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Health workers first to receive H1N1 vaccine

By Kevin Bottrell

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The first shipment of the new H1N1 vaccine will be arriving in Thomas County soon, but it won't be available for the general public.

County Health Administrator Connie Walden said the Thomas County Health Department is not getting very much of the vaccine in this shipment — only 88 doses — and has decided to vaccinate healthcare workers first. That group is further limited by the vaccine itself. The vaccine currently being distributed across the country, known as the "live" vaccine, has only been approved for healthy people between the ages of two and 49. Some at-risk groups, such as pregnant women, will have to wait for the injection vaccine.

Walden said the department is following the Kansas Department of Health and the Environment guidelines and will first be vaccinating those workers who have direct contact with patients.

The vaccine is only being sent out in 100-dose lots. Walden said

that Thomas County had to combine orders with Cheyenne County in order to make more than 100 requests under the state guidelines. Many other counties are combining orders too, she said. The county can order new shipments of the vaccine each week.

Walden again urged people to get the seasonal flu vaccine, once the department has more of the vaccine available.

"Even if it's in November it's not too late," she said.

There are some small steps that can keep people healthy in the mean time. There are still some doses of the seasonal flu vaccine for children available at the health department office. Walden also recommend washing hands often and keeping young children, especially infants, out of enclosed, crowded places.

"We want our county as protected as possible," she said.

Once they have an adequate supply of the H1N1 vaccine, Walden said the department is planning several different ways of distributing it to the public. The department will be taking it to the area schools as well as holding clinics for residents.



ANDY HEINTZ/Colby Free Press

Chamber unveils new decorations

Kevin Helus (above), city street department worker, unveiled one of the new ornament-shaped decorations hung on a light pole on Fourth Street before a crowd gathered at Farmers and Merchants Bank Wednesday morning. The decoration is part of the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce-led Project Shine in '09. The project will be hanging 53 decorations up on fourth street in time for the Christmas season. The decorations include Christmas trees (right) and 12 styles of ornaments (below) in three different colors hung on Fourth Street.



Democrat says he'll measure up against opponents

By Kevin Bottrell

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The sole Democratic candidate for the 1st Kansas District of the U.S. House of Representatives made a campaign swing through northwest Kansas this week, stopping to talk to the *Colby Free Press* Wednesday afternoon.

Acknowledging the difficulties of a Democratic candidate in a heavily Republican district, former Salina Mayor Alan Jilka describes himself as a conservative Democrat.

"I think if people will look at my record they will see I'm ideologically with the mainstream of the district," he said.

Jilka, a native of Salina, graduated with a degree in history from Notre Dame. He spent taught English and studied Spanish and Portuguese in Guadalajara, Mexico and Rio De Janeiro, Brazil. He later earned a PhD. in both languages. He interned with with U.S. Sen. Nancy Kassebaum, a Republican, and U.S. Rep. Dan Glickman, a Democrat.

Jilka was a member of the Salina City Commission from 1997 to 2009, and served three terms as mayor. He stepped down this summer.

"After 12 years on the commission I decided it was time for someone else to have their fun," he said.

Jilka said he took the summer to decide if he wanted to continue in politics. He began traveling around the district, meeting media contacts and talking to residents. He officially announced his candidacy on Oct. 1.

Jilka said in his tours of the district, many different issues matter to people, but several are universal. One of these issues, and one he expects to deal with if elected, is the budget deficit. Jilka said that there are many different reasons for the deficit, but the country should focus on how to get rid of it rather than assigning blame.

"There are a lot of different takes on why we are where we are," he said. "We're going to have to deal with it regardless of how we got there."

Jilka said that his time on the Salina city commission and his small business experience has made him aware of the need for a balanced budget.

"Being in small business instinctively makes you fiscally conservative," he said.

Some areas that could be cut,

See "CANDIDATE," Page 3

Social Security recipients to get new stimulus

WASHINGTON (AP) — There will be no cost of living increase for more than 50 million Social Security recipients next year, the first year without a raise since automatic adjustments were adopted in 1975, the government announced Thursday.

