



# COLBY FREE PRESS

## Dressing for the occasion



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

**ABOVE:** Dressed as a pirate, Lewis Haines, left, and a good witch, Laurel Myers, were among many classmates from Puddle Duck Preschool visiting downtown businesses today as part of the school's "trick or treat" Halloween activities. Residents are asked to be particularly careful about youngsters out Tuesday night during Halloween. Police are also reminding everyone of a "zero tolerance" for vandalism. **LEFT:** Susan Belshe, left, showed her pup, J.C., who was dressed as a pumpkin for Halloween, to her parents, Claude and Doris Belshe (not pictured), during "Trick-or-Treat Street" festivities Saturday at Infinia at Colby. Residents and trick-or-treaters enjoyed games, face painting and a costume contest.

## Kansas Gas rates increase

WICHITA (AP) — The settlement of a state gas rate case will cost the average Kansas Gas Service customer about \$72 more a year. Under the settlement announced Friday by the company and consumer advocates, Kansas Gas will be paid \$52 million more a year for providing gas to its customers. The increase applies only to the rates customers pay to the company for running its delivery system. The cost of the gas itself is a passed directly to customers and fluctuates with market prices. Kansas Gas had asked for a \$73.3 million increase, while the Citizens' Utility Ratepayer Board

had recommended a \$42 million payment. Kansas Corporation Commission staff had recommended \$51 million. The commission could reject or alter the settlement, but it rarely does that when its staff, a utility and all the consumer advocates are in agreement. The city of Wichita and the Wichita school district, which were parties in the case, have accepted the settlement, commission spokeswoman Rosemary Foreman said. The gas company needed the rate increase to offset cost of maintaining and improving gas service equipment.

## Morrison's accuser part of new ad for Kline

TOPEKA (AP) — Attorney General Phill Kline's new television ad attacks his opponent again over old, unproven allegations of sexual harassment and features an excerpt from a reporter's interview with the woman who made the claims. Kline, a Republican, has made the allegations his biggest issue against Democrat Paul Morrison in the final weeks of the campaign. Kline has done so even though the woman filed two unsuccessful federal lawsuits against Morrison in the early 1990s and both were dismissed without Morrison paying any damages. Morrison is the Johnson County

## Interim sheriff found for Sheridan County

By Jan Katz Ackerman  
Colby Free Press

In the wake of the Sheridan County Sheriff Jim Johnson's death Thursday, political wheels are turning in the background in Hoxie. Gove County Sheriff Allan Weber of Quinter is serving as interim sheriff to Sheridan County. Weber on Saturday said he has talked with Sheridan County's undersheriff, Brian Fenner, about the possibility of accepting an appointment by the Republican Party to finish Johnson's unexpired term. That term has two years left on it. "We've visited about it a little bit," Weber said. "But he just hasn't made a decision." Johnson was shot and killed Thursday while talking with Steven P. Reitcheck, 35, about voluntary commitment to a mental facility. Reitcheck has had difficulty accepting the June 2003 death of his father, Leroy Reitcheck, killed by a drunk driver. The driver was arrested and convicted. Reitcheck in September was alleged to have destroyed the headstone at Leroy Reitcheck's grave site, and last week tried to exhume the elder Reitcheck's body from its grave. Johnson's funeral is 2 p.m. Tuesday in the Hoxie High School auditorium and burial will follow at the Hoxie Cemetery located 1-mile north of Hoxie. Weber said Gov. Kathleen Sebelius is expected to attend the funeral. Sheridan County Republican Committee Chairman Doren Follis on Saturday said he's checking in to the procedures of filling the vacancy. Follis said he will take his direction from Topeka as far as filling the sheriff's vacancy permanently in order to relieve Weber of serving as sheriff for two counties. "I've got to talk with the Secretary of State's office and the Kansas Republican Party people and see how long we have," Follis said. "I think we have 15 days, but I don't know that for sure." Follis said while the county needs time to grieve the loss of Johnson, it too must move forward in choosing a full-time sheriff. When a sheriff dies or can no longer serve the position, state law requires the county clerk to become sheriff or select someone to do the job for him or her. County Clerk Paula Bielser Thursday contacted Weber about holding the position and following his acceptance and swore him in to office. "It's a sad thing that, happened,"

