

Weather Corner



Balmy temps expected Friday

Tonight — Clear with a low around 23. South wind around 10 mph. **Friday** — Sunny with a high around 65. Northwest wind between 5 and 15 mph. **Friday night** — Mostly clear with a low near 20. North wind around 10 mph. **Saturday** — Partly cloudy with a high around 44. Northeast wind 50 to 10 mph becoming southeast. **Saturday night** — Mostly clear with a low around 19. **Sunday** — Mostly sunny with a high around 56. **Sunday night** — Partly cloudy with a low around 23. **Monday** — Mostly sunny with a high around 60.

Temperatures
 Wednesday's high, 51
 Low this morning, 14
 Records for this date, 78 in 1918, -6 in 1914
 Precipitation past 24 hours to 8 a.m. today, 0.00
 February's precipitation, 0.04
 A recorded forecast updated throughout the day is available by calling (785) 899-7119. Current temperatures are available by calling 460-TEMP.

Briefly

Sacred Heart carnival Sunday

The annual Sacred Heart School carnival will be from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Sunday at the school. Food, games prizes and a raffle are all part of the festivities. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Vienna Choir to perform Sunday

The Western Plains Arts Association program "Bethany College Handbell Choir" scheduled for Sunday in the Colby Community College Cultural Arts Center will be rescheduled at a later date, association officials said. However, everyone is being reminded that the Vienna Choir Boys Concert starts at 4 p.m., Sunday, at the Colby High School auditorium.

Friday is last day to order daffodils

Colby is participating in the annual "Daffodil Days" sponsored by the American Cancer Society. This year's coordinator, Cathy Harrison, said all proceeds go to help the society's mission in research and finding a cure. Daffodils

are the first flowers of spring and a symbol of hope for a world free from cancer. With six different options available, people have many choices to fit their budgets. A bunch of daffodils is \$10; Cheer bouquet with vase, \$15; Bear and ABunch, \$25; 12 bunches, \$175; 25 bunches, \$250; and 50 bunches, \$350. For questions, call Harrison at 460-2501 (home); 462-2331 (office); fax 462-6242 or email: harrison@st-tel.net. Deadline for placing orders is Friday. Daffodil delivery will be the week of March 6.

College meets Monday

The Colby Community College Board of Trustees is having a special meeting at 5 p.m., Monday, to discuss the presidential selection process. The meeting will take place in the Bedker Memorial Complex board room. For questions, call 462-3984.

Reminder to monitor grain condition

The Thomas County Farm Service Office is issuing a reminder to area farmers that with this winter's weather conditions it is more difficult to store grain, said Ross B. Sloan,

county executive director. Bins that have the grain peaked is showing mold on the surface. "Grain stored in this manner must be monitored closely and may need to be aerated to prevent mold from forming," he said.

Storage structure containing commodities under loan with Commodity Credit Corporation are subject to spot check and must remain in condition during the term of the commodity loan, he said.

Childhood screenings March 7-8

The Colby School District, along with the Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center staff, will be having the pre-kindergarten screening Tuesday and Wednesday, March 7-8 at the United Methodist Church, said Emily Strange, school nurse. "Parents of students entering kindergarten in August 2006 are encouraged to take advantage of this developmental screening," Strange said. "The screening will be done by professionals who know how children grow and learn." The screening will take about one hour to complete. To make an appointment for the screening or questions, call Strange at Colby Elementary School, 460-5111.

Sheridan County Health Complex updates logo

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Colby Free Press



Sheridan County Health Complex is updating its image with the unveiling of a new corporate logo.

"The new identity is to better symbolize the healthcare provider's approach to serving Sheridan and surrounding counties," said Joe Stratton, administrator.

"The new logo includes the slogan, The Road to Wellness in Northwest Kansas. Our former logo was undeniably generic."

Stratton said the complex needed a "progressive, unique image to more effectively communicate its vision." The new logo replaces a traditional snake and rod symbol commonly used by clinics, pharma-

cies, health associations, and other medical entities throughout the county.

According to Stratton, organizations greatly benefit from a strong corporate identity or brand, saying it provides an opportunity to stand out and compete for attention, which is very important in today's

healthcare environment.

"We want people to clearly see our focus on the community's well-being," Stratton said.

"Wellness isn't simply a matter of healing a particular illness; instead, it is a journey we continue throughout our lifetime in mind, body, and spirit."

The desire for distinction motivated the logo design process, which began late last year. The logo was selected from a wide variety of sketches. The field was narrowed to two finalists by an ad hoc focus group of employees. All staff members were then given the opportunity to vote on their favorite version.

The new design was a near unanimous choice.

"I believe the staff made a bold choice in their desire to be more distinctive in the healthcare industry," Stratton said.

Stratton said he hopes the employee's input in the selection "provides a sense of ownership" in the overall corporate image and more of a connection to the healthcare complex.

The new logo will be displayed on all of the organization's printed material, facility signage, and a flag near the entrance of the complex.

The Sheridan County Health Complex in Hoxie consists of hospital, medical clinic, long term care center, and assisted living apartments.

House proposes \$500 million school funding boost over three years

TOPEKA (AP) — House leaders are pushing a \$500 million school funding increase over three years, targeting at-risk students while holding school districts more accountable on student achievement, according to documents obtained by The Associated Press.

The plan, funded with existing state revenues, is the first to emerge from the chamber in response to a

Legislative Division of Post Audit study last month.

