



COLBY  
**FREE PRESS**

8 pages

**Pulitzer possibility for Coplin**

Dr. Keith Coplin's novel, "Crofton's Fire," has been entered into competition for the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for 2004.



K. Coplin

Neil Nyren, senior vice president and editor in chief at G. P. Putnam and Sons, recently announced that Putnam is sponsoring the novel in the prestigious competition. Putnam released the novel in January.

Coplin has been an English instructor for many years at Colby Community College.

His articles, short stories and poems have earned him several awards. "Crofton's Fire," his first novel, has received very favorable reviews from literary critics.

"Dr. Coplin's nomination for a Pulitzer prize by his publisher is a great testament to his talents," said Colby Community College President Dr. Mikel Ary.

"He has spent lifetime learning and crafting his abilities as a writer. His publisher honors him with this nomination just as Dr. Coplin does the college by being on our staff. I wish him well in the competition."

The Pulitzer Prize was established by New York publishing magnate Joseph Pulitzer in 1904. Previous winners in the fiction category are William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck and Harper Lee.

Asked about his chances of winning, Coplin said, "'Crofton's Fire' is a good book.

"I've got as good a chance as anyone else."

"Crofton's Fire" is available in the Campus Bookstore located in the college's Student Union.

The bookstore is open Monday-Friday from 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

**Summer's over:  
Classes begin  
Thursday  
at  
Colby Schools**



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

J.L. Ellis, service officer with the Colby Fire Department, showed one of the many features associated with the new 36' long trailer that will be used for educational purposes and prevention programs.

**Fire station has new trailer**

By PATTY DECKER  
Free Press Editor

The Colby Fire Department recently became the owners of a new 36' long trailer that will be used in conjunction with its many fire prevention programs.

The cost of the trailer was \$34,000 of which 10 percent of the cost was donated by F&M Insurance, Cersovsky Insurance, American Family and Colby Wal-Mart, and the other 90 percent paid by a grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, said J.L. Ellis, service officer.

"This new trailer opens up so many more possibilities for education," added Rick Dickman, assistant fire chief and educational officer.

In the past, Dickman said, the

fire prevention program was limited to pre-kindergarten through third grade.

Now with this new addition, programs will be expanded to all grades, all groups, organizations and age levels.

"We can take the trailer wherever we need to go," Ellis said.

The trailer is equipped with stadium seats, a working kitchen, bedroom and many VCR tapes that can simulate a real fire or hazard.

By adding in the hazard house, which the fire department already has in its prevention inventory, the programs can provide playground and neighborhood safety along with practicing and learning how to get out of a burning structure using escape ladders, windows and other exits, Ellis said.

"We can create smoke, thunder-

storms, provide 911 training and much more," he said.

There's even a feature that will alleviate curiosity by those who have always wondered what happens when pulling a fire alarm. The pull station fire alarm is an exact replica of what people see in auditoriums, businesses, and other public buildings.

"This new trailer is only limited to the imagination," Ellis said.

For questions or to schedule a tour, Dickman encourages anyone to call him at 462-4454.

The tours are open to everyone and can be tailored to whatever area of prevention is necessary, whether that is home safety, severe weather, fire prevention, other types of emergencies, or more.

**School board not happy with company**

By TISHA COX  
Colby Free Press

The Colby School Board isn't a bunch of happy campers.

The track at Dennen Field will be getting a new surface, but it will cost the district an additional \$24,650 more than anticipated.

The board approved paying the additional amount for a polyurethane surface instead of the latex specified in the original bid from Fisher Track in Boone, Iowa.

It was approved 5-2 with board president Stan Molstad and board member John Cranston voting against.

The track resurfacing project was put on hold until the board got an explanation on why the company wouldn't start the work it agreed to do.

Sam Fisher, president of the company, was at the meeting to discuss the track resurfacing project. The company was awarded the project back in March.

The bid of \$53,386 was for a 3/8 inch latex surface and repair of the asphalt base underneath.

Fisher proposed doing the polyurethane surface for the quoted price and gave the board the option of paying the remainder next year, which is what they will do.

"It's not something we normally do," he said. "I was trying to help out. I'm trying to work with you as best we can."

The target date for the resurfacing project is Sept. 11-22, with Oct. 9-13 and 16-21 as back up dates.

Fisher said the company had concerns with the asphalt underlay around the track. He said a problem is a trough in the asphalt that goes around the entire distance of the track, an issue that would affect how well a latex surface would stick to the asphalt underneath.

He passed around pictures showing what the latex track surface looked like before it was removed and also of the asphalt base that is now exposed, showing the trough.

Fisher said the concern was that latex wouldn't give the district a return on its investment.

"It seems irresponsible to recommend a latex surface out there," he said.

The board and Fisher took a walk

around the track to inspect its condition.

Fisher said he was "amazed" at how few cracks there were in the asphalt but said he didn't think latex would stick long-term.

He said the asphalt looked good with the exception of the trough.

Over the past few months, Fisher said three of his employees have looked at the track and they all had the same consensus — the track's asphalt isn't suitable for long-term latex.

He said polyurethane would stick to the current asphalt surface, unlike latex.

"We had to remove that surface to really understand what's going on out there," Fisher said.

The board wasn't happy with the situation but several members agreed something needed to be done.

