



# COLBY FREE PRESS

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## Sheridan fills vacancy

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Colby Free Press

Doyle Kauk will represent District No. 3 Sheridan County residents as soon as Gov. Kathleen Sebelius gives him the green light.

Kauk, 63, pending the governor's approval which could take place within the next week, will serve the remaining term of David Zimmerman. Sheridan County Republicans met Tuesday to select and approve Kauk.

Zimmerman resigned March 1 and moved to Kinsley to become manager of the grain company ADM.

Kauk, who works for ADM Alliance, has a master's degree in agriculture economics with an emphasis in accounting and is an animal nutritionist and consultant.

New to the political arena, Kauk brings to the commissioners a business background which includes having taught accounting for two years. He said he believes he has the ability to "look at needs and problems and come up with more than one answer."

"Once you come up with more than one answer," he said, "The next thing is to come up with a good decision." Kauk said one of his first responsibilities as a commissioner is to review operational policies and modify them if necessary.

"Decisions need to be made for the benefit of the county," he said. "It's the residents' business and things need to be done on their behalf."

During a brief question and answer segment of the meeting, Kauk said he would support privatization of some services, such as mowing right of ways, if it was cost effective.

Asked if he would support installation of an elevator in Sheridan County Courthouse, Kauk said the issue "needs to be revisited."

He also said he supports getting out among the county's residents in a town hall format. "We need to get out and ask questions," he said.

Kauk's wife, Ronnie, works part time in the county treasurer's office, but he said he will avoid voting on issues that directly affect her job.

Thirty-four people attended the convention. Republican Party Chairman Doren Follis said he appreciated those who turned out to observe the process.

Follis said he appreciated Lea Herl of Hoxie and John Karls of Selden for applying for vote.

## Storm's aftermath



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Starting Monday the City of Colby will be running its chipper to clean up branches that came down during the December storms (above). Officials said they will not pick up entire trees since the chipper is limited to branches no larger than 8 inches in diameter. Anyone who would like the city to pick up branches should have them curbside by 8 a.m.

## Brewster shuts off city well

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Colby Free Press

Mother Nature's effort to play havoc with drinking water in Brewster is being monitored by city officials.

One of the city's three wells is temporarily out of service to allow nitrate levels to reduce as a way to satisfy state and federal officials.

"Nitrates fluctuate in drought conditions, especially in fall and spring," City Superintendent Mike Schultz said, "but, nitrates occur naturally."

In 1974, the United States Congress passed the Safe Drinking Water Act.

This allowed the Environmental Protection Agency to force cities to test for more than 125 different contaminants and the allowable levels were drastically lowered. Schultz said prior to the Drinking Water Act, contaminant levels had to meet parts per hundred ratio, but now they must meet parts per million ratio.

"The major adult human intake of nitrate is from food, rather than from water," Schultz said.

"Vegetables such as spinach, lettuce, beets and carrots contain significant amounts of nitrate. Drinking water normally contributes only a small percentage of the total nitrate intake."

Schultz sends samples of Brewster's water to a testing laboratory four times each year.

In December, nitrates in water well No. 4 in Brewster tested at 11 parts per million, 1 part higher than allowed by law.

"That's a very minute amount, but over a period of time could cause concern," he said. "An adult would have to drink about 50,000 gallons of water for there to be a problem."

But the problem with high nitrate levels is not with adults, but with children.

Feb. 5, Schultz notified Brewster residents they should not give city water to infants who are 6-months or younger or use the water to make infant formula.

"Nitrates deplete oxygen in infants under 6 months old and causes blue baby syndrome," Schultz said.

Nitrates in drinking water can come from natural causes, industrial or agricultural sources, including septic systems and run off. Levels of nitrate in drinking water can vary throughout the year, and Schultz said well No. 4 will remain out of service until the nitrate level drops.

"It's not a big concern, but we still have to notify our people," he said. "I've put notices at the school, the bank, post office, cafe and sent them to all the residents."

He said while well No. 4 is located south of the football field in the northeast part of town it is not likely fertilizers used on the grass are the problem.

"But something homeowners ought to be aware of it that they probably put more chemicals on their lawns per square foot than most farmers use on their crops," he said.

"Rest assured that the city of Brewster will always try to maintain a safe and healthy water product."

## Some blame water shortage on farmers

STOCKTON (AP) — When Robin Bailey wanted to escape the Denver suburbs, she bought a 160-acre alfalfa farm in northwest Kansas and fell in love with a pair of creeks that raced through the property.

Two ponds she added later were just another bonus.

But nine years later, the creeks are dry, the ponds puddle up a bit but are mostly empty, and a nearby section of the Solomon River doesn't run much at all.

And it's not because of drought, Bailey says. "It's because of irrigators. Once they turn that spigot on down the road, that's the minute you see the water move from the pond."

Irrigation, the cornerstone of modern agriculture that helped the United States become a world food supplier, has become a source of contention for farmers, environmental groups and governments.

