



# State asks for help from area

By Patty Decker  
*Free Press Editor*

Three state agencies have combined forces and are meeting with other groups in western Kansas to find answers on what can be done to raise awareness about traffic fatalities and injuries and stop an epidemic.

The Kansas Department of Transportation, Kansas Department of Health and Environment and the Kansas Highway Patrol are asking for help and earlier this week held the first of five meetings in Colby at the City Limits Convention Center for that purpose.

Thomas County and Colby law enforcement officials, along with officials from county health, emergency medical services in Ellis, child advocacy groups, the church and the press totaling 19 people attended the meeting.

"Traffic crashes are the number one killer of children in Kansas, the number one killer of teenagers, and the number one killer of adults under the age of 34," said Dr. Howard Roadenberg, the new division of health officer with KDHE.

"These deaths are absolutely preventable," he said. "With healthcare on everyone's mind, we need to somehow raise awareness that motor vehicle accidents deprive rural areas of vital people."

All three state agencies are looking to western Kansas as the "fountain of knowledge," adding that Topeka doesn't have all the answers.

"We are in Colby to learn, listen and find out what strategies work for you here regarding use of seatbelts, driving under the influence and avoidable accidents," said Steve Hale, a CCG Consultant from Kansas City and serving as moderator.

With Kansas being the 43rd state in the nation for seatbelt use and last year alone, 456 people died on Kansas roadways, the state needs help in solving the problem, said Maggie Thompson, with the transportation department.

By stopping the epidemic the three agencies are hoping to find cures for motor vehicle deaths and injuries. At the Colby meeting, attendees decided that restricted licenses, tougher laws and fines, education and talking to the courts and prosecutors about enforcement could help limit the "epidemic."

During the month of March and early April, representatives from the three state agencies will continue their tour around western Kansas with meetings in Pittsburg on Tuesday; Wichita on Thursday; Lawrence on Wednesday, March 30 and Liberal, Thursday, April 7.

Colby  
Hoxie  
Oakley



## Slim chances for moisture

**Tonight...**Partly cloudy. Lows around 20. Northeast winds 5 to 10 mph shifting to the south after midnight. **Saturday...**Partly cloudy. Highs in the upper 50s. South winds 10 to 15 mph. **Saturday night...**Increasing clouds. Lows in the upper 20s. South winds 10 to 15 mph with gusts to 30 mph. **Sunday...**Breezy. Mostly cloudy. A 20 percent chance of rain showers in the afternoon. Highs in the upper 50s. South winds 10 to 15 mph increasing to 15 to 25 mph in the afternoon. **Sunday night...**Mostly cloudy. Moisture likely in the form of rain or rain/snow mix.. Lows in the lower 30s. Chance of precipitation 40 percent. **Monday...**Mostly cloudy with a 40 percent chance of moisture, rain or snow, depending on temperatures. Highs in the upper 40s.

**The numbers**  
Thursday's high, 67  
Low this morning, 26  
Year ago today, 66 and 31  
Records for this date, 90 in 1921 and -3 in 1958  
Precipitation past 24 hours to 8 a.m. today, 0.00  
Precipitation for month to date: 0.07  
Snowfall for month to date: 1.0 inch  
Soil temperature, 44

**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.

# Casual conversation



**ABOVE:** Lori Ziegelmeier (left) student ambassador at Colby College, spoke with Dr. Mark Hansen, the first speaker in the Max Pickerill Lecture Series and Cathy Gordon, lecture series chair. Hansen is a native of Colby, graduating from Colby High School in 1977. He graduated from the University of Kansas in 1981 and received his Ph.D. in 1987 from Yale University. Hansen now is the dean of social sciences at the University of Chicago.

**RIGHT:** Among the more than 175 people attending the Thursday night lecture held in the Cultural Arts Center on the college campus, were Hansen's wife, Dana, and his mother, Joyce of Colby. His lecture will appear in Monday's edition.

Patty Decker/Colby Free Press



# Kansas House to vote on budget

TOPEKA (AP) — State universities would receive extra money — but not as much as some legislators want — under the House's proposed state budget.

House members were to take final action today on their \$11.3 billion spending plan for the fiscal year that begins July 1.

Much of a four-hour debate Thursday centered on how much to spend on higher education.

While Republican leaders want a budget that increases spending on public schools, in hopes of meeting a Kansas Supreme Court mandate to improve funding, they also want to avoid raising taxes.

Some House members worried

those goals led Republicans to squeeze state universities, community colleges and vocational colleges.

By the end of Thursday's debate, members had provided for \$21 million in new state dollars to higher education, an increase of about 3 percent.

But Gov. Kathleen Sebelius had proposed an increase of \$43 million, or 6.1 percent.

"It could have been worse, but it's still not good," said Rep. Tom Sawyer, D-Wichita, who supported the larger increase.

Other House members saw the \$729 million in state tax dollars for higher education as generous.

"We're not cutting," said Rep. Scott Schwab, R-Olathe.

"We're just not spending as much as the governor wants us to spend."

And Dick Bond, chairman of the state Board of Regents, a former Senate president, said: "The summary for today is that it's more positive for higher education than when the day began."

The Senate expects to debate a

proposed budget next week, and the final version will be drafted by negotiators from the two chambers.

Under the House's proposed budget, overall state spending would increase about \$427 million during the next fiscal year, or about 4 percent.

Many of the extra dollars would go to K-12 programs and to cover higher costs associated with providing medical services to the needy.

State employees would see a 2.5 percent pay increase, but not until March 2006.

Sebelius proposed starting the raises in June, but House Republicans wanted to divert salary dollars to public schools.