## County residents sad, shocked about death

By Jan Katz Ackerman  
Colby Free Press

Sheridan County is grieving from the unexpected death of its sheriff who served 18 years. Jim Johnson was known throughout the community for his kind heartedness and willingness to help others. Mayor Lori Horesky said she, like Johnson, grew up in Hoxie and she had known him all her life. "All the kids respected him," she said. "He did his job and did it well. The community knows both families, but we pull together and will get through this." Sally Cameron, vice president of First State Bank, was a classmate of Johnson and graduated with him from Hoxie High School in 1970. She said Johnson's influence in the community is deep and wide. "It goes down generations," she said. "My daughter is a classmate of one of his daughters. A lot of families and classmates are touched by this. There's just tons of families effected by this tragedy." Cameron said Johnson came from a large family, of which many of its members reside in Sheridan County. Sheila Heim, an employee at State Bank of Hoxie, also grew up in Hoxie and she too said the com-

munity is suffering. She said people she waited on at the bank on Friday were "quiet and solemn." "I have both families in my prayers," she said. "I feel for both of them." Jeff Torluemke, executive vice president of State Banke, said he grew up in Denver, but has lived in Hoxie 31 years. He said news of Johnson's death was a shock. "You expect this kind of thing on a daily basis in Denver, but not in Hoxie," he said. "But still, Hoxie is far ahead of larger places in spite of this." Torluemke said he enjoyed Johnson's tenure as sheriff. "I'm sure he provided us with as good as protection as the economy allowed him," he said. Larry Cressler said law enforcement was part of Johnson's family history. Johnson's father, Millard, served as Hoxie's police chief. Cressler said he respected the younger Johnson as sheriff. "He must have done something right because he never had opposition," he said. Johnson was known for trying to help people by first talking to them, as was doing when he was killed. "It's sad. Jimmy was a very good voice of reason," Jayne Moss said.

## Investigation reveals shooting incident unexpected

By Jan Katz Ackerman  
Colby Free Press

Details from the Kansas Bureau of Investigation about Thursday's shooting death of Sheridan County Sheriff Jim Johnson indicate it was unprovoked. "Sheriff Johnson was interviewing Steven Reitcheck, a person he'd known all his life, and (Reitcheck) had agreed to commit himself," Kansas Bureau of Investigation Deputy Director Kyle Smith said Friday. Distraught over the death of his father, Leroy Reitcheck, who died as the result of a hit-and-run accident caused by a drunk driver,



J. Johnson



K. Smith

Steven P. Reitcheck last week tried to exhume his father's body. Johnson was talking with Reitcheck, 35, about Reitcheck's need for mental health care. The conversation took place about 1 p.m. in Johnson's office, one block west of Main Street in Hoxie and

across the parking lot from the Sheridan County Courthouse. Calling Reitcheck's behavior "bizarre," Smith said in September he was alleged to have broken the headstone at his father's grave at St. Frances Cemetery west of Hoxie. Smith said despite Reitcheck agreeing to commit himself, the conversation abruptly turned fatal. "At some point, the young man was asked to take off his coat and from then on it deteriorated," Smith said. "Mr. Reitcheck pulled a handgun and shot Sheriff Johnson." Smith said Johnson had known Reitcheck well and apparently did

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"I felt intimidated. He knows that I'm telling the truth."

Kelly Summerlin, accuser

district attorney, and his accuser, Kelly Summerlin, worked as his victims coordinator until February 1991, when Morrison fired her. He has said her job performance was unsatisfactory, while she still contends she lost her job for rejecting a

sexual advance. Kline's campaign arranged interviews with Summerlin with selected news organizations this week, and his new ad features Summerlin's voice from one of those interviews, playing over

grainy black and white footage of Morrison speaking. She ends her remarks by calling Morrison "ruthless." "I felt intimidated," she says in the ad. "He knows that I'm telling the truth." Morrison has said her allegations were and remain baseless. Besides her two lawsuits being dismissed, the federal Equal Opportunity Employment Commission said in January 1992 that Summerlin had no witnesses to corroborate her story and concluded there wasn't sufficient evidence to show she'd been subjected to comments of a sexual nature.