



XX pages

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Leave rules change to help service families

By Andy Heintz
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The Colby City Council changed its rules for employees taking medical leave in order to be in compliance with new federal regulations.

The council approved the new provisions in accordance with the federal Family and Medical Leave Act at its meeting on Tuesday evening at City Hall.

The amendment will allow employees up to 26 weeks of leave to provide medical care for an armed service member. It also provides up to 12 weeks of leave for other types of needs of service people, including such things as moving and finding day care.

The required forms were taken from information on the U.S. Department of Labor's website and City Attorney John Gatz reviewed the ordinance.

In other news the commission:
• Accepted a proposal from Microcomm to program the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition System in Colby. The system controls turning on and off the city's nine water wells, towers and lift stations.
"It was developed by Gerry

Bieker and Mike Albers in the early 1990s using software that is now sadly outdated," said City Manager Carolyn Armstrong.

The cost for Microcomm is \$16,595 and the computer workstations is \$2,394 for a total cost of \$19,529.

• Approved a bid by Office Works of \$4,817 for a copier to be put in the city manager's office. IKON had also submitted a bid for \$5,369 for the copier.

• Learned that the economic development bonds, issued in 1999, for the Fairview Estates Retirement Community included a provision that the property could be purchased for \$100 if the bonds were paid off. Armstrong told the council that the corporation, which runs the center, wants to exercise that option and the closing has been set for Wednesday, April 8. The council approved a resolution authorizing the sale and conveyance of the property.

• Accepted a bid of \$96,390 from the company Key Equipment for a 2009 Sterling rearload trash truck.

"There is \$100,000 in the Municipal Equipment Reserve Fund for the purchase of a refuse truck," said Armstrong.

Oil thieves hit wells in Kansas

HAYS (AP) — The Ellis County Sheriff's office is investigating two oil thefts from leases near Hays, following similar thefts elsewhere in northwest Kansas.

In Colby, Thomas County Sheriff Rod Taylor said that he has had no reports of problems here. He said he had heard about a theft near Dighton, in Lane County, and been warned to be on guard.

The first theft reported to Ellis County officials took place in late February from a lease owned by Mustang Energy Corp. Sheriff Ed

Harbin said about 160 barrels of oil worth about \$5,500 had been taken.

The second theft was in early March, when about 165 barrels was stolen from a separate lease.

No suspects have been identified, but officials say it's likely the thieves worked in the industry and had access to a tanker truck.

Oil thefts had been reported in Russell and Osborne counties in December and January. It's unclear if the thefts are related.

Wind farms increase state's energy output

NASHVILLE (AP) — Kansas has tripled its wind generating capacity in the last 15 months, and wind power supporters are hoping that is just the beginning.

Flat Ridge Wind Farm in Nashville, about 60 miles southwest of Wichita, began operations recently and will generate about 100 megawatts of power a year. And the Central Plains Wind Farm in Marienthal, just east of Leoti, is partially online. It will produce

99 megawatts when fully operational.

The two new wind farms make Kansas one of the few states in the country that can now generate more than 1,000 megawatts of wind power a year.

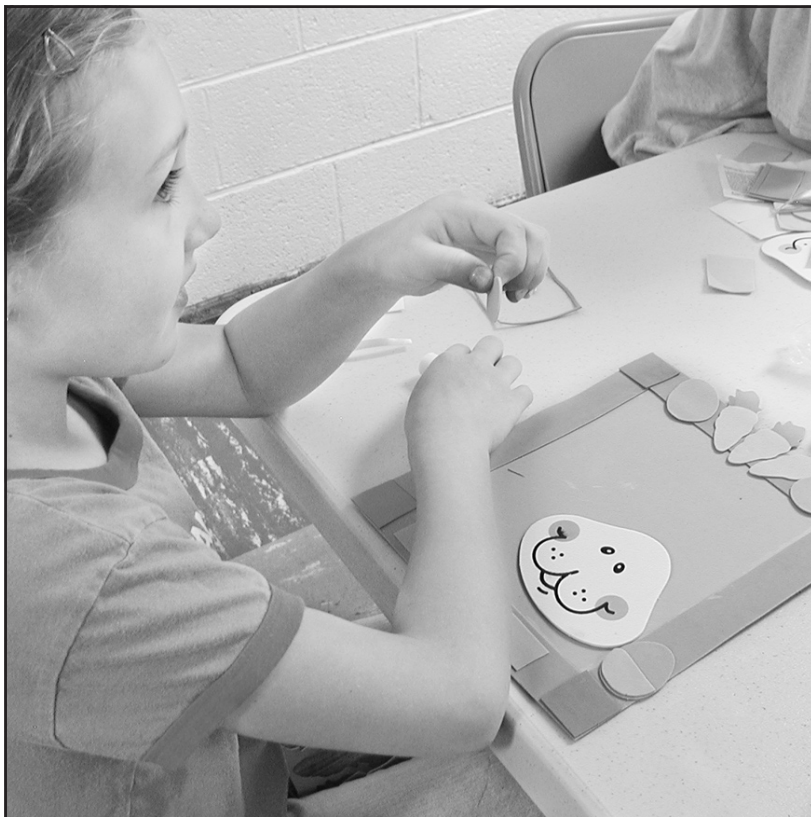
Government and industry officials say Kansas is making strides in taking advantage of its windy conditions, but there is still a long way to go to make wind energy profitable in the state.



