



More staff helps county health

By Jan Katz Ackerman*jkackerman@gmail.com*

Thomas County Public Health Administrator Lisa Molstad said staff additions in her department have helped.

Her comments were made Monday as part of a monthly report to Thomas County Commissioner Ken Christiansen, Paul Steele and Byron Sowers.

"I feel like we made a good decision to hire someone part time," Molstad said. "Laurie is able to handle it."

In January, Laurie Allen was hired to serve as billing clerk for the health department. Molstad said for the month of January, Allen tracked \$12,280 in patient charges.

"We had \$2,145 in write-offs, received \$2,136 and have \$8,019 outstanding," Molstad said. "That means 79 percent of our charges are still outstanding."

Molstad said 212 patients were seen at the public health department. The top three reasons patients were seen were family planning, with 50 patients; immunizations with 43 and 27 patients received lab work.

Of those same 212 patients, 85 of them, or 39 percent, paid for medical care themselves. Forty-one patients, 19 percent, were Medicare patients. Sixteen percent were patients who had insurance and another 14 percent whose care was paid for by Medicaid.

"Almost all our immunizations are being paid by insurance," Molstad said. "But we've got to get that money in the account."

Besides a new billing clerk, the health department has a receptionist and medical records clerk. Viviana Garibay started in January. She is bilingual and serves as an interpreter.

Senate OKs coal-fire plants

TOPEKA (AP) — Senators overwhelmingly rejected a proposal Wednesday to impose the state's first limits on carbon dioxide emissions, then gave first-round approval to a bill allowing two coal-fired power plants in southwest Kansas.

The Senate advanced the bill on a voice vote, setting up final action Thursday, when approval would send the measure to the House.

But the vote was 32-3 against the CO2 rules proposed by Sen. Chris Steineger, a Kansas City Democrat. His proposal included not only emissions limits for new power plants but a carbon tax of \$3 on each ton of excess emissions for utilities that failed to comply.



JOHN VAN NOSTRAND/Colby Free Press

Sentimental journey

Members of the Colby High School choir surrounded and serenaded Mysti Rothfuss, (seated, center) at Heartland Christian School this morning. The singing valentine was a gift from her father. The choir sang to people throughout Colby.

Wheat still wrapped up in winter

By Kevin Johnson*Colby Free Press
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Cold weather keeps wheat from emerging

With some of Kansas' winter wheat yet to emerge in the south-central and southwest areas, Thomas County farmers may be concerned as to whether the cold weather of December and January killed their winter wheat crops.

According to local farmer and District 4 manager of the Kansas Water Authority, Lon Frahm, this year's winter wheat, or, so far,

lack thereof, is nothing out of the ordinary.

"It is still dormant here," Frahm said. "But we expect it to be dormant as cold as it has been this winter."

Frahm explained that how winter wheat responds once planted is due to the elevation at which it was planted, adding the ground was still too cold for the wheat seeds to germinate at this point, and if and when it would sprout, would depend on the temperature.

"I wouldn't expect it to sprout

“At this point, I'm more worried about the potential for blowing in the fields where the wheat has not yet emerged or has put out very little plant growth.”
Jim Shroyer
Kansas State University



KEVIN JOHNSON/Colby Free Press

Officials have raised some concerns over Kansas' winter wheat, which has yet to sprout thus far do to above average freezing temperatures during this year's winter months. In Colby, winter wheat has yet to sprout, not unexpected at this point in the season.

anytime soon, not as cold as it has been so far," Frahm said.

According to Kansas State University agronomist Jim Shroyer it is unlikely that winter wheat crops have been killed in the ground.

"It is possible but highly unlikely," Shroyer said. "If the seed had germinated but not yet emerged and soil temperatures at seeding depth reached single digits, then we could have some problems."

In that situation, full emergence later in winter or spring isn't likely, he said.

"So far soil temperatures have not been that cold in Kansas even with the bone-chilling air temperatures we've had- because soils have been wet and we've had some snow cover," Shroyer said.

When seed has not germinated or started to swell, cold soil temperatures will not damage it in any way, he added.