Irrigation accounts for the largest demand on freshwater supplies in the United States, and is second only to thermoelectric power in its use of U.S. fresh and saltwater supplies combined, according to the

**"It's because of irrigators. Once they turn that spigot on down the road, that's the minute you see the water move from the pond."**

Robin Bailey,  
northwest Kansas farmer

Environmental Protection Agency.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that while about 16 percent of all cropland is irrigated, largely in the western states, that acreage generates about \$60 billion — or about half the value of U.S. crops. Some farm groups contend water is plentiful and irrigation is necessary to sustain crops and the livelihoods of the people and businesses that rely on a solid farm economy.

They also point to low rainfall and conservation measures that trap water on fields as contributing to water shortages.

But environmental groups are

among those who claim irrigation — particularly west of the Mississippi — has helped dry up streams and lower reservoirs, and has threatened the land's long-term viability.

Sandra Postel, director of the Global Water Policy Project in Amherst, Mass., estimates that 10 percent of the food supply is produced by growers who overpump groundwater and calls irrigation a "hidden subsidy" for farmers.

"If you're pumping more water than is being recharged, you're in a deficit situation in regards to water," Postel says.

"You're producing food today in a manner that's not sustainable, so

you're using some of tomorrow's water to meet today's food demand."

Several states have taken steps to curtail irrigation.

Colorado shut down about 400 wells last summer.

Kansas is paying farmers to stop irrigating and retire the water rights to wells that draw on underground sources like the massive Ogallala Aquifer, which has been showing signs of depletion in some sections for years.

Steve Smith, director of waterclaim.org, defends irrigation in the Central Plains states where relying on rain and snow to water crops can be a gamble. However, if some farmers had to stop growing crops like corn, which requires more water, it wouldn't be "the end of the world," Smith said.

"But if you do that across too much of America then you start to affect things."

One state in the nation will survive, but if you start shutting down two or three states of irrigation, then you need to start changing your diet."

## History comes to life through Sacred Heart School students

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Sacred Heart School students did more than just learn about history. They acted it out as well.

Students took part in a social studies fair Thursday.

Principal Dave Evert said students dressed up as their chosen historical figure and when a fictional button on their hand was pushed, students would come to life and give a presentation on their life. The fair re-enacted figures in wax museums.

"The kids chose who they wanted to be," Evert said.

"They were wax museum characters. They picked someone who interested them."

Presentations ranged from Jackie Robinson to Anne Frank, Thomas Jefferson and Harry Houdini.

This was the second time the social studies fair was held.

Elsie Rietcheck, fourth-grade teacher, said the staff came up with the idea of alternating the social studies fair every other year with the science fair.

They wax museum concept was mentioned after attending a Catholic school inservice where staff learned about students doing a Kansas wax museum.

"We thought that was a really neat



DAVE EVERT/Sacred Heart School

Sacred Heart School third grader Sydney Stephens, left, dressed as Sacagawea, gave a presentation on her life during the school's social studies fair last week.

idea," Rietcheck said.

Not wanting to limit the students to portraying Kansas natives, they opened it up to all famous people in history.

Fourth and fifth graders were required to participate; the fair was optional for all others.

Rietcheck said the fifth graders

chose figures on their historical basis and the fourth graders tended to choose based on their interests.

Presentations ran up to two minutes and students had to incorporate their research into their speech.

"The students picked up valuable skills in preparing for the event.

Research, history and learning

how to talk to a crowd were some of the skills they learned," Evert said.

Parents and grandparents acted as the judges.

Students participating in the fair were in first grade.

They included: Austin Brier as Lou Gehrig; Brock Horinek,

**Good Luck  
at state  
Golden  
Plains!**

Grandpa Bill Finley, Vietnam War veteran; Landon Reilley, H U Lee, eternal grand master of taekwondo; Hayden Reinert, Dr. Steve Howley, Kansas astronaut.

Second grade: Taylen Hubbell, Harry Houdini; August Hutfles, Steve Irwin, the "Crocodile Hunter."

Third grade: Elissa Zerr, Harriet Tubman; Sasrah Bieker, George Washington; Tessa Krzycki, Abraham Lincoln; Alli Franz, Laura Ingalls; Sydney Stephens, Sacagawea.

Fourth grade students: Ashleigh Bland, Harriet Tubman; Kyle Finley, Richard Sanders, Olympic wrestler; Jenilee Gray, Martha Washington; Keegan Morgan, Walter Camp, father of football; Phoebe Pfeifer, Olga Korbut, Olympic gymnast; Courtney Reilley, Anna Pavlova; Brett Schroeder, Grandpa John Kriss, Thomas County pioneer farmer; Marc Bremenkamp, Theodore Roosevelt; Shelby Cassaw, Amelia Earhart; Chase Hartwell, Jackie Robinson; Kaylei Reeh, Susan B. Anthony; Reed Stephens, Dwight D. Eisenhower; Andrew Taylor, Charlie Miller, Kansas Pony Express rider; Morgan Vap, Sacagawea; Kaylin Wiens, Anne Frank; Andrea Zerr, Samuel Adams.