

Colby resident represents Kansas at national cancer event

Ten thousand cancer advocates from every Congressional district in the country. The largest-ever monument to cancer covering three city blocks.

An emotional, candle-lit ceremony of hope. These are just a few of the many highlights of the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network's Celebration on the Hill 2006, an empowering, moving, monumental grassroots advocacy event held Sept. 20 on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

Carla Sharp of Colby was one of the 32 "Celebration Ambassadors" representing the state of Kansas. The "Ambassadors" were cancer patients, survivors, caregivers, and family members. Ambassadors from across the country and all

walks of life met face to face with our lawmakers in Washington to communicate the message that lawmakers must commit to the fight against cancer.

"Cancer is the most feared disease in America. We want our Members of Congress to know that this fear is felt in every corner of Kansas," said Renee Kelley, spokesperson for the Society. "In 2006, an estimated 1,399,790 million Americans will be diagnosed with cancer and an estimated 564,830 will die from the disease. In 2006, an estimated 13,210 Kansans will be diagnosed with cancer and an estimated 5,330 Kansans will die from the disease. Cancer funding must be made a national priority." One of the main objectives at

"Cancer is the most feared disease in America."

Rene Kelly
American Cancer Society

Celebration was to urge elected officials to sign the Congressional Cancer Promise, a commitment to taking specific legislative steps to increase the government's investment in cancer research, prevention and early detection, survivorship, and access to care. More than 300 lawmakers, including all of Kansas' six Congressional members, signed on and voiced their support for this short term plan to put the nation's

fight against cancer back on track. In the short time since Celebration on the Hill, progress has already been made. The National Institutes of Health reauthorization bill was on the House floor for a vote a week after Celebration. The House passed H.R. 6164, the "National Institutes of Health Reform Act of 2006" by roll call vote with 414 yeas and only 2 nays. In addition to strengthening coordination

and transparency within NIH, this bill sets authorization levels for NIH increases at a minimum of 5 percent for the next three years (in line with the Congressional Cancer Promise).

In addition, the Energy and Commerce Committee passed the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program Reauthorization Act of 2006 (H.R. 5472). This legislation will allow the program to reach more uninsured and other medically underserved women, by authorizing an increase in funding to the \$250 million level, so at least an additional 130,000 women can be served.

The roll call vote of 45 yeas and 0 nays was a very strong signal from the committee of its support for this

program and the need for increased funding to help ensure more women have access to these vital cancer screening tests.

The American Cancer Society is partnering with ACS CAN, its sister advocacy organization, to eliminate cancer as a major public health problem.

For more information anytime, call toll free 1-800-ACS-2345 or visit www.cancer.org. ACS CAN uses voter education and issue campaigns aimed at influencing candidates and lawmakers to support laws and policies that will help people fight cancer. ACS CAN does not endorse candidates and is not a political action committee (PAC). For information, visit www.acscan.org.

Region's groundwater may be affected by recent drought conditions

MANHATTAN — Drought conditions have prevailed in parts of the nation's midsection through much of the past several years, and that fact may have affected the quality of the region's well water, a Kansas State University agricultural engineer said.

"Well water comes from the pores in underground aquifers — deposits of soil, sand, rock, and such — so is in contact with many minerals," said Morgan Powell, K-State Research and Extension. "Some minerals, such as calcium

sulfate, readily dissolve in the water. Others don't."

"Water sometimes acts as a barrier, however, that prevents some minerals from undergoing certain chemical changes that alter their ability to dissolve in water. So, as long as the water is present in the ground and fills the pore spaces around the minerals, they resist chemical alteration and stay safely in place — and out of tap water."

But, when the water level drops, as in times of drought, minerals become exposed to dry conditions,

Powell explained. And, with their protective water barrier removed, some of the minerals may undergo the chemical changes that make them more soluble.

After that, when the drought ends and the water table returns to its former level, the chemically-altered minerals can dissolve in the water.

In turn, they're carried out of the ground and into the household.

Increased concentrations of dissolved minerals also can relate to reduced recharge rates, he said.

When the soil is quite wet or saturated by rain, the excess moisture in the soil profile recharges the groundwater supply.

"It takes several rains in succession or a large rain that lasts over multiple days to raise soil moisture to the point that there is excess water in the soil that can move downward to groundwater and recharge it," Powell said.

That kind of recharge, however, is important to more than just water supply, he said.

