



# COLBY FREE PRESS

## Safety first

*Fire chief reassures residents here following Rhode Island tragedy*

By **PATTY DECKER**

*Free Press Editor*

Can what happened in Rhode Island last week that claimed the lives of 97 people be repeated these thousands of miles away?

Colby fire officials reassured people here that pyrotechnics displays of any type are not used in any Colby businesses or restaurants. A nightclub fire in Warwick (R.I.) which featured pyrotechnics at a concert reduced the building to nothing and left nearly 100 people dead in a matter of minutes.

"We wouldn't allow those types of fireworks," said Bob McLemore, Colby fire chief, "and we make regular inspections to make sure owners are in compliance with all codes."

Fire prevention codes, he said, are put in place to protect people whether in the workplace or at educational facilities, hospitals, day care centers, and anywhere a lot of people would congregate.

There are a lot of things the fire department checks to insure that life safety features are either in working order or maintained, he said.

Those include all exits being clear and that they are unobstructed and marked, emergency lighting is sufficient, all fire alarms, detection and suppression systems are in working order and exits are unlocked when open to the public.

"Another thing that people need to be aware of is their surroundings," McLemore said.

People tend to leave the same way they came in, whether at a restaurant, movie theater, church, courthouse, gymnasium or any other number of public meeting buildings.

In the event of an emergency, most people will try to go out the

same way they went in, which might not be the best way to exit depending on where the fire would break out.

McLemore said he recommends that everyone train themselves to familiarize themselves with a secondary exit and how to get to it.

"If you don't feel safe or comfortable in a building after trying to identify another exit, don't stay," he said.

In addition, both McLemore and Karl McNorton, of the Kansas Fire Marshal's office, encourage everyone to watch out for buildings that house "vulnerable people," like those in nursing homes, the very young, or those sick and injured or incarcerated.

"Agency services are limited," McNorton said today, "and if you find any exits or other infractions at public buildings, please report them to the local authorities or our office."

Should someone notice a problem, McNorton said they need to file a complaint explaining what the concern is, along with providing the address and phone number of the business.

"Complaints are kept confidential," he said, "so it isn't necessary to give your name when writing to us."

In light of the recent nightclub incident in Rhode Island in which 97 people died, state fire officials want to continue to balance safety and security for all Kansans.

"We all need to adhere to fire codes, and public awareness is the key to avoiding tragedy in Kansas," McNorton said.

For questions, call McLemore at (785) 462-4454 or McNorton with the Kansas Fire Marshal's office at (785) 296-3401.

## Eagles leave nest for state tourney

MICHELLE L. HAWKINS/Colby Free Press

(ABOVE) Colby Eagles' head wrestling coach Mitch Beims gave a pep talk at the rally and send-off for the team at school this morning. Beims is taking nine wrestlers to the state tournament at Wichita. (RIGHT) Anita Powell presented her son, Travis, a blanket as he prepared to leave this morning for the tournament. The wrestling moms all provided their sons with blankets featuring an Eagle and their name. Travis finished fourth at the regional tournament last weekend at Goodland in the 112 pound weight division. See story page 6.



## Rejected on 20-20 tally

# Senate vote surprises party leaders

TOPEKA (AP)—Senators have rejected a bill to prevent a change in federal tax laws from costing the state \$51 million a year.

The 20-20 vote Wednesday surprised leaders in both parties. Minority Leader Anthony Hensley, D-Topeka, said he considered a "yes" vote "a no-brainer."

The measure has the support of Gov. Kathleen Sebelius, who saw it as a way to lessen the possibility that she would have to cut spending after legislators adjourn the 2003 session in May.

Unless the bill is revived by the Senatetoday, it will die. But legislators could incorporate its provisions into some other bill.

At issue is President Bush's proposal to eliminate the federal income tax paid by investors on some stock dividends.

Kansas would be affected be-

cause its tax code follows the federal tax code in determining residents' adjusted gross incomes.

The bill says that Kansas will tax dividends to the extent that the federal government does not, starting in 2003.

Many Republicans dislike the bill because it would go against Bush's proposals and because they believe the president's plan is good tax policy.

"This was an anti-Bush bill," said Sen. Robert Tyson, R-Parker.

"If we're going to do a little tax relief on the federal level, why wouldn't it benefit Kansas?"

But 16 of the Senate's 30 Republicans voted for the measure because of the state's projected \$750 million shortfall in the next budget year.

"It's a matter of being at the low point — we think — of a slumping

economy with a budget that is badly out of balance," said Senate President Dave Kerr, R-Hutchinson.

Last year, then-Gov. Bill Graves, a Republican, ordered \$118 million in cuts, about 2.6 percent of the \$4.4 billion in spending financed with general revenues.

He did so to prevent a deficit on June 30, and most of his cuts were endorsed by Sebelius and ratified by legislators this year.

Sebelius' fellow Democrats had an incentive to vote for the bill because it could shield her from having to make tough budget choices on her own later this year.

But six of the Senate's 10 Democrats voted against the measure.

"I'm not sure I understand why," Hensley said.

Sen. Jim Barone, D-Frontenac, who voted against it, said lawmakers should wait to see what Con-

gress enacts as tax policy.

"I think it's premature to begin picking things off one by one," Barone said.

