

Weather Corner



Wind gusts near 20 mph

Tonight — Partly cloudy with a low around 28. Blustery with a northwest wind between 15 and 20 mph, with gusts as high as 30 mph. **Thursday** — Mostly sunny with a high near 48. Windy, with a north wind between 25 and 30 mph, with gusts as high as 45 mph. **Thursday night** — Clear with a low near 20. **Friday** — Mostly sunny with a high around 60. West wind between 5 and 15 mph. **Friday night** — Mostly clear with a low around 28. **Saturday** — Partly cloudy with a high near 67. **Saturday night** — Partly cloudy and blustery with a low around 25. **Sunday** — Partly cloudy with a high near 49.

Temperatures
 Tuesday's high, 70
 Low this morning, 24
 Records for this date, 70 in 1956, -24 in 1959
 Precipitation past 24 hours to 8 a.m. today, 0.0; January's precipitation, 0.03 A recorded forecast updated throughout the day is available by calling (785) 899-7119. Current temperatures are available by calling 460-TEMP.

Briefly

Childbirth classes begin Thursday

The next series of Childbirth Education Classes will run from 7 to 10 p.m., Thursday at the Colby College Health Science Building and continue throughout the month of January on Thursdays. To register for the classes or for questions, call Jeanene Brown, education director at Citizens Medical Center, 460-4850.

Blood testing for Wellness Fair nears

The Colby Wellness Fair will be held Saturday, Jan. 14, 2006 and as in previous years, prior to the fair, a variety of screening laboratory tests will be offered, said Tracey Gilchrist, wellness committee member. Blood tests will be drawn on Wednesday and Thursday, Jan. 4 and 5 and also on Saturday, Monday and Tuesday, Jan. 7, 9, and 10. All blood testing will be done from 6 until 9 a.m. with registration in the lobby of the Citizens Medical Center Specialty Clinic.

Anyone planning to be tested should fast 10-12 hours prior to the test so an accurate level on the Lipid Profile can be attained. Healthcare providers will share general explanations of the test results during the fair at 9:15 and 10:15 a.m. and again at 11:12 a.m. and 12:15 p.m. on the day of the fair. More details about the Wellness Fair will be published in future editions of the Colby Free Press. For questions about testing or general information, call Jeanene Brown, 460-4850, another committee member and the education director at Citizens Medical Center.

Deadline nears for producers

Producers with irrigated cropland in areas of Thomas County might want to take advantage of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, said Andrew Burr, district conservationist with the United States Natural Resource Conservation Service in Colby. An added provision in the ground

and surface water conservation for fiscal year 2006, he said, is the designated quick response areas where producers convert irrigated cropland to non-irrigated cropland. The deadline is Friday, Jan. 20 to receive applications and after that date those submitted will be evaluated. Producers who submit applications should know by March 2006 whether or not they have been accepted. To apply or for questions, call Burr at 462-7482 or stop by the conservation service office. Information is also available on the Web site: <http://www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/2006>.

College plans special meeting

The Colby Community College Board of Trustees will hold a special meeting at 5 p.m., Monday, Jan. 9, in the board room of Thomas Hall to discuss the presidential search and consulting with the board's attorney. In addition, the board will also talk about the progress of the Wellness Center. For questions or an agenda, call 462-3984.

Some schools struggle finding ag education teachers

HOLTON (AP) — Jason Larison moves around his classroom, helping students in an agriculture business class at Holton High School use their laptops to complete a test review.

Larison acknowledges being tempted by offers to pursue more lucrative careers but says he loves his job in this town of 3,345 people.

"What I do changes every day, from things like record-keeping to building trailers to landscaping to horticulture," said Larison, who has run this school's agriculture education program for 11 years. "That fits my personality. It's the flexibility and the kids I truly enjoy."

Schools across the United States are looking for people like Larison. A persistent shortage of ag education teachers, coupled with a growing demand for such programs, has school districts searching hard for teachers.

“What I do changes every day, from things like record-keeping to building trailers to landscaping to horticulture.”

Jason Larison, agriculture instructor

A study done for the National Association of Agricultural Educators estimated that 1,175 new agriculture teachers were needed in the nation's schools in the fall of 2001, but only 693 new graduates were looking for teaching positions.

Tom Broyles, an assistant professor of agriculture extension and education at Virginia Tech, and Adam Kantrovich, an assistant professor at Morehead State University, are currently updating the NAAE study through 2004. Early responses from 87 univer-

sities that graduate ag education teachers showed about 770 new teachers graduated in 2004, up from about 685 in 2001, Broyles said. Of the 770 in 2004, about 500 are employed as ag education teachers.

Roger Robinson, superintendent of the Lorraine School District in central Kansas, has been looking for an ag education teacher for the district's two high schools since last spring.

"We could not find anyone to fill that position," Robinson said. "We beat the bushes. And we have a

long-standing, tradition-rich program.... It was very disheartening."

One of the most prominent reasons for the continuing shortage of teachers is that ag education graduates have many options other than teaching.

"Our graduates are very marketable," said Steve Harbstreet, coordinator of the Agriculture Education program at Kansas State University. "And it's like teaching in general — there are a whole lot of rules and regulations to get a license that discourages people from entering the profession."