Over time, minerals that dissolve

readily from water-bearing materials cause an increase in mineral concentrations. The longer water remains in contact with such materials, the more concentrated the contaminant dissolved minerals become.

So, the introduction of fresh water not only recharges the aquifer, it also dilutes concentrations of contaminants, because the fresh water has not been exposed to minerals for long.

"Water well users should be alert to changes in their water at any

time, but during drought it can be unusually important," Powell said. "Because many contaminants are not detectable by appearance, taste, or odor, testing is the only way to determine water's safety."

"All analyses should be retained for future reference. Comparison with previous results reveals trends and allows for intervention before problems become more obvious."

Based on test results, for example, a well owner may see the need to take action to protect the well and groundwater, to install a treatment device, or to seek an alternate new water supply.

More information on well water quality is at county and district K-State Research and Extension offices in the publications "Measuring Depth to Water in Wells;" "Testing to Help Ensure Safe Drinking Water" and "Recommended Water Tests for Private Wells." The publications also are available on the Kansas Extension Web site at <http://www.oznet.ksu.edu>.

Kansas offers adventurous tourists plenty of spooky haunts to visit

TOPEKA (AP) — Beth Cooper takes visitors to the Charles Curtis Memorial Cemetery and talks about the Tuxedo Man.

He's a shadowy figure who has been known to appear on misty occasions wearing a tuxedo and top hat and standing by a tree.

Digital photos of him are said to disappear within hours of being taken.

In Rochester Cemetery, a few miles away, unidentified screaming supposedly can be heard.

At a former train station, the ghost of a 10-year-old boy, killed by a train, is said to be seen in reflections of a door's window.

Welcome to Ghost Tours of Topeka, a wild and crazy mix of history, mystery, gossip and standup comedy.

Topeka is one of an increasing number of towns and cities, including Wichita, that have ghostly tours.

For \$10 or \$12.50, depending on how close you are to Halloween, you can go on Topeka's ghostly 90-minute tour.

"We've had people from California, Texas, Oklahoma, Missouri and Nebraska," said Cooper's sister Cathy Ramirez, who also runs the tours.

Ghost tours are becoming so popular that many tours are already sold out for this fall.

"They are very popular," said Stan Lawson, marketing director for the Atchison Area Chamber of Commerce.

And almost any town has a story to tell — and a ghost to go with it:

— Atchison, nicknamed the "Most Haunted Town in Kansas," has offered haunted trolley tours each fall for the past decade.

— Wichita has a downtown walking tour of ghostly haunts.

— Fort Scott has a "Believe it or Not" ghost trolley tour.

— The Caldwell Historical Society's sixth annual evening cemetery tour, "Angels on the Plains," features stories of six previous residents of Caldwell as told by their descendants or by re-enactors.

— Fort Riley's annual ghost tour introduces visitors to Gen. George Custer's ghost.

"It is a reason to get a little spooky," said Marci Penner, director of the Kansas Sampler Foundation, which promotes rural communities.

It's also a way to bring in tourists, show off the uniqueness of a community and provide entertainment, she said.

"It is just something to push the envelope a little further out," she said. "The tours are fun and something different. They are a reason to enjoy the fall."

Tammy Weihe, founder of the Paranormal Institute in Wichita, conducts ghost tours in the city. She said they have become so popular that she'll be conducting them again in the spring.

"I grew up in a haunted house, and I'm always trying to find more stories," she said. "Downtown Wichita is a smorgasbord of ghosts."

Her tour includes a stop at the Carey House Square, at the southeast corner of Douglas and Emporia, where the ghost of a prostitute is said to haunt the building.

In Topeka, there are stories about

the Capitol and the men who fell from scaffolding while building it. Others tell of a suicide and of workers who refused to leave their post, even after they died. Ramirez is haunted by the picture of Capitol librarian Louise McNeal. She loved her job so much that she came to work every day, even in retirement.

Ramirez believes McNeal still comes to work, decades after her

death. Her proof?

A clock has fallen off the wall in the library, books have flown off shelves and the Capitol's elevators are notorious for starting and stopping for no known reason, she said.

"We are like the good cop, bad cop," Cooper said of herself and Ramirez. "She believes. I'm skeptical. We think that makes a good combination."

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Pumpkin decorating contest

Unicel, 1933 S. Range in Colby, will hold a pumpkin decorating contest for children 3 to 10 years old Saturday. Stop in from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. to decorate a pumpkin. Pumpkins and supplies will be provided and prizes will be awarded.

For information, call 462-7265.