



COLBY FREE PRESS

Student figures decline

By Patty Decker
Free Press Editor

Declining population, a drop in high school graduates and competition from other institutions continues to play havoc on enrollment numbers at Colby College, which prompted discussion at this week's Colby College board of trustees meeting.

While enrollment is an ongoing issue, in recent weeks one of the trustees, Larry Arehart, said he wants to know what the administration plans to do about making sure Colby College survives and grows in the future.

Substantiating his concerns, Arehart requested enrollment numbers from 1990 through the fall of 2004. In the 15-year comparison, the fall of 2004 marked the lowest point ever. However the biggest contributing factor to the decline was in part time students.

The total number of Colby College students (including full and part time) in 2004 was 1,761.

Also included on the chart were the following numbers: in 1990, the total number of students was 2,163; in 1991 — 2,000; in 1992 — 2,045; 1993 — 2,071; 1994 — 2,132; 1995 — 2,462; 1996 — 2,160; 1997 — 2,117; 1998 — 2,110; 1999 — 2,117; 2000 — 2,160; 2001 — 1,967; 2002 — 1,872; and 2003 — 1,951.

Although the full time average for the 15-year comparison show a steady amount of students ranging in the low 700s to the mid 800s with an average of 762, the part time students dipped from 1,156 in 2003 to 989 in 2004.

Dr. Mikel Ary, president of the college, agreed with Arehart that the college has some real challenges in this area.

In addition, Ary said there are many things the administration is doing to turn this situation around despite the many obstacles.

Skip Sharp, dean of student services, said his office has been tracking numbers of students in eighth grade and the lower grades. According to the information he has received, those numbers are continuing to go down. The Virtual College at Fort Hays State University has also been attracting potential students away from the college by offering 100 and 200 series courses, along with the 300 and 400 series.

In year's past, the four-year universities were "hands off" when it came to offering the lower series courses, but with technology the way it is today, some of the old rules aren't relevant, Ary said.

"We have been sticking to our own backyard, but now the competition is getting fierce," he said.

Consequently, the college has continued to look at what they can offer that is appealing to students. One way is working with Kansas State University online for a bachelor of science degree in business.

"We need to look at what our goals and objectives are and how we plan to grow," said Arehart.



TISHA COX/COLBY FREE PRESS

'COOL' SPECTATORS

Shannon Myers was the featured entertainer at Fike Park Thursday noon for the weekly "Picnic in the Park" series. Among the many onlookers were these two goodlookers, Cassandra and Melissa Zimmerman, nine-month-old twins, the children of Chad and Angela Zimmerman. The musical picnic continues each Thursday noon at Fike Park through July, courtesy of the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce, Colby Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Colby Free Press.



Wheat harvest tempo beginning to pick up

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

More grain is coming in to area elevators, a sure sign that harvest is ready to go gangbusters during the weekend.

Roger Hale, manager of the Colby Wheat Office, said he's heard bushel reports from around the area, but didn't have any yield data yet.

In Colby, Cornerstone Ag general manager Eric Sperber said as of yesterday, 18,000 bushels have been brought in to their elevators. He said they don't yet have numbers for today.

As of 8 a.m. today, Gem elevator had taken in 3,000 bushels; Selden, 37,000; Hoxie, 42,000; Mingo, 21,936; Rexford, 18,000; Levant, 7,000; Brewster, 40,000 and Menlo, 10,000 bushels.

Farmer Bill Miller of Colby said he started cutting wheat on Wednesday, June 22 and is on his third day of cutting. Yields, Miller said, are varying.

On land he's cutting northwest of Levant, yields are running 25-30 bushels an acre. Some has been as low as 10 bushels an acre and on irrigated, it's going as high as 60 bushels per acre.

Olson said that's good because it means the wheat berries received enough moisture to completely fill out and will make good seed wheat for planting next year. As far as where cutting is going on, Hale said he's already sent some cutters out north of Levant and some over by Rexford.

