



COLBY FREE PRESS

Ice enemy for I-70 motorists

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

The holiday weekend was busy for law enforcement working accidents on a slippery Interstate-70.

Three took place on Sunday, with two happening at the same time on the interstate at 9:05 p.m. at mile marker 43.9, nine miles west of Colby.

The first happened when a 2001 Nissan Frontier pickup driven by Casey Eileen Huff, 28, of Highlands Ranch, Colo. was westbound and slid into a 1999 Freightliner semi that was parked on the shoulder.

After hitting the semi, the pickup came to rest in the median.

Huff and passenger Micah Hodgkins Huff, 28 of Parker, Colo. were taken to Citizens Medical Center in Colby where they were treated and released.

Kenyon Devone Hunger, 27, the driver of the semi, wasn't injured in the wreck.

The second accident involved a 1996 Geo driven by Jill Marie Diedrick, 40, of Pueblo, Colo. The car was westbound when it went off the highway and rolled.

Passenger Michael T. Clason, 45, of Shakopee, Minn. was treated and released after being taken to Citizens Medical Center. Diedrick was not admitted to the hospital.

The third accident Sunday happened at 8:15 p.m. on I-70 at mile marker 59.6 six miles east of Colby.

A 1999 Dodge Durango driven by Judy L. Luedke, 38, of Colby, was westbound when it hit a patch of ice and rolled.

Luedke was taken to Citizens Medical Center, where she was treated and released.

Getting ready



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Judy Shull, a kindergarten teacher at Colby Grade School, put down name tags for a new seating arrangement for her students this morning in her classroom. Principal Terrel Harrison said teachers had the choice to put in a flex day over the Christmas holiday or get their 7.5 hours in today in preparation for the new semester that starts Tuesday in the Colby School District.

2005 resolutions (if realized) spell success for county

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

The new year means resolutions and city and county officials have made theirs for 2005.

Thomas County Sheriff Mike Baughn, who officially took office on the last day of 2004, said he hopes to have more people visible and out in the county in the interests of safety and preventing crime.

"Hopefully we can do this by meeting people," he said. "We're hoping for a good, safe year."

Baughn also said he isn't looking to make any big changes, only to make his personnel more visible than they have been, but he would also like to see the solvability rate improve.

He said in rural areas, people sometimes wait several weeks before reporting a crime or other incident but he hopes that changes.

County commission chairman Ron Evans hopes all of the new officials taking office this month — Baughn, County Attorney Andrea Wyrick, Commissioners Ken Christiansen and Paul Steele and County Clerk Shelly Harms — get off to a good start.

Carolyn Armstrong, city manager, said the city has several major projects that will start this year and her hope is that all of the scheduled projects go smoothly and come in under the engineer's estimate.

On the slate are the new sewage treatment plan, the completion of Horton Avenue, improvement of Franklin and Sewell for the new Wal-Mart Supercenter, the new city well and construction of the water

main into town which starts next week and also the \$500,000 airport improvement plan.

Bids will be accepted in February and the work will be completed during the year.

Armstrong said she hopes the projects will be a positive experience for everyone involved from the city, the contractors and citizens. She added she wants people to contact her if they have any questions or concerns.

Mary Ann Downing, director of the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce, said she hopes 2005 is a prosperous year for the county and community of Colby.

She said a goal for this year is for the communities in the county as well as the area to work together to promote themselves for the benefit of all. Promoting the area is also the goal of Gerry Fulwider, director of the Thomas County Economic Development Alliance.

Fulwider said the state and the city used 2004 to prepare for economic growth in the new year by putting in the investment and infrastructure necessary for it.

"Those things are essential to the economic growth of our area," he said, adding the city and the voters have provided the necessary infrastructure and the tools with the passage of the sales tax issue in November.

Fulwider said it will be used "aggressively" to put together a package to recruit industry to the area to facilitate economic growth, and he thinks all of the planning will produce visible results in the new year.

Thomas County Wellness Fair at top of local chart in 2005

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

The holidays are over and for many people one New Year's resolution might be for a healthier lifestyle in 2005.

If that's the case, then the Wellness Fair is just in time — starting at 9 a.m. until 1 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 15 in the Colby College Student Union, said Tracey King, publicity chair for the event.

Now in its 20th year, the fair is planning something special as part of its two-decade celebration.

In addition to many familiar booths, blood tests and information, King said, there will also be door prizes given away throughout the day.

With less than two weeks until the fair, laboratory screening tests begin Thursday from 6 to 9 a.m. at Citizens Medical Center.

The other days for drawing blood include Saturday, and Monday and Tuesday (Jan. 10 and 11) also from 6 to 9 a.m.

"Participants will register for the fair at a cost of \$5, along with pay-

ing for lab tests prior to blood being drawn," King said. Depending on which lab tests a participant chooses, the cost can range from \$12 to \$18 each.

"These screenings also require a 10-12 hour fasting period," she said.

A new addition to this year's fair is the photoscreener, which can de-

termine if there are vision disorders in verbal and pre-verbal children.

"The screener can test for amblyopia, refractive errors, strabismus, media opacities and ptosis," King said. "All are treatable if detected early."

As part of the Lions unit, King said, there will be a visual acuity screening, glaucoma pressure,

blood pressure, non-fasting blood sugar test, hearing booth screen, and vision fields screening.

The unit is a self-contained bus that travels statewide, she said.

"The services are provided as part of the \$5 regular Wellness Fair registration," she said.