In other action by the Senate body:

— Senators approved a bill giving school districts more flexibility to pay rising utility and property insurance costs.

— The House tentatively approved a bill pre-empting federal orders to save land for prairie dogs should the species be declared endangered.

— Senators approved a bill allowing Kansans to buy specialty license plates supporting public education.

— The Senate approved a bill changing how vacancies in elective offices are filled, one Democrats saw as a Republican attempt to grab power.

## Big Apple's skyline to go out of sight

NEW YORK (AP) — The city intends to fill its vacant skyline with an airy spire that stands taller than any other building in the world and defiantly recalls the year of America's independence with its height of 1,776 feet.

The spire, accompanied by five stark geometrical towers and several smaller cultural buildings, has

been picked as the model for redeveloping the site where the World Trade Center once stood.

Architect Daniel Libeskind's design calls for preserving part of the sunken pit that was the foundation of the original 1,350-foot twin towers, where he imagines space for a museum and a memorial to the nearly 2,800 victims who died there

on Sept. 11, 2001.

Libeskind, whose firm is based in Berlin, has estimated the cost of building his design at \$330 million. Officials have said insurance payments on the twin towers and public money are expected to finance the redevelopment, but the specific funding plan is one of many questions that remain.

## Briefly

### Exhibit closing, another opening

Tonight is the final night to view Danielle Jones' art exhibit at the Cultural Arts Center gallery on the campus of Colby Community College from 7 to 9 p.m., said Kathy Gordon, art instructor. On Sunday, the opening of Diane Frazey Mahanna's art exhibit is featured from 2 to 4 p.m., also in the Cultural Arts Center gallery. For those unable to make the Sunday premiere, Gordon said the exhibit can be seen from 1 to 5 p.m. daily or on weekends by making prior arrangements.

For questions on either of these two exhibits, call Gordon at 462-3984, ext. 310.

### Caregivers group to meet

The Northwest Kansas Area Agency on Aging is sponsoring a support group for caregivers. If you care for someone over the age of 60, you are encouraged to join the group at Colby Community College on March 5 at 7 p.m. in the Stu-

dent Union room 106.

### Commissioners to meet

The Thomas County Commissioners will meet on Friday at 9 a.m. at the courthouse. This will be the end of the month meeting and the public is urged to attend.

### Senior Center feed is Saturday

The Senior Progress Center will hold a pancake and sausage feed on Saturday from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the center. The cost is \$3. Proceeds will go toward the building's upkeep. The public is urged to attend.

### Help available with form filings

Free assistance in filling out the Low Income Energy Assistance Program applications is available to individuals with disabilities until March 31. Free assistance in completing the Homestead Food Sales Tax Returns will be available until

## 'Mister Rogers' is dead

PITTSBURGH (AP) — Fred Rogers, who gently invited millions of children to be his neighbor as host of the public television show "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" for more than 30 years, died of cancer early today. He was 74.

Rogers died at his Pittsburgh home, said family spokesman David Newell, who played Mr. McFeely on the show. Rogers had

been diagnosed with stomach cancer sometime after the holidays, Newell said.

From 1968 to 2000, Rogers, an ordained Presbyterian minister, produced the show at Pittsburgh public television station WQED. The final new episode, which was taped in December 2000, aired in August 2001, though PBS affiliates continued to air back episodes.

## Canadian plan dismissed

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Bush administration on Wednesday dismissed a compromise proposal by Canada to set an end-of-March deadline for Iraq to comply with U.N. disarmament demands.

After Secretary of State Colin Powell conferred by telephone with Foreign Minister Bill Graham, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said the proposal "only procrastinates on a decision we all should be prepared to take." Boucher recalled other governments tried earlier to set a deadline

for Iraq. But he said, in the meantime "we have heard from inspectors again, again and again" that Iraq had not agreed to fully disarm.

Earlier, President Bush offered to Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien "a resolution that he thinks is the way to go," said spokesman Ari Fleischer. "He's confident in the end that his position will be accepted and voted on."

Bush also called Prime Minister Peter Medgyessy of Hungary, a which has supported the U.S. position, to thank him for that backing.

April 15. For information, or to set up an appointment, call (785) 625-6942 or (800) 569-5926.

### 'Great Strides' meeting Monday

The next monthly committee meeting for the Western Kansas "Great Strides" walk-a-thon to benefit the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation will be held Monday at 5:30 p.m. at the Farm Credit Administrative offices, 375 S. Range, Colby. Anyone interested in getting involved should call Doris Reed at (785) 465-7907 or attend the meeting.

### 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.



### Snow — maybe

Tonight...cloudy. Lows in the mid teens. Southeast wind 5 to 10 mph. Friday...cloudy with a chance of snow. Highs in the upper 20s. Light and variable wind. Chance of snow 40 percent. Friday night...mostly cloudy. Lows in the mid teens. Saturday...partly sunny. Highs in the upper 30s. Saturday night...partly cloudy. Lows in the upper teens. Sunday...mostly clear. Highs in the lower 40s.

#### The numbers

Wednesday's high, 32  
Low this morning, 4  
Soil temperature, 31  
Year ago, 40 and -3  
Month's snowfall, 5.3 inches  
Month's precipitation, 0.40  
Records, 77 in 1904 and -10 in 1960