"I've had a few come in and I put them to work," he said, adding he will probably get busier over the weekend and the harvest will probably be in full swing.

Hale said there could be one problem with harvest, barring any major rain or hail.

Gas prices could keep many custom cutters off the road.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

These combines parked east of Colby on Highway 24 have already been cutting and are holding wheat ready to be unloaded. It's just one of the signs of the wheat harvest popping up around Thomas County. According to reports, harvest should be in full swing over the weekend.

"Quite a few aren't doing it because of the high price of transportation," he said. "I am seeing that," he said.

He said it shouldn't hinder harvest too much, except some farmers might not get their wheat cut exactly when they want it.

State's attorney involved in Hildyard case steps down

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Colby Free Press

When the hearing for a Colby doctor takes place in October, a new legal team will represent the state.

Stacy Cook, attorney for the Kansas Board of Healing Arts, Topeka, won't be at the hearing for Dr. Victor Hildyard. Cook stepped down from the case earlier this week so she can pursue an advanced degree in health law.

"I've withdrawn from the case because I'm leaving the board to pursue a post-doctoral master's degree in health law," Cook said.

Cook was reluctant to offer other details about leaving her job, saying the information was "part of my personal life."

Larry Buening, board executive director, said David Steed, Wichita, has been hired as special prosecutor to replace Cook.

Buening said hiring a special prosecutor is not common practice for the board, but it "has been done in the past."

"We have kind of unusual circumstances where we have an attorney who has been on the case for a long time and we needed someone to step in and fill the gap.

"We believe Mr. Steed can do that," he said.

Besides Steed, board attorney Diane L. Bellquist will represent the Board of Healing Arts in its claim against Hildyard.

So far, the Board of Healing Arts has subpoenaed 13 witnesses to testify at an administrative hearing which was to have started on Wednesday in Colby, but has been put off until October. Hildyard's attorney, Michael O'Neal, Hutchinson, said he has not subpoenaed anyone yet, but anticipates having a couple doctors testify as expert witnesses.

Hildyard is licensed to practice medicine in Kansas and Colorado and is in the process of renewing his license in both states. According to the Colorado Division of Registrations, Hildyard's license has been active since 1990, and has never had action taken against it. O'Neal said Hildyard has recently applied to renew his Kansas license, active since 1974, and scheduled to expire on June 30.

O'Neal said he sees no problem with the renewal process, adding

Gates Foundation could aid state schools

KANSAS CITY, Kan. (AP) — Funding from the foundation established by Microsoft Corp. co-founder Bill Gates could help boost education reform efforts on both sides of the state line in Kansas City.

Currently, only the two-year-old Achievement First program in Kansas City, Mo., gets money from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, but efforts are under way that could include the older First Things First program in Kansas City, Kan.

That program, started eight years ago, was praised by Gates himself earlier this year when he spoke to

the National Governors Association, lamenting the state of high schools across America.

Steve Gering, deputy superintendent of the Kansas City, Kan., district, said the attention from Gates was both gratifying and humbling. "That created external pressure in a really good way," he said. "When someone is talking about your school system in that way, you want to make sure it continues, so you step it up a notch."

The Gates foundation is exploring ways to work with the two urban school districts, as well as two

charter schools on the Missouri side, for funding that district officials say could run into millions of dollars.

"It is an important effort," said Tom Vander Ark, executive director of education with the Gates foundation.

Jack Jennings, director of the Center on Education Policy, said First Things First and the Kansas City, Kan., district often draw national recognition for student progress. He said the administrators there could use their experience in guiding those from the Kansas City,

Mo., district.

"They have shown they can reduce the achievement gap," Jennings said. "They deserve the additional support. Without a doubt, Kansas City, Kansas, is doing much better than Kansas City, Missouri. Maybe there is something they can do to help Kansas City, Missouri."

Ray Daniels, who retires at the end of this month as school superintendent in Kansas City, Kan., said he would consider serving as a consultant on a regional reform effort, or overseeing its implementation.



Bonus section in today's Free Press

