



COLBY FREE PRESS

10 pages

The author, the book



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Dr. Keith Coplin, an English instructor at Colby Community College, read passages of his new novel, "Crofton's Fire" at a book signing at the college library Tuesday afternoon. The book

was released nationally on Jan. 5. The book is his first novel. Copies of the book are available at the Campus Bookstore in the college student union.

Congressman engages crowd at Colby visit

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

Congressman Jerry Moran spoke to a nice size crowd at the Colby Senior Progress Center Monday afternoon as one of his many stops on his annual "Listening Tour" of the big First District.

Moran gave a quick overview of a few matters before addressing concerns from the audience.

He said mail coming to his Washington, D.C. office is now delayed slightly because it must now go to Ohio to be irradiated to eliminate biological agents such as anthrax before it is sent on to the nation's capital.

He passed around cards with phone, fax and e-mail, where people can also reach him quicker than sending a letter.

Then he went on to outline some of the issues from the last legislative session. For starters, Moran said he was not very happy with the prescription drug bill Congress passed.

"I don't think the bill we passed you're going to appreciate," he said. "I had great concerns about the bill."

He said it won't benefit seniors and could lead to prescription drug benefits being dropped by many insurance carriers.

"We did nothing to reduce the cost of prescription drugs," Moran said, adding their price, along with the cost of health care, needs to be addressed instead.

"There's no wonder in my mind why states supported the plan."

Moran opposed the bill. Another concern is the government's inability to control spending and a rapidly increasing national debt.

"I must be traditional because a national debt still bothers me," Moran said. He said Democrats and Republicans need to work together as Americans in "reversing spending money we don't have."

Government spending has increased 55 percent over the past several years, but things like Sept. 11, 2001, the war on terrorism and homeland security account for some of the increases but not all, he said.

Moran also said prosperity for the region is vital because preserving the way of life here for another generation is important.

The first question he fielded was on the drought.

"The drought was pretty localized," he said.

Urban Congressmen, Moran said, didn't understand the need for drought relief in the farm bill that was passed last session. Moran said they thought the bill was giving farmers everything they needed, but 55 percent of the bill was payments for the Department of Agriculture's nutrition programs and other parts of it were crop insurance. "It doesn't work when there is a multi-year di-



U.S. Congressman Jerry Moran spoke to a full house Monday at the Senior Progress Center in Colby.

saster," he said. Moran also explained that newspapers like *The New York Times* and *Washington Post* make people think that agriculture is doing fine, but that's not the case.

He said the average age of a farmer these days is 58.5 years, which means that there aren't that many new farmers.

Moran said it's his goal to help change that and also work on economic development in his district to help keep farmers going and the communities they live in.

Another issue discussed was the bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or "mad cow" scare.

Moran said the ag department has sent delegates to Japan to discuss opening the beef markets back up.

"These countries are not going to be anxious to open up the markets," he said.

Moran has no concerns about the disease and how quickly the markets and people's perception of the issue depends on what the media shows. "Those are the images we in Kansas can't afford," he said.

He also didn't understand why beef prices fell despite little or no fall in demand.

Moran also briefly touched on the falling dollar and its effect on trade.

He said he is the co-sponsor of a bill to stop China from floating its currency. The bill would add a 40 percent tariff to China's export bill.

"They would worry about a trade war," Moran said. "You have to get into a battle of some kind if you're going to win. Unless we react in some fashion, how is it going to change?"

Moran also received some thanks for the work he's done.

Colby College President Dr. Mikel Ary expressed his appreciation to Moran for his help in securing \$250,000 to help build the school's new wellness center.

While on the subject, Moran said he would like to address the nursing shortage in the region and the community colleges in the area are going to help do something about it.

Welcome Wagon stops after 20 years

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

Anyone wanting to take up the banner to welcome newcomers to Colby should talk to Donna Pflasterer.



D. Pflasterer

Pflasterer was the Welcome Wagon lady in Colby for 20 years but recently decided to quit after becoming less able to

get names because it's gotten harder to do.

"Because of the Privacy Act, I cannot get names," she said, adding federal law made it nearly impossible to get the information she needed.

Plasterer would welcome anyone who wants to take over the business from her, someone with the ingenuity to get names and keep things going.

She said she would like to see it happen.

Welcoming people involves giving them a gift and helping familiarize them with the community.

"I had a basket of gifts from 42 sponsors which was a way to introduce the newcomer to businesses, professionals, or churches," Pflasterer said.

terer said. "I did all three."

She tried to do 5 to 10 welcomes a month and managed to do it through most of last year but it became too difficult to get names.

Plasterer said she succeeded in hitting her goal of welcoming people in 2002.

She didn't have statistics on how many people she welcomed to town over the years but said she welcomed people from all walks of life. One way she used to get names was if her husband saw a U-Haul truck, he'd follow it to see where it was unloaded.

Pflasterer also had a few incidents where cats would hop in her basket, something that happened many times over the years.

She also didn't push the service

on people and if they didn't want contact, she respected that.