"At this point I'm more worried about the potential for blowing in the fields where the wheat has not yet emerged or has put out very little plant growth," Shroyer said. "Blowing not only will result in erosion losses from the fields in question but also could damage young, emerged wheat plants in other fields."

"The freeze-thaw cycles we're having tend to dry the soil surface and destroy the soil structure, which leaves the surface soil powdery and subject to blowing. However, timely moisture will help

keep that soil from blowing."

There are two types of wheat, winter and spring, each with various subsets. According to Frahm, winter wheat was integral to Thomas County in the 1950s through the 1970s but since that time there has been a shift, due to several reasons.

"Before the Freedom to Farm Act of 1996 the government told us what to plant and when to plant if (farmers) wanted subsidies," Frahm said. "Now payment is not directly linked to that."

Frahm added that conserving water with no till, leaving cover on the ground, and genetically modified crops also played a factor.

"Wheat control isn't the problem that it used to be," Frahm said, "we are growing a lot of crops now that we couldn't 30 years ago. At one time winter wheat was huge... Colby was called the 'Kansas Golden Buckle of Wheat'."

Frahm added the type of wheat grown, spring or winter, is determined by the season in which the wheat is planted and the optimum growing period a particular area is accustomed to.

"North of here, where the winters are harder, they plant wheat in spring and they cut it later in the summer," Frahm said. "We could plant spring but the yield isn't as high. Up in the Dakotas it is all spring wheat, but around Kansas and Nebraska it is all winter wheat."

Briefly

Correction

Anyone wanting to take advantage of the free paint at the Thomas County Landfill can contact (785) 462-8139.

The phone number in a story in Wednesday's Colby Free Press was incorrect.

The county obtained the paint as part of the hazardous materials received at the landfill. He said the paint has been evaluated to make sure it is usable and is available in 5-gallon buckets with each color noted on the lid.

"They are in to be given away in 15 gallon increments of one color," landfill director Larry Jumper said. "There are 15 gallons of white, 15 gallons of green, 15 in earth tones and they are all labeled so someone doesn't pick up different colors and start to paint and have different colors."

Landfill closed Feb. 18

The Thomas County Landfill will be closed Monday in observance of Presidents' Day.

Lent lunch offered

Weekly Brown Bag and Scripture events will be held a noon Wednesdays during Lent at First Baptist Church, 615 W. Webster.

Feb. 13: For My Sake

Feb. 20: A Life Spent for Me

Feb. 27: Why?

March 5: A Murderer They Save

March 12: No House, No Home

The meals are brown-bag. Desserts and coffee are furnished. A free-will offering will be taken for the Thomas County Ministerial Association Transient Fund. For more information, call 462-3497.

Soups benefits preschool

Kappa Upsilon, a local service group, is sponsoring a soup supper from 5-7:30 p.m. Friday at the Colby Community Building during the Colby vs. Rawlins County basketball games. Chili, chicken-noodle soup, vegetable-beef soup, cinnamon rolls and cookies will be served for a free-will offering. Proceeds benefit Puddle Duck Preschool.

Pancakes benefit baseball

A pancake feed from 7-1 p.m. Saturday at the Colby Community Building will benefit the American Legion Baseball program.

Free-will donations will be accepted.

Nice touch

Go to www.thomascountycommunityfoundation.net

com and click on the line of look who's participating in Thomas County's Random Acts of Kindness.

It will take you to a place where staff has listed some of the known kind acts in the community. Random Acts of Kindness is this week.

Daffodils help society

American Cancer Daffodil Days is coming and orders may be placed until Thursday, Feb. 21. The daffodils will be delivered to Someplace Special in Colby around the first week in March, said Cathy Harrison, coordinating the event. Prices range from a bunch for \$10 to bouquet with vase, \$15. In addition, there is a "Bear and A Bunch," for \$25 and one-half and full cases of daffodils from \$250-\$400. For questions or to order, call Harrison at 460-2501; 462-2331; fax: 462-6242 or e-mail: harrison@st-tel.net