



COLBY FREE PRESS

14 pages

Fire Safety Month

Smoke alarms save lives

By John Van Nostrand
Colby Free Press

A \$10 investment can save something valued 10,000 times greater and even things that are priceless.

In recognition of Fire Safety Month during October, the Colby Fire Department urges residents to check their smoke alarms and reminds those who want to sell their house to do the same.

Since 1988, the city of Colby has required residential property owners to have working smoke alarms before the sale of the property is complete.

"It's really never been a problem," said Rick Dickman, assistant fire chief.

"We work well with those in the retail sale of homes to certify the smoke alarms are installed and are working before the closing.

"We still need to educate our children to tell their families about smoke alarms."

The city of Colby's smoke alarm law was enacted about 10 years before the state of Kansas passed a similar law.

"We are a pretty progressive community that way," Dickman said. "We had some fire fatalities in the early 80s."

Dickman has been with the department for 21 years.

Colby's ordinance states smoke alarms must be installed near sleeping rooms in Colby properties. Dickman said the location of smoke alarms in a house is vital considering how common residential property fires happen between 12 a.m. and 6 a.m.

"Sometimes, it's a slow smolder that turns into a fire," he said. "Death is commonly caused by the inhalation of toxic fumes and the smoke."

The development of smoke alarms over the years has made smoke alarm maintenance very minor Dickman said.

Although new batteries may be the only thing a smoke alarm needs, Dickman said some people don't want to constantly hassle with batteries and are switching to special power packs that last much longer than batteries.

Other smoke alarms can be connected to the house's electrical system. That way the battery acts as a back up should the electricity be shut off. Dickman said for some new house construction, all the

smoke alarms in the house will be activated if any one of them detects smoke. Dickman suggested people replace smoke alarms that are 10 years old.

Dickman said homes that serve as registered daycare facilities are treated differently.

Alarms are to be installed in rooms where the children can be present and alarms must be checked every six months.

Heat detectors do not operate the same as smoke alarms. Heat detectors are activated once the room temperature reaches a certain degree.

"They do have their application," said Dickman, "but do not replace smoke alarms."

October's Fire Safety Month and smoke alarm promotion correlates with the ending of Daylight Saving Time Oct. 29.

Fire departments across the country have encouraged people to check their smoke alarms and batteries while changing clocks back one hour.

It's no different in Colby.

"In the past we have changed 200 batteries in one day," Dickman said.

Most of the requests are from those who have difficulty reaching their smoke alarms attached to the ceilings.

Dickman said fire department personnel are available to assist with other smoke alarm needs.

On the list

Pat Sloan of HomeLand Realty in Colby said the town's smoke detector law has not been an issue in the potential sale of homes in her 23 years in the business.

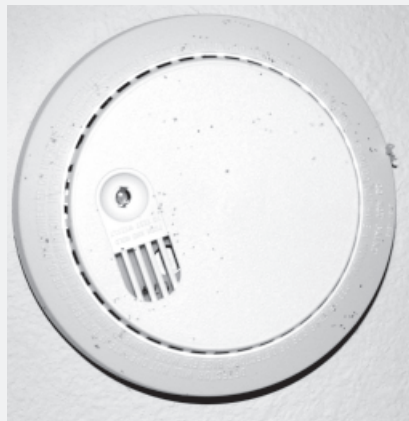
"People have said, 'What do I have to do,' but it has never been a problem," she said.

Sloan said it has become habit for Colby realtors to inform potential sellers about the law and condition of their smoke alarms.

"And if something would happen, remember, it is no more than a \$10 expense to the seller," she said. Smoke alarms can also affect a home insurance policy, said Darvin Strutt of F&M Insurance.

"It is very rare to have a house without one," Strutt said. "They have become pretty common."

Strutt said depending upon the insurance provider, property owners receive certain credits based on the smoke alarms in the house.



Do you need this?



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Alec Wildeman, left, helped Judy Kleinsorge, children's librarian at Pioneer Memorial Library Tuesday while she read a story during Family Storytime at the library. The weekly event is at 7 p.m. each Tuesday through October, except for a Halloween open house Tuesday, Oct. 31.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Thomas County has new director

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

The new director at Thomas County Big Brothers Big Sisters will be familiar to some. Diane Stithem, 46, took over last month.

Formerly with the Regional Prevention center, Stithem joined Big Brothers Big Sisters because of its reputation and opportunities.

"It's a worthwhile organization that provides mentoring to the youth," she said.

The organization provides services to children 5- to 17-years-old.

At one time, the purpose behind the group was to provide mentors to children at-risk or in single-parent families. While that still is an objective, there are still many other children who do need a mentor.

"We provide a mentor and friend to children. A child gets another adult in their life and the chance to develop a healthy relationship with an adult while his or her family gains more support," she said.

A misconception is the time spent together requires a special activity. That, however, is not the case. Normal everyday activities

work, like errands, movies or a sporting event.

