

**Weather Corner**



**Snow continues in the forecast**

**Tonight** — A 40 percent chance of snow before midnight. Cloudy with a low around 14. North wind around 15 mph. New snow accumulation of less than a half inch possible.

**Friday** — Partly cloudy with a high near 34. Northwest wind between 10 and 15 mph.

**Friday night** — Partly cloudy with a low around 14. Northwest wind between 10 and 15 mph.

**Saturday** — Partly cloudy with a high near 35. Breezy with a north wind between and 20 mph.

**Saturday night** — Mostly clear with a low around 12.

**Sunday** — Mostly sunny with a high near 37.

**Sunday night** — Mostly clear with a low around 18.

**Christmas Day** — Mostly sunny with a high near 39.

**Temperatures**  
 Wednesday's high, 33  
 Low this morning, 27  
 Records for this date, 72 in 1933, -15 in 1983  
 Precipitation past 24 hours to 8 a.m. today, 2.5  
 December's precipitation, 2.22

A recorded forecast updated throughout the day is available by calling (785) 899-7119. Current temperatures are available by calling 460-8367.

**Briefly**

**Colby College plans auditions**

Auditions for the Colby Community College spring play will be held from 7 to 9 p.m., Wednesday and Thursday, Jan 17-18 in the Frahm Theatre in the Northwest Kansas Cultural Arts Center.

No experience or advance preparation is required, said Deb Bickner, theater department director. "Those who audition will be reading from the comedy fantasy Card Play, which is a family play suitable for all ages," she said.

Everyone is welcome and encouraged to audition. The play performances will be March 2-4.

**Taxes, tag deadlines near**

The Thomas County Treasurer's office is reminding taxpayers the first half of their 2006 taxes were due Wednesday, said Donita Applebury, treasurer. Because poor weather closed the courthouse Wednesday, taxes can be paid today without penalty. In addition, persons renewing license plate tags with the last name beginning with U through Z need to do so by Dec. 28.

**Former mayor recovering**

Former Colby Mayor Warren Hixson, now living in

Hutchinson, recently underwent open heart surgery to bypass five arteries. He is recovering at home. For those who would like to send him a card, his address is: 129 West 23rd, Hutchinson, KS 67502.

**County announces closings**

All county offices at the Thomas County Courthouse and Thomas County Health Department in the office complex will be closed Monday and Tuesday, Dec. 25-26 and Monday, Jan. 1, 2007. The county landfill will also be closed those dates, and Sunday.

*Holiday cheer*



Lisa Bieker, right, a client at the Developmental Service Center of Northwest Kansas in Hoxie, greeted Joanne Emerick, left and Kaylene Oelke, center, at the holiday open house Tuesday. The open house is an annual tradition hosted by the clients at the "college for learning."

JAN KATZ ACKERMAN/Colby Free Press

**Oakley experiences boom in business**

By Jan Katz Ackerman  
 Colby Free Press

Logan County Development Executive Director Jamie Bell is pleased with a business boom the past several months in Oakley. Bell said he hopes the growth continues.

"I think there is a real entrepreneurial spirit in Oakley right now," Bell said. "A lot of the businesses that are opening are being opened by local families or combinations of friends who want to be business owners."

Changes to Oakley's business portfolio have included a pharmacy, a computer technology business, dental laboratory, fitness center, telecommunications business, a clothing store and the merger by an implement dealership.

Bell said Jeff Brittenham is the owner of J.B. Tech, a computer service in Brittenham's home. A native of Oakley and software programmer for the past 15 years, Brittenham moved back from Texas to open his business. Working primarily on personal computers with Windows operating systems, Brittenham also services Macintosh computers.

Body Works, a new fitness center, is owned by Elaine Wycoff and Betty Hockersmith and is located in the old Eagles Club building at 117 Center Ave.

Anyone needing cable television or wireless phone service can stop by 211 Center Ave. at the new S&T location.

"It's a full service center," Bell said.

Oakley also has two new doctors and a dental laboratory. Tracy and Terry Grace own Grace Dental Laboratory. Located at 116 Center, the Graces use the latest equipment and technology in the dental laboratory work. The two will fill prescriptions written by dentists.

Dr. Charles Zerr and Dr. Ratchnee France joined New Frontiers Health Services, located at 216 Maple Ave., to further help with medical needs.

In addition, Bell and his wife, Phi,

**"Oakley and Logan County is a great place to live, with lots of opportunity for young families, retirees, and single people looking to make a positive impact."**

Jamie Bell,  
 Logan County Development

opened a business in Oakley.

Chunky Goose Clothing has new and used clothing at 300 Center Ave. The couple has plans to launch their own line of clothing in the future, and hopes to open stores in Salina, Wichita and Colorado Springs, Colo.

Bell said people are investing in the community and investing in the lives of their neighbors.

"Oakley and Logan County is a great place to live, with lots of opportunity for young families, retirees, and single people looking to make a positive impact."

As a result of this, we are seeing people step into leadership roles and being proactive in our community," he said.

Besides new businesses, one merger took place in Logan County. John Deere dealers Colby Implement in Colby merged with Oakley's Tri-County Implement, located on U.S. Highway 40.

Both locations will have sales, parts and service.