Blame falling consumer prices. By law, cost of living adjustments are pegged to inflation, which is negative this year because of lower energy costs. Social Security payments do not go down, even when prices drop.

The Obama administration, meanwhile, is pursuing a different way to boost recipients' income. On Wednesday, President Barack Obama called for a second round of \$250 stimulus payments for seniors, veterans, retired

railroad workers and people with disabilities.

The payments would match the ones issued to seniors earlier this year as part of the government's economic recovery package. The payments would be equal to about a 2 percent increase for the average Social Security recipient.

Social Security payments increased by 5.8 percent in January, the largest increase since 1982. The big increase was largely because of a spike in energy costs in 2008.

"Social Security is doing its job helping Americans maintain their standard of living," said Social Security Commissioner Michael J. Astrue.

But, he added, "In light of the human need,

we need to support President Obama's call for us to make another \$250 recovery payment for 57 million Americans."

The Labor Department reported Thursday that consumer prices had declined 2.1 percent since the third quarter of 2008. The cost-of-living adjustment for Social Security, or COLA, is based on the change in consumer prices from the third quarter of one year to the next.

Social Security recipients shouldn't get a raise next year because their purchasing power has already increased with falling consumer prices, said the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a liberal-leaning think tank.

See "SECURITY," Page 3

Briefly

Legion plans pancake feed

The Colby American Legion Post will hold a pancake and sausage feed from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday at the Legion Hall, 1850 W. Fourth St. The cost will be \$4 per person. For information, call Jim Griffin at 269-7074.

Coaches offer coffee, talk

Join the Colby High School football staff for "Coffee with the Coaches" at 9 a.m. Saturday and every Saturday after home and away games at the Sports Shoppe, Fourth Street and Franklin Avenue. For information, call Eagles' Coach Chris Gardener at 460-1390.

Groups to canvas for food bank

The Colby Girl Scouts, Cub Scouts, Catholic Youth Organization, Colby Community College track and cross-country team and the college presi-

dential scholars will be trick-or-treating around town for non-perishable food for the Genesis food bank from 2-4 p.m. Sunday. If you would like to donate and will not be home, you can leave food in a sack outside your front door. If the weather is bad, the groups will collect food on Sunday, Oct. 25. For information, call Penny Cline at 460-2929.

Learning Center in new home

The Thomas County Learning Center plans an open house from 3 to 6 p.m. Monday at its new location, 485 N. Chickamauga Ave. Refreshments will be served and door prizes given, said Site Director Melinda Fikan. For information, call the center at 465-7900.

Students to give free massages

The Therapeutic Massage Department at Colby Community College plans public clinics on Wednes-

days this month in Thomas Hall, room 402. Cubicle massages are 30 minutes and chair massages 15, starting at 6:15 p.m., 7 p.m., 7:45 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. Massages will focus on feet on Wednesday and feet Oct. 28. Donations are accepted. To make an appointment or for information, contact Director Debra Waites at (785) 460-5427.

Heartland plans Fall Festival

Heartland Christian School's annual Fall Festival will begin with games and supper from 5 to 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 23. Soup will be served for a donation. A volleyball scrimmage will follow from 8 to 10:30. For information, call Deena Bandy at the school, 460-6419.

Food bank taking applications

Genesis-Thomas County, the Colby food bank, has forms available for county families who will

need food baskets this holiday season. Forms can be picked up between 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. on Wednesdays at the Genesis office, 350 S. Range Ave. Suite 13. All applications are due by Tuesday, Nov. 10. For information, call Genesis at 460-7930.

Veterans needed for list

The *Colby Free Press* will be publishing the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars list of all area military veterans on Veteran's Day, Nov. 11. To be certain that we have the names of all Thomas County veterans, the *Free Press* would like all veterans or their relatives to please stop by the office, 155 W. 5th St., or call at 462-3963.



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