"You just take the child with you," she said.

Stithem said some people could claim not to have time for such a commitment, but it doesn't take much time.

Three new programs are also in the works. The first is Bigs in Schools, which Stithem presented in Brewster today; Pass it On and Mentoring Children of Promise.

Bigs in Schools is site-based, and mentors meet with their children at school.

One way it works is for the two to have lunch at school once a week, or meet for an after school activity.

Stithem is working on eventually getting all Thomas County schools involved.

The Mentoring Children of Promise program is for children who currently have, or have had an incarcerated parent. The program has been used in the county before, and is being reimplemented.

Stithem said there are three children who need a match through this program.

Pass it On, the newest program,



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Carla Jo Long, left, "Little Sister" of Diane Stithem, right, horsed around with jump ropes Thursday. Stithem is Long's "Big Sister"

will be available next year. It will match children and adults who have interests in outdoor activities such as hiking, fishing and hunting.

She is also working on another

misconception, that Big Brothers and Big Sisters closed its doors.

"Over the last few months, the word out there on the street is that we folded," she said. "We are alive

and also the new director of Thomas County Big Brothers Big Sisters.

and well. We are not going to close our doors." That perception is something the organization wants to change. That is the number one priority of the board," Stithem said.

To become a Big Brother or Sister or to refer a child, call 460-9125. The application process and referrals can also be done online at www.ksbbbs.org.

Forecast shows Kansas to see year of job growth

WICHITA (AP) — Kansas will see its third straight year of job growth in 2007 and finally return to the employment levels it enjoyed before the 2001 recession, according to an economic forecast released Thursday.

Job growth in Kansas has been slow over the last decade and not all industries have rebounded since 2001, according to Janet Harrah, director of the Center for Economic Development and Business Research at Wichita State University. "Kansas shed jobs at a faster rate than the nation following the March 2001 recession and has since created jobs at a slower rate than the nation," Harrah said in a news release.

In the annual forecast, Harrah projected that in 2007 the state will gain 8,500 nonfarm jobs, for a 0.6 percent increase. That would mean Kansas would have the same number of jobs it had in 2001.

Harrah's forecast for Kansas also says:

— The production sector will add 1,000 jobs, a 0.4 percent growth.

— The service industry will add 7,400 jobs, a 1.3 percent increase.

— Trade, transportation and utilities will lose more than 200 jobs, a 0.1 percent decrease.

— Government will add 275 jobs, a 0.1 percent increase.

— Private education and health care will add 3,200 jobs, a 2 percent increase — the biggest percentage jump for any sector.

Some industries — including manufacturing and telecommunications, two of the state's dominant job sectors — continue to struggle. Harrah predicts no growth in manufacturing employment in Kansas next year and continued job losses in telecommunications, although losses in that industry have stopped nationwide.

"A Great Plains state is not one where people want to live because of the amenities," he said. "We have to do better than other places just to get them here."

School support group needs more members

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

The Colby Parent Teacher Student Association has a small, dedicated membership, but more are always needed.



T. McAdams

The group has a three-fold purpose, to support and speak on behalf of youth, assist parents in developing the skills needed to raise and protect their children and encourage parental and public involvement in public schools.

Co-chair Toni McAdams said the group currently has 27 members, ranging from singles to couples to students. Becky Bond is the co-chair.

Members don't have to have children, just an interest in them. Students can join.

"They have a voice to be heard so we want to include them in it," McAdams said.

"Anybody can be a member of the PTSA."

McAdams said Colby's group has a secondary organization dedicated to middle and high school. Colby Grade School has its Parent Teacher Organization, which is why the PTSA focuses on middle and high school.

She said the group can bring in speakers to talk on subjects like No Child Left Behind, and also has a legislative convention each year.

Also, the group provides information to the school district each year.

This year, information on whooping cough and head lice prevention was given to Colby School District Nurse Emily Strange and also Heartland Christian School.

The organization's membership fee gives members access to even more.

Parenting tips, choosing a college, scholarships and Internet

“ They (students) have a voice to be heard so we want to include them in it. Anybody can be a member of the PTSA.”

Toni McAdams,
co-chair of PTSA

safety are some of the topics provided.

In addition to providing information, the group has three upcoming events.

McAdams said the organization is planning an informal reception for people to get to know the new school district faculty and will collect school supplies for underprivileged children for next school year.

The third event will be providing a hospitality room for the state Technology Student Association gathering, to be held in Colby in April, 2007.

The group also works with other groups on various projects. Those

have included the Regional Prevention Center, Technology Student Association and school forensics.

The group will also have pocket calendars for sale at the next two Colby Eagle home football games.

That is the only fundraiser the organization does during the year.

The group applies for grant money. A grant helped fund their mother/daughter "Bridging the Gap" seminar last year.

For information or questions about the association, call McAdams at 462-6248.