

Weather Corner



Rain possible Wednesday

Tonight — Partly cloudy with a low around 43. Southeast wind between 10 and 15 mph.

Tuesday — Partly cloudy with a high near 74. South wind 10 to 15 mph becoming west.

Tuesday night — Partly cloudy with a low near 35. Northwest wind between 5 to 10 mph.

Wednesday — A 40 percent chance of rain, mainly after 1 p.m. Mostly cloudy with a high around 48. North wind 10 and 15 mph, with gusts as high as 30 mph.

Wednesday night — A slight chance of rain and snow before 1 a.m.

Thursday — Partly cloudy with a high near 55.

Temperatures
Sunday's high, 64

Low this morning, 27

Records for this date, 89 in 1901, -13 in 1920

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

March's precipitation, 0.00

A recorded forecast updated throughout the day is available by calling (785) 899-7119. Current temperatures are available by calling 460-TEMP.

Briefly

Fair board to meet Thursday

The Thomas County Fair Board will meet at 8 p.m. Thursday at the 4-H Building at the Thomas County Fairgrounds. Items on the agenda include Thomas County extension agent report; bills and financial report; committee reports on the buildings and grounds, carnival, rodeo, parade, demolition derby, races, fair book and advertising; old business includes the fair barbecue and even sponsor contract; other business will be a discussion on display cases for open class and Colby Community College rodeo contract. The meeting is open to the public.

Chorus rehearses every Tuesday

The Hi-Plains Harmony Chorus of Sweet Adelines holds rehearsals every Tuesday at 7:30 pm. at the Colby United Methodist Church, 950 S. Franklin Ave. All female singers

are encouraged to attend anytime.

Orchestra continues rehearsals

The Pride of the Prairie Orchestra holds rehearsals from 7:30 to 9 p.m., Mondays in the Colby High School band room. All musicians are invited to join the orchestra, said Sharon Kriss, one of the members. Musicians span a wide range of vocations and ages (middle school to retirees) from communities throughout northwest Kansas and northeast Colorado, she said. For questions, call Kriss at 460-2800 or Mary Shoaff, 462-2391.

Sacred Heart pre-enrollment set

Sacred Heart School will hold pre-enrollment for the 2006-07 preschool and kindergarten classes from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Wednesday, in the school lobby, said Dave Evert, principal.

Parents or guardians will need to bring immunization records, birth certificate, social security card and physicals. For questions, call 460-2813.

Childhood screenings start Tuesday

The Colby School District, along with the Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center staff, will be having the pre-kindergarten screening Tuesday and Wednesday at the United Methodist Church. To make an appointment, call 460-5111.

Tax help Wednesdays

Pioneer Memorial Library, 375 W. 4th, will be the location on Wednesdays from 1 to 3 p.m. and until April 15 assisting with tax returns for the elderly or low to middle income families and individuals. Alvin Volk will help in tax preparation at no charge. For information, call 460-2645.

Sheriff's office seizes more drugs

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Colby Free Press

Thomas County Sheriff's deputies have taken more than \$4 million dollars worth of drugs the past two weeks.

A traffic stop last week near Colby resulted in more than one-half million dollars worth of marijuana being seized.

Thomas County Undersheriff Jason Moses said Tuesday a deputy stopped Carlos Omar Bolivar Astorga, 28, and Andy Alarcon, 27, on Interstate 70 near Colby.

Moses declined to say why the two men were pulled over or where

they reside.

During the stop, approximately 321 pounds of marijuana was located in the car.

The street value of the drugs is estimated at \$627,326.

Both Astorga and Alarcon were booked into Thomas County Jail pending charges of possession of marijuana with intent to sell or distribute.

This is the fourth major drug bust for the Thomas County Sheriff's Office since Feb. 14.

Last week's seizure, added to earlier ones estimated at \$433,851, \$367,406 and \$2,859,120 marks \$4.3 million worth of drugs.

No economic benefit seen with Global Flyer

SALINA (AP) — Salina has yet to reap much economic benefit from investing time, money and energy into Steve Fossett's aviation 2005 milestone, when he became the first to fly solo, nonstop around the world without refueling.

But Dennis Kuhlman, dean of Kansas State University-Salina, which housed mission control for Fossett's Salina-based Virgin Atlantic GlobalFlyer's 2005 project, said benefits can be measured in other terms.

