

**Briefly**

**County closing for holiday**

The Thomas County Courthouse and courts will be closed Monday, Sept. 4, for the Labor Day holiday. The county landfill will be open Saturday, Sept. 2, at its regular time and be closed Sunday, Sept. 3, and Monday, Sept. 4. The courthouse and landfill will open at its regular time Tuesday, Sept. 5.

**Kreider to appear at Lions meeting**

Dr. Lynn Kreider, Colby Community College president, will be the guest speaker at the Colby Lions Club meeting at 6:45 p.m., Monday, at the Prairie Skillet, Quality Inn, 1950 S. Range Ave. He will also be the guest speaker at the Hill City Chamber of Commerce Sept. 7; the Atwood Chamber Oct. 3; Quinter Chamber Oct. 5; and the Colby Chamber of Com-

merce Nov. 10. All chamber meetings begin at noon.

**Fall play auditions next week**

Auditions for the Colby Community College fall play will be held from 7 to 9 p.m., Monday and Tuesday in the Frahm Theatre, Northwest Kansas Cultural Arts Center on the campus. Auditions are open to the public and community members are encouraged to attend. No preparations are necessary. For questions, call Terrilyn Fleming at 462-3984, extension 300.

**Orange Fridays new tradition**

The Colby Booster Club is looking at generating Eagle spirit this year by starting a new tradition. The challenge to businesses and individuals is to wear orange every Friday

during the months of September to May as a way to build enthusiasm for local students and athletes at all levels of participation.

"By wearing orange," a spokesperson said, "you will be showing support for more than 350 students in grades 7-12 in all extra curricular activities."

**Boot Block Saturday**

The Colby firefighters will be out in full force from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saturday, for their annual Boot Block for muscular dystrophy, said Rick Dickman, assistant fire chief today. Firefighters will be at the corner of Fourth Street and Franklin Avenue; Dillons Parking Lot, 1605 S. Range Ave.; and Wal-Mart parking lot, 115 W. Willow, collecting for the Arc Valley Chapter, which benefits Colby and surrounding areas. For questions, call Dickman at 460-4454.

**Biofuels boost rural areas**

TOPEKA (AP) — Is \$3-a-gallon gasoline necessarily a bad thing?

Not necessarily, if it spurs interest in fuels made with corn, soybeans, wheat straw or even switchgrass — and builds an industry that can be big in rural Kansas, a high-ranking U.S. Department of Agriculture official who toured the state this week with Rep. Jerry Moran suggested Thursday.

Moran, R-Kan., and Thomas Dorr, undersecretary for rural development, are bullish on the future of rural Kansas, thinking there are enough economic opportunities to stem population declines.

While they have some concerns, such as the collective aging of community leaders, they see biofuels as a big opportunity.

"If there's a silver lining in all of this, it's an acknowledgment that we have to become more energy secure," Dorr said Thursday during a Statehouse news conference.

Colby firefighters worked to put out a fire that engulfed a motorhome Thursday seven miles east of Colby on Interstate 70. Assistant Fire Chief Rick Dickman said the driver of the vehicle, Peggy A. Jackson of Colby, said it backfired, then she pulled off and the engine caught fire. A couple of acres of grass adjacent to the interstate also caught fire. Dickman said no one was hurt. The motorhome belonged to Glen C. Davis of Oakley. The call came in at 12:46 p.m.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

**Despite insurance, study finds heavy medical debt among farmers**

WICHITA (AP) — Kansas farm families are carrying heavy loads of medical debt, even though most of them are covered by some health insurance, a new study shows.

In findings that surprised even its authors, a survey of Kansas farmers by the Boston-based Access Project found that an overwhelming majority of farmers, about 95 percent, bought medical insurance. But so many had purchased just minimal or catastrophic health policies that left them vulnerable to most illnesses or accidents.

"Isn't it good to have something? I am not sure. That something needs to cover the things you have to have covered, otherwise all those monthly payments are meaningless — you just threw your money away," said Bill Lottero, an analyst with The Access Project.

While their research found that

one in six Kansas farmers had medical debt, there was a big discrepancy between the medical debt levels of older farmers and non-elderly farmers. Only five percent of those age 65 and over had medical debt while nearly one in three farmers under age 65 reported significant medical bills. The median owed was \$2,500.

Since older farmers have insurance coverage through Medicare, the apparent disparity led the study's authors to question whether younger farm families were buying adequate coverage.

"It is unusual to see people with this level of insurance and yet having medical debt across the span — that was surprising to me," said Kim Moore, president of the United Methodist Health Ministry Fund.

Nine of every 10 farmers reported owing money to their doc-

**“It is unusual to see people with this level of insurance and yet having medical debt ....”**

Kim Moore,

United Methodist Health Ministry Fund

tors, with nearly as many owing to hospitals. About two-thirds had outstanding prescription costs, while slightly over half had bills with dentists. Thirteen percent reported owing money to ambulance services.

The survey was funded by United Methodist Health Ministry Fund and the Kellogg Foundation, and based on the responses of 281 randomly selected members of the Kansas Farmers Union.

"For years, I've heard that farm-

ers have high-deductible policies and this seems to substantiate that is the case," Moore said.

While the new study covered just Kansas farmers, the issue is indicative of problems faced by farmers across the nation as well as self-employed people or small employers who are buying these catastrophic health policies because they cannot afford high premium costs, Lottero said.

But The Access Project did not know of any other studies which

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You are the wind beneath our wings!

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specifically examined medical insurance carried by farm families, said Nancy Kohn, one of the Kansas study's co-authors.

Farmers are not alone in struggling to pay their medical bills, either.

A national survey conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation last year found nearly a quarter of Americans had problems paying medical bills, with one in five reporting having an overdue medical bill. That was in spite of the fact that 61 percent of those Americans were covered by health insurance, the study found.

On the Net: The Access Project: www.accessproject.org

**BOWLING LEAGUE OPENINGS**

**2006 Fall League Schedule**

**SUNDAY P.M. - Mixed Couples League.** Two couples per team. Bowls at 7 P.M. every other week. Starts Sept. 10th

**MONDAY P.M. - 5 person Men's League.** Starting at 8:00 p.m. Starts August 28th.

**TUESDAY A.M. - Ladies Coffee League.** Starts at 9:00 a.m. and bowls 4 to a team. Starts Sept. 5th.

**TUESDAY P.M. - NON-SMOKING LEAGUE Men's 5 person teams.** Starts at 7:15 p.m. Starts Sept. 5th.

**WEDNESDAY P.M. - Two - 4 person Ladies Leagues.** Starting at 6:15 or 8:15 p.m. Definitely Ladies Night Out!! Both Start Aug. 30th

**THURSDAY MIXED COUPLES - "Free NFL Team Ball League"** Bowls at 6:30 p.m. (two games and shorter season. Starts Oct. 5th

**THURSDAY COED LEAGUE - 5 person (any sex) Teams** starting at 8 p.m. Starts August 31st

**FRIDAY P.M. - NON-SMOKING LEAGUE 4 person Ladies League** at 7:00 p.m. Starts Sept. 8th.

**SATURDAY AFTERNOON JR. LEAGUES - Ages 5 & up.** Sign up is Sat., Sept. 30th at 1:00 **NON-SMOKING LEAGUE**

**Let's Bowl**

Most Leagues still have openings! Call the League Hotline to save your spot:

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