



COLBY FREE PRESS

75¢

Thursday

October 29, 2009

Volume 120, Number 169
Serving Thomas County since 1888

8 pages

Fort Hays president warns of cuts

By Kevin Bottrell
Colby Free Press
kbottrell@nwkansas.com

Although there's light at the end of the economic tunnel, many more budget cuts may be in store for Kansas higher education. If that happens, says Fort Hays State University President Ed Hammond, the state's universities will have to make some serious cuts.

Hammond stopped by the Colby Free Press on Tuesday in the middle of a 40-stop tour of 16 Kansas towns. The president said he's been attending alumni events, and Rotary Club meetings and giving interviews at newspapers and radio stations, talking about the need to continue state spending for higher education.

Hammond said that in his discussions with people around the state, Kansans are beginning to see signs of improvement in the economy, but they remain concerned over budget cuts and enrollment for the state's colleges.

The state has been backing off

its financial support of the universities, Hammond said. This year for the first time, he said, more money is coming in from tuition than from state aid. In the budget crunch this year the state made a 12 percent cut to its higher education budget.

"If we continue to cut, we aren't going to be able to continue providing services at the same level," Hammond said.

Fort Hays is one of the major destinations for Thomas County's college-bound youth, he noted, with 48 students from the county on campus and 23 online students. Hammond said Colby Community College is the second-largest feeder into Fort Hays State, after Barton County Community College in Great Bend.

Fort Hays itself is in a pretty good spot to ride out the lean times, he said. Hammond pointed to the university's recent growth as one of the ways it has weathered the recession. Enrollment in the

See "EDUCATION," Page 3

Rain, snow storm blankets Denver

DENVER (AP) — A slow-moving autumn storm showed no signs of letting up in Colorado and the western High Plains on Thursday, blanketing areas already buried with as much as 3 feet, closing schools and businesses and delaying flights.

Roads across Colorado and Wyoming were snow-packed and icy from the first big winter storm of the season in the West, and the snow is not likely to let up anytime soon. The storm spread a

blanket of white from northern Utah's Wasatch Front to western Nebraska's northern border with South Dakota.

"There's definitely some adverse driving conditions right now, and it's expected to continue throughout a good portion of the day," said Bob Wilson, a Colorado Department of Transportation spokesman. Wilson said although some cars have slid off icy roads,

See "STORM," Page 3

Hospitals restrict visits amid flu scare

By Vera Sloan
Colby Free Press
vsloan@nwkansas.com

Hoping to protect patients from sick people, Colby's Citizens Medical Center has jointed other Kansas hospitals by posting visitor restrictions, asking kids to stay away.

Director of Nursing Pat Howell said Citizens has put a ban on visitors 12 and under until further notice. There are no restrictions on adults.

Nearby hospitals have implemented similar — or tighter — restrictions.

"We don't see an end in sight right now," said Julie Britton of the Rawlins County Hospital in

Atwood. "We are limiting visitors to immediate family only."

At the Logan County Hospital in Oakley, receptionist Cassie Zodrow, said, "Children under the age of 12, and anyone experiencing flu-like symptoms, respiratory distress or signs and symptoms of flu, are asked to please abide by visitor restrictions."

"Patients are our first priority," said Melanie Urban, risk management and quality director at Hays Medical Center. "While these restrictions may inconvenience people who don't understand or agree with the need to limit visitation, our main goal is to protect our patients and decrease the spread of the flu virus."



VERA SLOAN/Colby Free Press

Creepy things and secret passageways are a small part of what awaits visitors to the American Youth Soccer Organization's Haunted House at 660 N. Franklin Ave. The house will be open tonight, Friday and Saturday, with a matinee from 5 to 7 p.m. on Saturday for kids. A can of food for Genesis and \$1 will get a child in Saturday.

Soccer group preps house for Halloween

By Vera Sloan
Colby Free Press
vsloan@nwkansas.com

Creeps and chills, spooks and thrills await those who dare to enter the American Youth Soccer Organization's Haunted House at 660 N. Franklin Ave. this weekend.

Those who dare can visit the house from 7 to 10 p.m. Thursday, 7 to midnight Friday and 8 to midnight on Saturday. There will be a matinee for kids 11 and under from 5 to 7 p.m. on Halloween.

Admission will be \$3 for kids under 12, \$5 for everyone 12 and over. Matinee admission price is \$2, or \$1 with a food item for the

Genesis-Thomas County Food Bank.

Members of the soccer group have been working overtime to get the project finished in time for Halloween visitors.

"The project is one of several the club has planned to raise funds to benefit the improvement of the city soccer fields," said Tina Harris, of Tina Harris Physical Therapy, a sponsor of the group.

Improvements needed at the field are sprinklers, storage building, landscaping and field improvements in general, Harris said.

"A fifth field is also needed because of increased interest in the sport," said Greg Griffin of Griffin Plumbing, another sponsor. "Right now there are about 130 kids playing

on four fields, and we could have as many as 50 more sign up for the spring season."

Supporters say the group is known as the world's most child-focused youth sports program, with kids from 4 1/2 to 18 playing soccer.

"Decisions made in this region are based on what's best for the kids," said Harris.

The group's motto is "Everyone Plays," she said, "and each child can expect to play half of each game."

If you don't need a good scare, but would like to contribute to the project, donations can be sent to the group at Box 314, Colby, Kan., 67701.



ANDY HEINTZ/Colby Free Press

The soccer organization isn't the only group preparing for Halloween. Pat Wolf and others from the Colby Public Schools set up this house on School Street as a safe place for little trick-or-treaters each year.

Briefly

For latest flu info, call 460-4599

A hot line for answers to questions on seasonal influenza and the H1N1 flu strain will be available throughout the flu season at (785) 460-4599. The Thomas County Health Department said information about the status and availability of vaccines, priority groups and the like will be available at this number.

Hospital auxiliary needs help

The Citizens Medical Center Auxiliary is looking for volunteers to greet visitors, operate the gift shop and help patients and their families, among other things. If you'd like to become involved, call Tama Unger at (785) 460-1214 or Mary Smith at (785) 462-3387.

Halloween bash for kids 13, under

Big Brothers Big Sisters, the Thomas County

Community Foundation and the Modern Woodmen will hold a Halloween Bash for kids 13 and under from 3 to 5 p.m. Saturday at the 4-H Building on the Thomas County Fairgrounds. There will be food, prizes, games and lots of fun, said Diane Stithem of Big Brothers Big Sisters. For information, call Stithem at 460-9125.

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.

Brewster church plans turkey feed

The Brewster United Methodist Church will hold

its annual Thanksgiving turkey supper from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Wednesday at the church, 202 Nebraska. Donations will be accepted. For information, call Nadine Kammer at (785) 694-2456.

Trivia night planned at library

The Pioneer Memorial Library plans a Trivia Pursuit Night at 6:30 p.m. next Thursday. Get your team of six to eight players together or call the library to join a team of random players. Each team will bring snack food for a potluck of chips, crackers, popcorn, veggies and the like to munch on. A prize will be given for the winners. For questions, to call 460-4470.

Food bank taking applications

Genesis-Thomas County food bank has forms available for families who will need food baskets this holiday season. These can be picked up from 10

a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. on Wednesdays at the Genesis office, 350 S. Range Ave. Suite 13. 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. Fifth St., or call 462-3963 by Friday, Nov. 6.



8 0 4 8 7 9 1 3 8 9 8 3