In other action, the Senate voted 18-14 against a proposal to dramatically cut the state's spending on Viagra and other impotence-fighting drugs for men under the Medicaid program.

Also, Sen. Barbara Allen, R-Overland Park, disclosed that she has been diagnosed with breast cancer and is undergoing treatment in Boston.

## Briefly

### College board agenda told

The Colby Community College Board of Trustees will meet at 5 p.m. Monday in the board room of the administration building. Items on the agenda include approval of minutes for the Feb. 21 and March 14 meetings; former employee Dale Wilcox on a personnel matter; termination of employee contract; termination of maintenance employee contract; natural gas proposal; approval of contracts and agreements; board retreat; payment of claims and negotiations. The meeting is open to the public.

### Commissioners to meet

The Thomas County Commissioners will meet at 9 a.m. Monday at the courthouse. Items on the agenda include Rod Rodenbeck with Pro-Active Committee discussion and Thomas County Emergency Medical Services director Kathi Wright to show their new ambulance to the commissioners. The meeting is open to the public.

### Childbirth education series begins in April

Colby Childbirth Education will host a Childbirth Education Series beginning Thursday, April 7, from 7-10 p.m. at the Colby Community College Health Science Building. The series will include the four Thursdays in April finishing on Thursday April 28. For information or to reg-

# Guard event brings soldiers, airmen to town

By Tisha Cox  
*Colby Free Press*

Colby will be the temporary home of more than 175 Kansas Army and Air National Guard personnel this weekend. The National Guard enlisted conference is taking place today through Sunday at the Comfort Inn.

First Sgt. Manuel Rubio with the Detachment 2-107th Maintenance Company in Colby, said soldiers and airmen from around the state will be attending, both active and retired.

Greg Gilroy, executive director of the enlisted association, said the purpose of the event is to work on issues and legislation important to the military personnel.

Past issues have been health care, which is still of importance, and lowering the retirement age from 60 to 55.

Gilroy said it's also a chance for people to get together and visit, and an opportunity for many people to catch up because sometimes they don't see each other between conferences.

Other public events are coinciding with the conference.

Gilroy said a traveling exhibit from the Kansas National Guard Museum in Topeka will be on display at the Comfort Inn along with Guard equipment.

Those are open to the public starting this afternoon and will be on display Saturday also.

Rubio added the public is invited to a dance at 8 p.m. tonight at the Comfort Inn.

It is being sponsored by the 150th birthday committee.

There is also a family support workshop at the Holiday Inn Express.

# Economic director pleased with planning

By Tisha Cox  
*Colby Free Press*

The process to develop a new strategic plan for the county has begun and Gerry Fulwider, Thomas County Economic Development Alliance director, and a member of the core committee, said he thinks the planning process is going well.

He said the Tuesday meeting results were very good and thought the people there enjoyed the visioning process and thinking about the future.

The committee broke into small groups and worked on a project where they had to come up with headlines for a progress edition of a newspaper 10 years in the future.

The groups came up with ideas like more apartments and senior housing such as a microcommunity for seniors or downtown lofts; new dorms at Colby Community College, four-year education after high school, more college resources; government consolidation; cheese production; economic development through industry or private investment.

Ideas for recreation and tourism included golf course homes and an 18-hole course; a community center or wellness center and recreational opportunities like biking and hiking trails and improved athletic fields.

They also discussed changing attitudes like having more youth involvement in boards and civic representation as well as making community service something people want to do instead of something they have to do.

"I thought that was great," Fulwider said. He also said they could still use more representation from other areas.

He added the process is "meaningless" if they don't have input from all possible aspects.

In an editorial in a recent copy of the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of commerce newsletter, he said a list of at least 52 different boards of governance were identified. Fulwider said it's positive how many people are involved in grassroots leadership and participation in the county.

Even though there isn't room on the core committee, he said there are still plenty of chances for groups to get in on the process in the task force phase.

"Those boards should have someone representing them," he said.

Fulwider said they also still need someone from Rexford, Gem and Brewster.

Eventually the core group will break down into task forces or committees. Ideally, he said, for example, on education, each school should be represented.

Agriculture and economic development are two more examples of task forces, and he said there will be 6-8 of them.

He also said he was pleased with the leadership the group chose.

Fulwider said Scott Focke was an "excellent" choice for the group's leader.

The group also adopted a mission statement during their meeting this week.

It is "Develop and market a common plan in Thomas County for a prosperous future through a shared vision."

The committee's next meeting will be at 7 p.m. Tuesday, April 19 at the Thomas County Office Complex.

ister, call Amy Huftles, RN, at (785) 460-4344 or the Citizens Medical Center Education office at 460-4850.

### Amusement Association Monday

There will be a Thomas County Amusement Association meeting on Monday at 8 p.m. in the Thomas County Office Complex.

### Easter egg hunt Saturday

The annual Kiwanis Easter Egg Hunt will be held in Colby's Fike Park on Saturday at 10 a.m. Youngsters will be divided into three groups: ages 3 and under, ages 4-6 and ages 7-9. Organizers are hoping for another good turnout for this popular annual community event.

### Share delivery Saturday

Delivery for Heartland Share is Saturday, at 10:30 a.m. at Sacred Heart School gym. The menu for March includes: little cocktail smokies, chicken stir fry dinner, lobster cakes, chicken drums, breaded chicken chunks, potatoes, cucumbers, red peppers, salad mix, radishes, apples, lemons, tangelos, red pears, and chocolate chip cookies. There are a few extra shares if someone is interested. A share is \$18.50 plus two hours of volunteer time. For questions, call Gene Griffin, 460-3579.