"I was proud of my sponsors and they were very loyal," she said. She started out with nine originally and ended with 42.

The Welcome Wagon was originally through a company called Welcome Wagon out of Tennessee but several years ago they decided the welcome business wasn't economically viable and canceled its contracts.

Pflasterer continued on her own three years ago, starting Welcome to Colby.

She said she will miss the welcome business "terribly."

"I'll miss the new people," Pflasterer said. "They were so appreciative."

Official says bar fire could happen here

TOPEKA (AP) — On Feb. 20, 2003, the State Fire Marshal's office received a complaint about a Montgomery County bar that one inspector deemed a "disaster waiting to happen."

The same day, 96 people died when a blaze roared through a packed West Warwick, R.I., nightclub. A similar tragedy could have happened anywhere in Kansas, State Fire Marshal Joe Odle said Tuesday.

"Probably Rhode Island went for a lot of years before something that horrific happened," he said. "But somehow everything came together and it did."

Odle told the Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee there are nightclubs all across Kansas that don't meet building and fire codes, his department can do nothing unless someone complains.

"A lot of clubs in the rural part of Kansas, we don't even know they

are there," he said.

Odle, who was appointed by Gov. Kathleen Sebelius a week after the Rhode Island blaze, said his office doesn't have enough resources in its \$3.5 million budget to inspect all the bars in the state.

The problem is, he said, many counties don't have the resources, either.

"A lot of counties don't have building inspectors, and they have volunteer fire departments where



Warming trend

Colby, Oakley, Hoxie area

Tonight...Clear. Lows in the mid-20s. Southwest winds up to 10 mph. **Thursday...**Partly cloudy. Highs in the lower 60s. South winds up to 10 mph. **Thursday night...**Partly cloudy. Lows in the mid-20s. Southwest winds around 10 mph. **Friday...**Partly cloudy. Highs around 50. North winds 10-15 mph.

The numbers

Tuesday's high, 58
Low this morning, 20
Records for Jan. 14, 68 in 1900 and -15 in 1979
Year ago today, 43 and 17
Month's precipitation, 0.05
Month's snowfall, 1 inch
2003 precipitation to date, trace
Soil temperature, 33

The sources:

The forecast is from the National Weather Service, and other numbers are from the Northwest Research-Extension Center, Colby. A recorded forecast updated throughout the day is available by calling (785) 899-7119.

Briefly

'Great Strides' meeting Sunday

The first meeting for the 2nd Annual Northwest Kansas "Great Strides" walk-a-thon benefiting the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation will be held at 2 p.m., Sunday, at the home of Doris and Craig Reed. Anyone interested in getting involved should call Doris Reed at (785) 465-7907.

Homestead refund work Thursday

Rosalie Seemann will be at Meadowlark Manor in Colby from 10 a.m. until noon and from 1 to 2 p.m., Thursday, to assist with the homestead food sales tax refunds and utility refunds.

She asks that those participating please bring booklets and other needed information. For questions, call (785) 586-2240.

Amusement Association to meet

The Thomas County Amusement Association will meet at 7 p.m., Monday, at the Thomas County Office Complex. With only a little over six months left until the 2004 Thomas County Fair, association members need to continue preparations.

Anyone wanting to offer assistance is encouraged to attend the meeting.

Childbirth classes begin

Colby Childbirth Education has started its January series. The first session was Thursday with three more classes to follow this Thursday, Jan. 22, and Jan. 29 from 7-10 p.m. at Colby Community College. For questions or enrollment, call Amy Hutfles at 460-4344.

Obedience school Tuesday

The Thomas County Trackers 4-H Dog Club will once again be offering obedience training this winter and spring. There will be an orientation meeting Tuesday, at 7 p.m. at the 4-H building. This will be a meeting without dogs and participants will need to bring a copy of their dog's current vaccination records, said Carrie Bredemeier, trainer. There is a nominal fee required and for details on the cost or other information, call (785) 460-3816.

Jaycees sponsoring 'Coats for Kids'

The Colby Jaycees are hosting "Coats for Kids" from 9-

11 a.m. Saturday at the Jaycee Center. Kids who have outgrown a coat or kids needing a coat can come with their parents to pick out a coat or jacket donated by members of the community. Some adult coats are also available. The event is open to the public. For information, call 460-7147.

County fair board to meet

The Thomas County Fair Board will meet at 8 p.m. on Thursday at the Thomas County 4-H Building at the fairgrounds. Items on the agenda include the Extension Agents reports, financial report, bills, committee reports on the buildings and grounds, carnival, parade, demolition derby, races, fair book and advertising.

Also on the agenda are the year-end audit and barbecue bids. The meeting is open to the public.

Heartland Share sign up extended

Heartland Share sign-up extended until Thursday at the State Farm Insurance Office in Colby at 905 E. 4th. Delivery will be at 10:30 a.m. on Jan. 24 at Sacred Heart School gym. There are three ways to sign up this month. For questions, call 460-3579 or 462-3733.

