



Driving changes for teens

By Andy Heintz Colby Free Press

Teenagers will have to wait a little longer before driving their friends around town on weekends since the Kansas Legislature changed state law to make things a little tougher — and a little safer — for young drivers, a state trooper told Colby High School students.

At an assembly on Monday, Trooper J.L. Hileman told students that Gov. Kathleen Sebelius signed a bill to establish "graduated licensing" for young drivers on March 27. The law will go into effect in January, he said.

The new law says teen drivers between 15 and 16 1/2 can have only one other teen, other than a brother or sister, in the car. It bars them from driving after 9 p.m. unless they are going to for from school activities or work, said Hileman. Cell phone use — including text messages — will be prohibited except in emergencies, he said.

Teenagers need to learn to drive without distractions from friends or their cell phone, the trooper said.

Hileman, who is from Thomas County, said he returned to the area late last year after 17 years in the Kansas Highway Patrol. He talked to Colby High students in the auditorium about the new driver's license laws and a seat belt law that recently went into effect.

The Legislature changed the law, Hileman said, because the top two causes of fatal accidents for teens involve having more than three kids in a car and driving late at night.

Teens are involved in more than their share of fatal accidents in Kansas, Hileman said. Teen drivers make up only about 7 percent of the driving population, he said, but are involved in about 20 percent of fatal accidents.

A study provided by the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, the trooper said, showed that the risk of a fatal car crash for teen drivers increases exponentially with each teen passenger. The risk for a crash doubles when there is one teen passenger and quadruples when there are three or more, he said.

Kansas is the second-to-last state to adopt a more stringent

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VERA SLOAN/Colby Free Press

The Colby High School concert choir (above) put fingers in the mouths to make sure their vowel sounds were loud and pure during practice Tuesday, for their next to last practice before the state music festival to be held here Thursday. The high school drummers (below) were also practicing for the event.

Music to fill school

By Vera Sloan Colby Free Press

Choirs and musical groups — nearly 700 students, plus teachers and sponsors — will take over Colby High School on Thursday for the state large-group music festival on Thursday.

The students, representing 17 schools, will compete as bands, choirs and singing groups. The average size of a group will be in the mid 40s, said Joey Nickols, Colby High School music director. There will be no solos or ensembles here; there is a separate event for those.

Each group will perform before three judges approved by the Kansas State High School Activities Association and considered by the state to be some of the best.

This year's band judges will be Ken Hakoda, from Kansas Wesleyan University in Salina; Gayle McMillen, retired band instructor from Salina Central High School; and William



McMosley, jazz instructor from Kansas Wesleyan.

Choir judges are Terry Crull, choral director from Fort Hays State University; John Matlock, past president of the Northwest Kansas Music Educators and vocal instructor; and William Tuzicka from the choral department

at Kansas Wesleyan. Performing groups are given a state-required list of selections to learn. The judges will request one selection, and the groups get to choose the second.

Throughout the day, Colby kids will act as student hosts by making sure visiting schools are di-

rected to the right practice rooms, and performance areas. Colby teachers will help by being runners with score sheets, acting as hall monitors, and announcers.

"The kids are excited, and nervous at the same time," said Nickols, "and we have done well in the past."

All groups are expected to perform a minimum II achievement level, he said, but he has his students practicing level IV pieces.

"I have no doubt the students are capable of high achievement," said Nickols, "and we've been spending a lot of time lately just polishing."

Congressman to visit Colby on Thursday

Congressman Jerry Moran will be in Colby at 8:30 a.m. Thursday for a stop on his annual "Big First Listening Tour."

The congressman will be at the Colby-Thomas County Chamber of Commerce office at the county office complex, 350 S. Range, from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m.

Moran said he is visiting

communities in each of the 69 counties of the 1st Congressional District. He said he bases much of his work in the capital on what he learns in his conversations during his tour stops.

Everyone is invited to come meet with their representative, ask questions and hear what is going on in Washington.

Development group hires new director

The Thomas County Economic Development Alliance has hired a veteran retail manager as its new executive director.



Rick Patrick

Richard Patrick, a graduate of Marietta College in southeast Ohio, took over the office on Monday.

The new director said his background includes 26 years with the F.W. Woolworth company in management. He left to

work for Macy's and traveled throughout the United States as a store-opening supervisor.

His most recent work has been a three-year stint as finance manager for Hays Ford-Toyota, now called the Lewis Automotive Group, so he is no stranger to northwest Kansas.

He brings with him, extensive background in management and finance.

When asked what drew him to Colby, Patrick said, "Colby wants to see people succeed, and I do like it in Colby."

"The rural roots of America stand a good chance of growth, and rural America has a good ethic.... People are tired of traffic, stand-

ing in lines and crowding, and they want to get out of the cities, and they are needing a place to live, so affordable housing is attached to growth."

He said as he gets into his job, he wants to look at what's available and what the town needs and wants.

He said he wants the office to be known as "people friendly."

Patrick said his first meeting with the full board will be Thursday. His wife, T.J., has a home-owned business in Hays, he said. She plans to move to Colby after the loose ends are tied up there.

Briefly

Come to library for lunch, talks

The Pioneer Memorial Library plans book reviews, talks by authors and lunch at noon each day this week for National Library Week. The library plans book reviews each day, with authors for three and two by local reviewers. A free lunch (really!) will be served at noon. (Participants can give a donation if they wish.) Book reviews begin at 12:15 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

City to pick up grass clippings

City crews will begin picking up grass clippings on Monday, April 27. Clippings must be at curbside by 8 a.m. on your regular trash day. They must be in a separate tipper can from household trash. Put clippings in the tipper loose, not in plastic bags. For questions, call the Public Works office at 460-4420.

County van will be gone

The Thomas County community van will run from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. today and be unavailable Thursday and Friday due to schedule conflicts. For a ride or information, call 460-2901 or 443-9208. A \$1 per stop donation is requested.

Seniors plan potato bar

The Senior Progress Center in Fike Park will have a potato bar, raffle and bake sale from 5 to 6:30 p.m. Thursday for the center's spring fund raiser. For questions, call Kaila DeBoer at 460-2901 weekdays before noon.

Lifeguards can renew skills

A review class for lifeguards on cardiopulmonary resuscitation and using an automatic external defibrillator for professional rescue will be held 9 a.m.

Thursday at the Colby Community College pool. Call the Thomas County Red Cross at 462-7161 for information or to enroll.

School plans scrapbook event

Heartland Christian School is having a "scrapbook extravaganza" from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Saturday. Cost is \$30 for all day and \$15 for half a day, including three meals, eight-foot tables to use, prizes and lots of fun. Call Deena Bandy at (785) 460-6419 to reserve your table.

Mentor program says thanks

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Thomas County plans to hold an ice cream social as a thank-you for volunteers and contributing supporters and to celebrate National Volunteer Week from 7 to 8 p.m. Monday at the Pioneer Memorial Library. Anyone who has

volunteered for the program or contributed in any way is welcome. For questions, call Diane Stithem at 460-9125.

Safe driver program planned

Volunteer instructor Don Keihl will teach the American Association of Retired Persons Driver Safety Program, which can help drivers remain safe and save money on insurance. The eight-hour class is scheduled for 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday, April 24, at Trinity Lutheran Church, 855 E. Fifth St. Class size is limited to 30; register by calling Dwayne at (785) 460-7555 or Don at (785) 890-6638.