"When I want to go to (Washington) D.C. or go see somebody at NASA, I can get in now," he said. "A year later, it's still something that people want to know about."

A select group of 11 Kansas State students joined mission control and the ground crew for the 2005 project. More than 100 students were involved in some way. Virgin Atlantic built in glitz to the college during its stay and reimbursed K-State at Salina for its expenses.

Patrick Rinearson, 22, Olathe, a K-State senior in the professional pilot program and a flight instructor, was in mission control for the

GlobalFlyer project. He said the value runs deeper.

"It's our mission to be on the cutting edge of technological advances," Rinearson said. "If we didn't gain a single student from the project, we've broadened our university collective experience."

Criminal crackdown good election politics

TOPEKA (AP) — In an election year, a politician's best friends often are criminals, especially those seen as lurking in the shadows, preying on innocent children.

Best friends in that by targeting such villains for harsher punishments, politicians enhance their stature among voters.

"Voting against not getting tough on crime in an election year isn't a smart thing to do," said Rep. Mike O'Neal, R-Hutchinson. "If you're really pushing a criminal justice agenda, it's better to do it in an election year."

This election year, numerous bills would get tougher on criminals, including ones mandating harsher penalties for sexual predators and child molesters, allowing law-abiding citizens to carry concealed weapons to protect themselves from criminals and restricting where registered sex offenders can live.

But the enthusiasm isn't limited to legislators in a year when all House seats and state offices are on the ballot.

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius and Attorney General Phill Kline want to convince voters that criminals won't be walking the streets targeting innocent citizens — who, by the way, vote.

Sebelius outlined her get-tough stance during her State of the State speech in January. As the state's chief law enforcement official, Kline talks about it at every opportunity.

"It's clear what the governor was doing is trying to show she is a law-and-order Democrat and Republicans can't say she is soft on crime," said Joe Aistrup, head of Kansas State University's Department of Political Science.

The sexual predator bill puts third-time violent sex offenders



M. O'Neal



P. Kline

behind bars forever and doles out harsh penalties for those who molest children.

Locking up perverts and molesters is high on the public's must-do list. Among the reasons is the high-profile case of Jessica Lunsford, a 9-year-old Florida girl killed last year by a convicted sex offender.

"Politics is about identifying your windows of opportunity and acting when those windows are open," said Senate Majority Leader Derek Schmidt, R-Independence.

Law-and-order legislation makes for good headlines back home and actually can do some good at a time when legislators want to point to their good deeds.

"There is apple pie, the flag and throwing criminals behind bars. It's a surefire winner," Aistrup said. "The reality is, if you're going to throw a criminal behind bars, the best criminal is a pedophile."

Despite the rush to get tough, not everyone is on the same page about the sexual predator bill.

The Senate wants a minimum mandatory sentence of 25 years for child molesters.

The House leaves it up to prosecutors to journey down the highway of harshness, letting juries decide whether that's the road best traveled.

There's concern a mandatory sentence will mean millions in increased prison costs and maybe somebody getting the tough time who doesn't deserve it.

On the flip side, there's concern that leaving such a decision to a jury could mean some defense lawyer with a briefcase full of legal razzle dazzle could get a guilty client set free. Because the public wants tougher laws for child molesters, the smart money is on mandatory sentencing winning out.

"Legislators respond more readily to public pressure in an election year," Schmidt said.

The concealed gun bill passed overwhelmingly in the Senate and likely will clear the House.

The question is what will Sebelius do, given she vetoed a nearly identical bill two years ago. But two years ago, she wasn't seeking a second term.

"It's more of a conservative issue, and those who will be upset with her on that issue probably will be voting for someone else," Aistrup said.

Despite a bill's obvious benefits, votes often are based on whether lawmakers think it will make them popular at the coffee shops and church socials back home.

"People understand that putting child molesters and sex predators in prison is a good thing," said Sen. Phil Journey, R-Haysville. "It's a great postcard to send a voter to say you supported this."

Sometimes, of course, what seemed like a good idea at first turns out not to look so good. Even so, buffer zones still may ride the criminal crackdown caravan.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Tom Nickols watched Ken Weber of Weber Remodeling work on a storage unit last week at Eighth Street and Franklin Avenue. Weber Remodeling and Ginther Construction are putting up the storage units on Eighth Street.

Opening Monday, March 13th



Schedule your appointment with

Pam or Lacy at:

785-460-4247

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