The first year would increase spending by \$175 million and set aside \$500,000 for teachers seeking certification in bilingual courses. An additional \$325 million would be distributed over the second and third years, targeting poor and minority students as identified by the study.

"I think it is a workable plan. It's

a plan we hope will answer the court's concerns but at the same time it's not dumbing down our rural schools," House Speaker Doug Mays, R-Topeka, said Wednesday night. "What we tried to do is take into consideration the court case, the resources we have and what is fair for children no matter where they live in Kansas."

Additional details were expected Thursday morning from members

of the House Select Committee on School Finance. The plan is the product of negotiations since the start of the session between legislative leaders and Gov. Kathleen Sebelius.

The study concluded that legislators needed to increase spending by as much as \$470 million to satisfy a constitutional mandate to adequately fund public schools and to comply with rulings by the Kansas

Supreme Court in 2005.

Rural school districts would continue to get a greater proportion of money for being small, as they do under the current finance formula, than their larger counterparts.

But under the study's recommendations, rural districts could lose as much as \$136 million they now receive, a notion the House rejected.

The House plan also would hold schools and school districts to greater accountability.

Districts would be required to

determine spending priorities, to be reviewed by the Kansas Department of Education.

Schools failing to meet yearly student progress on state tests would be required to redistribute money to make improvements. Failing that, schools would face greater scrutiny by state education officials.

"I think it's pretty reasonable. We spent a lot of time talking with a lot of people trying to build a consensus," said House Minority Leader Dennis McKinney, D-Greensburg.

Biofuel boom breeds ethanol distributors

GARNETT (AP) — On early mornings at East Kansas Agri-Energy, trucks pack the driveway loop to unload bushels of dry, yellow corn into a hopper. By nighttime, those kernels are ready to transform — they'll turn into fuel.

"That's the sound of money," said ethanol marketer Steve Rust, against the roaring sound of crushed corn passing through the colored pipes overhead.

Rust, who works for Colwich, Kan.-based ICM Inc., the nation's largest designer of ethanol plants, says the factory sends streams of patrons to Garnett's tiny supermarket and keeps Kansas farmers in business.

The tiny town of about 3,350 has also become part of a new supply chain, where a small group of fuel distributors and ethanol barons stand to make a mint shipping the alternative fuel from the Midwest, where it's made, to major urban markets on both coasts.

Ethanol plants have attracted hundreds of investors, including Microsoft Corp.'s Bill Gates — who sunk \$84 million into West Coast producer Pacific Ethanol Inc. — and venture capitalist Vinod Khosla, who is seeding BC International, which will make fuel from switchgrass. But just a handful of companies in the corn belt hold the keys to distributing the fuel, which will prove crucial to making ethanol available at pumps across the country.

"They don't grow a lot of corn in

New York or New Jersey. It's going to be a very profitable situation," said Jim Jordan, a Houston-based consultant to the ethanol and transportation fuels industries.

"Kansas is obviously pretty well positioned."

The U.S. ethanol industry now has 95 plants nationwide. Analysts say by 2012 it will double in volume, from producing 4.3 billion to 7.5 billion gallons of biofuel. That growth will be aided by the Energy Policy Act of 2005, which gives ethanol producers sizable subsidies, including a federal tax credit for small refiners.

Archer Daniels Midland Co. Chairman and CEO G. Allen Andreas told analysts Tuesday he expects producers will get another bump since ethanol companies' rising demand for American-grown corn will push corn prices higher. ADM, headquartered in Decatur, Ill., is one of the world's largest corn processors.

It's not the first time ethanol exuberance has swept over the Midwest — a spike in oil prices sparked initial enthusiasm in the early 80s — but this time analysts think the fuel stands a chance at becoming a viable and accessible alternative amid fresh calls from President Bush to reduce U.S. dependence on foreign oil.

ICM President Dave Vander Griend and his brother developed the country's first fuel alcohol in 1978. He said his company has since grown so large — earning

\$200 million in revenue last year — that it spun off its distribution business. Aventine Renewable Energy Holdings, Inc., an ethanol producer based in Pekin, Ill., has started distributing to major oil companies like ConocoPhillips Co. and Chevron Corp.

Agriculture giants ADM and Cargill Inc. are in the shipping business, too.

But as states like California, Texas and New York roll out legislation forcing gas stations to sell a more environmentally friendly energy mix, they may also be tapped to spend public money to help move the fuel to its final destinations.

Kansas, in the heart of ethanol country, is preparing to offer an extra layer of incentives.

Last month, the Kansas Select Joint Committee on Energy recommended a legislative package offering biofuel industries public money to build railroad terminals to export ethanol and biodiesel, another renewable fuel made from recycled

oil, across the country.

One recommendation would offer state-backed financing and a 12-year property tax exemption.

Subsidies and rule changes are probably necessary to get the market going — after all, it took more than a century to build the nation's underground oil pipelines.

See "BOOM," page 5

Bridal Registry
 Stephanie Wieland & Brett Mead
 Shower February 25, 2006
 Wedding March 25, 2006

Ashley Friesen & Jeremy Bridgeman
 Wedding February 25, 2006

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2X4 Smoky Hills

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785-899-2328 or 1-800-974-2426
OR E-MAIL US AT: homestead@eaglecom.net
 Visit our website: www.goodlandksrealestate.com

THE VIENNA CHOIR BOYS
 Sunday, February 26, 4:00 p.m.
 Colby High School Auditorium

Admission by
 Western Plains Art Association
 Season Ticket or at the Door:

Adults \$15.00
 Students \$8.00

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