder.org.

Fire in night club kills 39

WEST WARWICK, R.I. (AP)—A nightclub erupted into flames during a pyrotechnics display at a rock concert last night, killing at least 39 people and injuring more than 150.

It was feared the toll would climb as firefighters sifted through the charred shell of the building today, said West Warwick Town Manager Wolfgang Bauer.

The fire broke out across the ceiling above the band, and quickly spread over the crowd, filling the building with thick, black smoke. The entire club was consumed.



Snow coming

Tonight...partly cloudy. Lows in the mid 20s. Northwest wind around 15 mph. Saturday...partly sunny. Highs in the lower 50s. West wind 15 mph becoming southeast early in the afternoon. Saturday night...cloudy with a chance of snow. Lows in the upper teens. Chance of snow 50 percent. Sunday...cloudy with a chance of snow. Much colder. Daytime temperatures steady in the upper teens. Chance of snow 50 percent. Sunday night...cloudy with a slight chance of snow. Much colder. Lows 5 to 10 above. Chance of snow 20 percent. Monday...cloudy with a chance of snow. Continued cold. Highs near 20.

The numbers

Thursday's high, 57
Low this morning, 21
Soil temperature, 38
Year ago, 54 and 27
Month's precipitation, 0.26
Month's snowfall, 2 inches
Records, 74 in 1972 and -7 in 1978

