



COLBY FREE PRESS

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Town meeting March 28

Coalition concerned with youth, drinking

By **Patty Decker**
Free Press Editor

Thomas County residents are invited to attend a town meeting Tuesday, March 28, with the goal to halt underage drinking before it happens, said sources of the event.

The meeting will begin at 7:30 p.m. at the Colby Community Building and the hope is to increase understanding about the consequences and how the community as a whole can best prevent underage alcohol use, said Diane Stithem at the Regional Prevention Center in Colby.

"New data shows that about 27 percent of Thomas County youth have used alcohol at least one time in the past 30 days," she said. "The average age of first use of alcohol for teens in Thomas County is 13.25."

The town meeting in Colby will be part of a nationwide effort with many towns in many states participating on March 28.

Parents, teachers, officials and youth, along with other community members will be educated on youth underage drinking and how they can help develop possible ways to address the problems.

"Along with hundreds of other communities, our county will come together to discuss the underage drinking issues here," Stithem said.

Sponsoring the event is the Thomas County Interagency Coordinating Committee, in coordination with the Federal government's Interagency Coordinating Committee for the Prevention of Underage Drinking.

For those with questions or concerns regarding the youth in Thomas County, call the Regional Prevention Center, (785) 460-8177.

"Let's start talking before they start drinking," organizers said.

KU cancels classes after tornado damages campus

LAWRENCE (AP) — Classes at the University of Kansas were canceled Monday because of a severe storm Sunday morning that damaged about 60 percent of the buildings on campus.

University Provost David Shulenberg said safety concerns about debris falling from rooftops prompted the school to ask that only emergency personnel report to work on Monday.

The storm was the first of several that passed through eastern Kansas and across most of Missouri on Sunday. High winds knocked over airplanes at the downtown Kansas City, Mo., airport and ripped roofs off homes, businesses and the Great Wolf Lodge Indoor Water Park in Wyandotte County.

The storm came on the heels of a powerful storm that ripped through southern Missouri and southern Illinois late Saturday night, killing a married couple whose car was blown off the road and destroying homes along a path of more than 20 miles south of St. Louis, officials said.

Late Sunday afternoon, a third person was killed as she was trying to seek refuge in her mobile home south of Sedalia, Mo., when it was toppled by a tornado.

The National Weather Service said Sunday's first tornado hit

"It felt like I was in the tornado, if that's what it was."

James Patterson, asleep in an apartment

Lawrence at about 8 a.m., knocking out the warning sirens in Douglas County and prompting police to take to the streets to warn residents to prepare for the next expected storm system.

Another storm system popped up Sunday afternoon, with hail — some up to baseball size — reported in several northwest Missouri counties including Clay, Ray, Cass, Bates and Linn counties.

A spokeswoman for the Kansas Adjutant General's office said emergency management officials declared Douglas County a local disaster after the storm hit Lawrence and the surrounding area.

The University of Kansas campus was littered with trees, roof tiles and window glass after several buildings, including Anschutz Library and the chancellor's residence, were damaged, said Joy Moser, a spokeswoman for the Kansas Adjutant General's Department.

The roof of the nondenominational Danforth Chapel, which has

been the scene of thousands of weddings on campus, was nearly completely torn off.

The storm also left damage across Lawrence, with awnings and roofs destroyed all along Massachusetts Street, the main street through downtown. A building that houses a T-shirt company east of downtown Lawrence collapsed and spires were blown off the top of Plymouth Congregational Church, one of the oldest churches in the city.

James Patterson, 23, was asleep in his upstairs apartment when a sudden drop in pressure woke him about 8 a.m.

"It felt like I was in the tornado, if that's what it was," he said.

In a small trailer court in north Lawrence, Rhonda Burns was trying to figure out how to recover after two trees fell through her trailer early Sunday. She said her cousin was walking from one end of the trailer when the trees came through, missing her bedroom by inches.

"If the wind had shifted that tree



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Gunshow attracts hundreds

ABOVE: Lynn Marcy of Oakley looked at a Russian 20-gauge sporting clays rifle during the Gun and Coin Show held Saturday and Sunday in Colby. **RIGHT:** Bill Rutherford of Denver said he has been attending the shows for the last 25 years. "I consider myself a long-time veteran," he said Sunday at the Colby Community Building. Although hundreds visited the show, many said numbers were down from previous years.



Program puts feather in museum's cap

By **Tisha Cox**
Colby Free Press

Prairie Museum of Art and History tipped thier proverbial hat.

More than 100 people turned out Sunday for the museum's Women's History Month program.

Complementing the program was Angela Bates of Nicodemus and her lecture titled "African-American Women and Their Church Hats."

Museum Director Sue Taylor was pleased with the event's success.

"It was a great day," she said. "We had about 100 people. We're definitely going to invite her back again."

Bates focused on the hats worn by African-American women after the Civil War.

She used her own mother's hat collection as an example, and typified what was going on. She said hats were a way to express their femininity because the women were treated no different from men when they were slaves.

She added women had no real control over their lives, and once freed, went to great lengths to express themselves and their roles as women.

"They wore outrageous hats, and went all out, and still do, with shoes, purses, jewelry, and all the other accessories," Bates said.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Angela Bates of Nicodemus gave a Women's History Month program on "African-American Women and Their Church Hats" Sunday at the Prairie Museum of Art and History. The event drew more than 100 people.

Bates said it still means something today for her and other African-American women of her age to see the older women wearing their hats to church, or just everyday. She also talked about other family members, and how African-Americans

deal with their hair. Bates mentioned her aunt, Ernestine, who had Ernestine's Barbecue. Bates is marketing the sauce, and sharing that legacy. The museum is preparing for another event next month.

On April 23, Dr. Donna Roper

related to archaeology. The day also includes an exhibit on a dig done by the forensic archaeology class at Colby Community College and High Plains Archaeology Group. It will include a spear throwing demonstration.

Property taxes muddy debate on education

TOPEKA (AP) — As legislators ponder how much more to spend on public schools, some of them worry they're not getting enough credit for dollars the state already provides.

To that end, legislative leaders have added a twist to two school finance plans. They would require school districts to levy additional property taxes — something almost all of them do, anyway. The state would say those dollars are part of its base support for schools.

The state looks more generous, of course. Supporters argue the twist promotes accuracy in assessing how much Kansas spends on its 300 school districts, but critics call it sleight of hand.

Whatever it is, the idea is raising eyebrows — and muddying the debate.

"I'm not that enamored with that part, because I think it's too difficult to understand," acknowledged Senate Education Committee Chairwoman Jean Schodorf, R-Wichita.

Senate leaders are proposing a plan to phase in a \$660 million increase over three years. However, \$180 million of the total

would be local property taxes.

A plan from House Majority Leader Clay Aurand, R-Courtland, is even more aggressive. It would provide \$315 million to districts during the next school year, but \$195 million of it would be their own property tax revenues.

What is easiest to understand is the reaction to the property tax idea from Alan Rupe. From Wichita, he is the lead attorney for parents and administrators in Dodge City and Salina who sued the state over education funding in 1999.

Legislators must put additional money into schools because of rulings from the Kansas Supreme Court last year in Rupe's lawsuit. "It's about renaming money to try take credit for what's not theirs," Rupe said. "I think the court has repeatedly demonstrated a high knowledge of school finance, and they're not going to be duped by some renaming trick."

Last year, under pressure from the court, legislators increased school spending by \$290 million, or more than 10 percent, to more than \$3 billion.