Andy Seibel, a regional vice president of the NAAE and an FFA specialist at Virginia Tech, said the shortage is felt more in rural districts because many ag education teachers go to larger, urban districts that tend to pay better.

That was the case in the Lorraine district, Robinson said, where the last few teachers have been beginning teachers who then moved on.

"Hanging on to them is the most difficult part," Robinson said. The shortage comes at a time when interest in ag education and ag business careers is growing. The FFA currently has 490,000 student members, an all-time high, said Harbstreet, who said some schools in Kansas and nationally have added new ag education programs.

Kansas State currently has about 85 students in its ag education program and would like to have more, he said.

"We're hitting the recruiting trail hard," Harbstreet said. "We have 28 new students this fall. We're focusing our efforts on getting the students here and keeping them."

Colby Animal Clinic searches for dog owners

The Colby Animal Clinic has a boxer and two labs that are either lost or in need of a home.

The boxer/heeler mix is a male adult; black, white, and tan-black in color with leather collar. The animal was found in the 500 block of N. Chick on Saturday, Dec. 31.

The two labs are female and yellow in color. One of the adult females was wearing a red harness and

the other female is a puppy. Both were found in the 1100 block of Terrace Drive on New Year's Day.

Since many of these animals are wearing collars, the clinic asks that the dog owners stop by the office at 810 E. 4th St. or call 460-8621 to make arrangements to take the animals home. In the event no owners step forward, clinic officials will consider adoption.

Uninsured motorists could get tougher penalties

TOPEKA (AP) — Keeping uninsured motorists off Kansas roadways is the goal of a pair of Senate bills that will be considered after the Legislature convenes Monday.

One bill helps the state keep better track of those who drive without required liability insurance, and the other imposes stiffer penalties for those who do.

The Department of Insurance estimates about 10 percent of the nearly 2 million licensed drivers in the state don't have the required coverage.

"We all are paying the costs of damages and injuries by uninsured motorists," said Senate Majority Leader Derek Schmidt. "The costs are shifted to those who pay for insurance. It results in higher premiums for everyone who pays."

The bills are sponsored by Schmidt, R-Independence, and Sen. Ruth Teichman, R-Stafford, who heads the Senate Financial Institutions and Insurance Committee.

Schmidt said Tuesday the legislation requires insurance companies to notify the Department of Revenue when a policyholder either cancels coverage or gets a new policy. He said state computer can track the changes to find those who canceled a policy but didn't get a new one.

"The technology has reached the point where we can do this without hassling the driver," Schmidt said.

He said the proposal is similar to a law that went into effect Jan. 1 in Kentucky, and that several other states are considering similar ideas.

The other bill provides tougher civil and criminal penalties for motorists who intentionally drive without insurance.

Currently, first-time offenders face fines from \$300 to \$1,000, plus the loss of car tags and driver's license, both of which can be reinstated by paying a fee and showing proof of insurance.

Under the proposal, a third con-

viction of driving without insurance would be a felony rather than misdemeanor, and if an uninsured motorist kills someone in a traffic accident, the charge would be murder instead of manslaughter, Schmidt said.

He said a person injured by an uninsured motorist could get triple damages instead of ordinary damages in a civil judgment.

Aging secretary retires; governor names successor

TOPEKA (AP) — The state's secretary on aging has retired, and Gov. Kathleen Sebelius has appointed a former top aide as acting secretary.

The departure of Secretary Pamela Johnson-Betts was announced Tuesday by Sebelius' office, after Johnson-Betts informed the governor of her retirement in a letter late last week. Johnson-Betts became secretary in February 2003, a month after Sebelius took office.

The new acting secretary is Kathy Greenlee, who had been the state's long-term care ombudsman, an official who serves as an advocate for nursing home residents. Greenlee also worked previously on the governor's office staff and in the Insurance Department, when Sebelius was commissioner.

"Kathy's years of work on behalf of consumers and experience with senior issues will be essential as she steps into this role," Sebelius said. As acting secretary, Greenlee will run an agency with an annual bud-

get of \$446 million and 210 employees. Much of the Department on Aging's budget reimburses nursing homes for the care they provide elderly Kansans.

Sebelius named an acting secretary to prevent administrative problems while she searches for a permanent replacement for Johnson-Betts, spokeswoman Nicole Corcoran said. However, Greenlee remains a strong possibility for such a promotion, Corcoran said.

NOW PLAYING:

COLBY CINEMA & ARCADE

DEC. 30 - JAN. 5

CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
 Fri. & Sat.: 7:00 & 9:30 (PG)
 Sun.: 4:15 & 7:00 2:20
 Mon. - Thurs: 7:00

KING KONG (PG-13)
 Fri. & Sat.: 6:00 & 9:15 3:07
 Sun.: 4:00 & 7:00
 Mon. - Thurs: 6:00

COLBY THEATRE

DEC. 30 - JAN. 5

CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2
 Fri. & Sat.: 7:00 & 9:00 (PG) 1:34
 Sun.: 4:00 & 7:00
 Mon. - Thurs: 7:00

FUN WITH DICK & JANE
 Fri. & Sat.: 7:15 & 9:00 (PG-13)
 Sun.: 4:15 & 7:15 1:30
 Mon. - Thurs: 7:15

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