Board member Gerry Fulwider said he would rather have good work done than spend money on something that wouldn't last. He said something needed to be done because the surface is gone.

Cranston said he felt the board was "mislead" and wanted a discount.

"I don't feel like we were treated right," he said.

Board member Tracy Rogers said he didn't like how they got to that point but he thought the polyurethane track surface was the best solution.

Molstad voted against the proposal because he was unhappy with the fact the company wouldn't put down the latex surface specified in the bid. Superintendent Kirk Nielsen wanted to know why, with their experience, the company didn't anticipate any problems.

Fisher said the track edges looked good and the surface showed no evidence of the trough. He said his company is one of only 21 certified track builders around the country and his background has made him "cautious."



Sam Fisher

**City manager explains how to figure bill**

By PATTY DECKER  
Free Press Editor

Most businesses and individuals in Colby should have received their August utility bill, but many have called saying they are confused about what amount to pay, said Carolyn Armstrong, city manager.

There were three bills mailed, but only one bill shows the total amount owed, she said.

"Customers need to check the one bill dated Aug. 1, 2004 for the total amount owed on the account," she said. "That amount is due on Monday, Aug. 23. Please, do not add the three months together."

Armstrong said the city had changed its utility software in May

since its old company, American Fundware, phased out the program that was being used to bill city utilities. "We looked for a suitable program, but once the program was installed it would not work on our sequel server," she said. In other words, the new program would not allow employees to access reports or post payments, bills, etc.

Some customers, Armstrong said, didn't get a bill since the new program was installed effective with the June billing, while others said they received bills that didn't appear correct, she said.

There were also some utility customers who got a bill during those three months, but without electric or

sewer charges.

Consequently, for the next six months, the city has returned to the old program until a more compatible system can be found.

The reason for sending customers three months worth of bills this week was in reassuring everyone of what the actual bills were.

For most customers, the amounts owing showed no major differences from the old and new program.

Regardless of what program the city installs next, Armstrong said the city guarantees customers that whatever product they consider will be a "proven product."

As for the August billing, Armstrong also said there will be no pen-

alties this month.

"The August bill normally due by Aug. 15 is now Aug. 23 and the shut off date will change from Aug. 25 to Aug. 31," she said.

The regular cycle for utility payments will return with the September billing.

As for customers who were billed incorrectly, didn't receive a bill, or now have a hardship associated with the system, Armstrong encourages them to call the utility department at 462-4400 and speak with a representative about alternative payment arrangements.

"We are trying to make this as easy as possible for the city's customers," she said.

**Briefly**

**County fair premium checks ready**

Premium checks for this year's Thomas County Free Fair are now ready to be picked up at the County Extension office, 350 S. Range Ave., Colby, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. For questions, call (785) 462-4582.

**Gem Lions Club hog roast set**

The Gem Lions Club is holding its annual hog roast from 5-8 p.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 25 at the Gem Community Building. The event includes bluegrass, folk and country music, a horse shoe throwing tournament, lots of good food and visiting. Free will donations will be asked and the net proceeds will be used for community betterment. The club also will be collecting used eye glasses and hearing aids for recycling.

**Licensed childcare provider class set**

Smart Start Northwest Kansas and Colby Community College Re-

source and Referral are sponsoring a class that is open to anyone who is interested in becoming a licensed childcare provider. The class will be held Thursday, Sept. 9, from 7 to 10 p.m. in the Colby College Student Union room 106. The class is free and anyone interested in information or to register is asked to call 1-(888)-634-9359, ext. 250.

**High school swim party set**

The Colby High School dance team is hosting a swimming party for all Colby High School students from 8-10 p.m. Saturday at the Colby Community College swimming pool. Cost of admission is \$2. The event is a fund-raiser for the team to go to competition.

**Heartland Share delivery set for Aug. 28**

Heartland SHARE delivery is scheduled for 10:30 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 28 at Sacred Heart school gym. For information or to find out what qualifies a person to receive shares, call Gene Griffin at 460-3579.

**Colby Wallace Jennings**



**'70s . . . and this is August**

**Tonight...** Mostly cloudy with thunderstorms likely. Lows in the mid 50s. Northeast winds 10 to 20 mph. Chance of thunderstorms 60 percent. **Thursday...** Partly cloudy with a 40 percent chance of thunderstorms. Cooler. Highs in the lower 70s. Southeast winds 5 to 15 mph. **Thursday night...** Partly cloudy. A 20 percent chance of thunderstorms. Lows in the lower 50s. South winds around 10 mph. **Friday...** Partly cloudy. Highs in the upper 70s. East winds around 10 mph. **Friday night...** Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of thunderstorms. Lows in the upper 50s. **Saturday...** Partly cloudy. Highs in the lower 80s.

**The numbers**  
Tuesday's high, 89  
Low this morning, 57  
Records for Aug. 18, 106 in 1936 and 42 in 1927  
Year ago today, 95 and 61  
Precipitation past 24 hours to 8 a.m. today, 0.00  
August total, 1.23  
Soil temperature, 76

**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. Current temperatures are available by calling 460-TEMP.

**Water use**  
• Aug. 16 = 1.841 million gallons.

**Water advisories**  
• Water **Watch** is 3.5 million gallons for 3 consecutive days.  
• Water **Warning** is 4.0 million gallons for 3 consecutive days.  
• Water **Emergency** is 4.5 million gallons for 3 consecutive days.