VERA SLOAN/Colby Free Press

Connor Lanning, 5, (above left) son of Mandy and Chad Lanning, and Aiden Cook, 5, the son of Jason and Therese, tried their hands at coloring eggs during the second annual Eggz-

stravaganza Wednesday morning. Karissa Singer, 9, (below) daughter of Mark and Denise Singer, listened closely to directions so she could make her craft project look like the sample.



Youngsters enjoy Easter eggs, crafts

By Vera Sloan
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The Colby Community Building was all abuzz Wednesday with the chatter of children 3 to 12 eager to get into the second annual Eggstravaganza Easter-egg decorating craft event.

Thirty-seven kiddos registered for the spring activity, sponsored by the city recreation department and scheduled to take place during spring break.

Director Stacey Lee said they had to turn down 20 youngsters because they missed the registration deadline. She said timely registration was important because they have to order supplies two weeks in advance. She said the department staff spent two hours boiling 15 dozen eggs.

Other annual events for kids sponsored by the department include the Firecracker Fair in July, Tricks and Treats for Halloween, and the fall pumpkin-carving event.

They also offer a Kids Corner craft hour each Wednesday for preschoolers.

For information, call Lee at 460-4440.



Four-year-old Molly Meis, from Spring Hill, was awed by all the eggs there were to color at the annual Eggstravaganza on Wednesday. Molly was here visiting her grandparents, Patty and Jim Drake of Colby, and Mike Meis of Gem. She is the daughter of Heather and Steve Meis, Spring Hill.

Briefly

Pets available for adoption

Looking for a pet? Colby Animal Clinic has a 3- to 4-year-old gray, black and brown male German shepard available for adoption. Lost or strayed animals are often brought to the clinic. Call or stop by 810 E. Fourth St. All animals have current shots, and costs are minimal. For questions, call 460-8621.

Storm spotter class planned

A free storm spotter workshop will be held at 6:30 p.m. Monday at the Colby Community Building, offered by the National Weather Service. Anyone interested in learning how to spot tornado-producing weather and severe storms is encouraged to attend.

Campus class to involve police

An "investigative scenario" for students in Linda

Davis-Stephens' Homeland Security class at Colby Community College from noon to 3 p.m. Tuesday may involve units from the Colby Police Department. Anyone on campus should that day not be alarmed, said Susan McMahan, Thomas County emergency management director. The activity is a "closely monitored training scenario." For questions, call Davis-Stephens at 462-3984.

College president to report

The public is invited to the Colby Community College "State of the College Address" at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday in the Northwest Kansas Cultural Arts Center. President Lynn Kreider will discuss new programs, existing programs to be expanded, current events and future plans and projects. If time allows, he will answer questions. Everyone is encouraged to attend. For information, call Debbie Schwanke at 460-5411.

Kindergarten enrollment set

Kindergarten pre-enrollment for the coming school year will be from 7:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Wednesday at the Colby Grade School conference room. Bring your child's birth certificate, immunization records and Social Security card. Call the school office at (785) 460-5100 for questions.

Lenten talk focuses on soldiers

The Lenten Brown Bag and Bible program at noon Wednesday will be led by the Rev. Carroll Morony talking about "The Soldiers." The program will be in the fellowship hall of the First Presbyterian Church. Bring your own lunch; drinks are provided.

Films focus on Bible lands

A film series on archaeological digs in Israel which retraces some of the early sites where Bible charac-

ters such as Abraham lived and walked continues at 7 p.m. Wednesdays at the College Drive Assembly of God church. The public is invited.

High School 'WhoDunit' set

Come help solve them mystery of "The Great High School WhoDunit" at 7 p.m. next Thursday in the Colby High School auditorium. The forensics team will have a soup supper before the show from 5:30-6:45 p.m. in the commons area and a dessert buffet during intermission. During the break, there'll be a clue hunt. Tickets are available at the door, from cast members or at the high school office at \$4 for adults and \$2 for students.



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