For questions about the fair, call Jeanene Brown, 460-4850.

Colby police respond to domestic disturbance calls during holiday

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

Colby police reported six domestic disturbances during the holiday season with one resulting in a 19-day old boy being taken from his mother and placed in protective custody, said Gary Shull, investigator.

In four of the six cases, no arrests were made including the incident involving the 19-day old child on Saturday, Dec. 22.

In that situation, Shull said the police were called around 4:30 p.m. after someone first reported to the Social and Rehabilitation Services that emotional abuse and unsafe

conditions existed because of domestic violence.

"The child was placed in a foster home and the parents were referred to mental health professionals," he said. Although no arrests were made, the couple will face a temporary custody hearing.

The two arrests occurred on Dec.

24 and Dec. 26. In the earlier incident at 6:22 p.m. Terry M. Mason, 43, was charged with disorderly conduct in the 1200 block of W. 2nd St. Kristen Joseph Huffman, 24, was arrested for domestic battery at Friendly Acres Trailer Court for the incident Dec. 26 at 2:21 a.m. occurring in the 700 block of E. 4th St.

The other domestic battery calls resulting in no arrests, but did send police out to the 100 block of E. Ash at 9:54 a.m. on Dec. 26 and then again at 5 p.m. to the 900 block of Court Terrace.

On Christmas Day, Shull said, a domestic disturbance was reported at 10:24 p.m. when someone came

into the Law Enforcement Center.

Although it was unclear as to what prompts the domestic disturbance calls, health professionals at High Plains Mental Health have said that feelings of sadness and even depression can occur during the holiday season for a variety of reasons.

Colby Oakley Atwood



Winter storm watch in effect

Overnight tonight...Cloudy. A 30 percent chance of freezing rain mixed with sleet after midnight. Lows in the lower 20s. East winds 5 to 10 mph. **Tuesday...**Wintery mix...Becoming snow in the afternoon. Snow accumulation of 1 to 3 inches. Highs in the lower 20s. Northeast winds 10 to 20 mph. Chance of precipitation 80 percent. **Tuesday night...**Snow. Additional snow accumulation of 2 to 3 inches possible. Lows around 8. North winds 15 to 20 mph. Chance of snow 80 percent. **Wednesday...**Cloudy with a 50 percent chance of snow. Highs around 11. North winds 5 to 15 mph with higher gusts. **Wednesday night...**Mostly cloudy early...Then becoming partly cloudy. Lows 5 below. **Thursday...**Partly cloudy. Highs around 30.

The numbers

Sunday's high, (not available)

Low this morning, (not available)

Year ago today, 31 and 24

Records for this date, 67 in 1964 and -22 in 1911

Precipitation past 24 hours to 8 a.m. today, 0.00

January total, 0.00

January snowfall, 0.00

Soil temperature, 37

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.

Record-breaking year for tornadoes reported

WICHITA (AP) — The bad news: more tornadoes were reported in Kansas and the nation last year than at any time since records have been kept.

The good news: no one died in the Kansas tornadoes, and the national death toll was far below the annual average.

Kansas recorded 124 tornadoes last year, breaking the mark of 116 set in 1991. The state also set a

record for most tornadoes in a single month: 66 in May.

There were 1,555 tornadoes recorded in the country through September, according to statistics compiled by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Storm Prediction Center in Norman, Okla. Even without figures for the final three months, that breaks the record set in 1998 by more than 130.

The higher numbers do not necessarily mean more tornadoes are occurring than in the past. Better reporting systems contribute to the record, said Mike Smith, founder and chief executive of Weather-Data, a private forecasting service based in Wichita.

"If we had had the radars, the spotters and the warning systems in the 1950s, there are a couple of years — like '57 or '55 — that it

wouldn't surprise me if they had more tornadoes than we have now," Smith said.

"But with the revolution in tornado science and detection that started in the early 1970s, it's easier to set a record now.

In Kansas last year, the southeast quarter of the state — 26 counties that include Wichita — reported 53 tornadoes. That's the annual average for the entire state.

Briefly

Genesis food drive to continue

Colby Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 3882 Auxiliary will continue the Genesis food collection at LeRoy's Printing, 560 N. Franklin in Colby. The auxiliary wishes to thank all that donated foods and cash to Genesis over the Christmas season.

Heartland Share sign-up this week

Heartland SHARE sign-up is through Jan. 7 at the State Farm Insurance office, 905 E. Fourth in Colby. Delivery will be Saturday, Jan. 22 at Sacred Heart School gym. A food share of five meats and five to six items of fruit and vegetables is \$18.50 plus two hours of volunteer community service. For information call Gene Griffin at 460-3579.

USDA program cutoff looming

The cutoff date for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program

(EQIP) applications to be considered for fiscal year 2005 funding is Jan. 21, 2005. In Colby, stop by 915 E. Walnut or call (785) 462-7671..

Fish/game licenses available Saturday

The Thomas County Clerk's office said the 2005 fish and game licenses and trout stamps are available. For questions, call the clerk's office at 462-4500.

Wheelchairs and more available at VFW

Officials with the Colby VFW are reminding anyone who needs to borrow medical equipment that some items can be found at the VFW, 220 N. Lake Ave. Borrowing medical equipment is free and available to anyone in need of these items for as long as necessary. Some items available include crutches, wheelchairs, and other medical equipment. For those needing equipment or have donations, can call Deaver at (785) 443-1113.