"As the Logan County development director, it is my privilege to work with such a fantastic, optimistic, and proactive group of people," Bell said. "I have learned that the most important thing I can do to help businesses succeed in Logan County is often to just listen to the business owners and work with them to ensure their success."

**Fort Riley build up to begin sooner than expected**

FORT RILEY (AP) — The expected buildup of troops at Fort Riley will begin next year, a year ahead of schedule, as Army officials reorganize a key unit to help relieve troops stationed in Iraq.

About 3,500 soldiers with the 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division, will begin arriving at the base throughout the year, with about 1,400 of them bringing along their families.

Lt. Col. Christian Kubik said Wednesday that while the timetable is changed, the base population is still expected to grow to 18,300 troops by 2011.

About 1,500 of the base's current

complement of 13,500 troops are training as part of transition teams in 60-day cycles for deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan.

The 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored, also known as the Bulldog Brigade, has trained those transition teams. The unit is scheduled to drop those duties and form a Heavy Brigade Combat Team of 3,800 soldiers and be renamed next fall as the 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division.

The unit was originally scheduled to reorganize in March 2008.

The change is designed to make the unit more self-sustaining and easier to deploy overseas with

Heavy Brigade Combat Teams using Abrams tanks and Bradley Fighting Vehicles.

Kubik said the brigade currently has 1,100 soldiers. About 600 of those soldiers, consisting of the 70th Engineer battalion, will head to Afghanistan early next year and between 200 and 300 other soldiers will be moved to the 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division to continue the transition team training.

He said the faster timetable will make for crowded conditions at the base, but isn't a serious problem.

"This is sooner than we expected, but it wasn't unexpected," Kubik

said. "Internally, there will be some challenges, but nothing we won't be able to deal with."

The surrounding communities, which have anticipated providing housing and other needs for the growing number of troops and family members, should be ready to take care of the influx, said Sam Robinson, director of the Junction City/Geary County Military Affairs Council.

"I think we are in good shape," Robinson said, adding that single- and multi-family housing developments have been under way for about two years. "This will help keep development moving forward. I was concerned that some developers were going to slow construction due to the slower growth timeline that had been discussed several months ago. That would have been bad since the overall timeline and numbers for Fort Riley have not changed. The last thing we need is a slow down."

**Hoxie officials to hire chief of police**

By Jan Katz Ackerman  
 Colby Free Press

Hoxie city officials have tabled contracting law enforcement with the Sheridan County Sheriff's office and are looking for a new chief of police.

Mayor Lori Horesky and Commissioners Jim Erwin and Troy Dewey decided to hire a chief since Sheridan County Sheriff Brian Fenner is not ready to combine forces.

"Brian visited with Ken Eland and said he wasn't ready yet," Horesky said. "We may revisit it in six months to a year."

Eland is Hoxie's city attorney and

owns Sloan and Eland Law Firm in Hoxie.

Fenner, since the death of Sheriff Jim Johnson in October, said getting the sheriff's office running is his first priority.

Talk of joining the Hoxie Police Department and the Sheridan County Sheriff's Office has taken place since 2003. The late Sheriff Johnson supported a joint venture.

With Chief John Bieker's retirement Dec. 31, that leaves the city with no chief of police. Besides Bieker, the only other officer is part-time, Jim Bainter.

As of Tuesday, City Clerk Jessica Spresser said only one resume has come in for the chief of police job.

She said resumes are being accepted until the end of the year meeting scheduled for Dec. 28.

"They will review resumes at that meeting, and I would imagine they will interview the next week after, but I don't know that for sure," Spresser said.

Beiker is paid \$40,342 a year plus benefits, but Spresser said the new chief's salary will depend on experience.

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**BANKWEST OF KANSAS**  
*will be closing*  
**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2006**  
*at 1:00 pm thru*  
**MONDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2006**

*May you have a SAFE and HAPPY HOLIDAY!*

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**Faced with a Drinking Problem?**  
 Perhaps  
**Alcoholics Anonymous Can Help**  
 Meetings are Open to the Public  
 City Hall Basement  
 Mondays & Thursdays - 8:30 p.m.

**NOW SHOWING**  
**Dec. 15th - 21st**

**DEJA VU**  
 PG-13 2 hour, 10 min.  
 Friday 7:00 & 9:25  
 Saturday 4:00 & 7:00 & 9:25  
 Sunday 4:00 & 7:00  
 Monday - Thursday 7:00

**CHAROLETTE'S WEB**  
 G 1 hour, 45 min.  
 Friday 7:00 & 9:00  
 Saturday 4:00 & 7:00 & 9:00  
 Sunday 4:00 & 7:00  
 Monday - Thursday 7:00

**4:00 Matinees**  
 Admission \$4.00 Ages 3 & up

460-9600 • colbycinema.com

**We will be closed on**

**Christmas**

*We wish everyone a...*

**Merry Christmas!**

There will be no Colby Free Press on Monday or Tuesday next week! We will have a Wednesday, Thursday and Friday paper next week.

**DEADLINES:**  
**Wed., Dec. 27 Colby Free Press:** Tuesday, Dec. 26 @ noon display & word ads.

155 W. 5th, Colby  
 462-3963