



# COLBY FREE PRESS

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ANDY HEINTZ/Colby Free Press

Colby firefighters put out a blaze in a home in Levant on Wednesday. They found fire in the kitchen and in the ceiling over the kitchen.

## Fire damages Levant home

By Andy Heintz

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A fire about at 2:41 p.m. Wednesday heavily damaged a house at 505 N. Main in Levant.

The house is owned by Dale Deaver, said Sean Hankin, assistant chief of the Colby Fire Department. No one was hurt, but it took firefighters nearly two hours to get the blaze under control.

Nine firefighters rushed to the scene in an engine, two tankers and a support truck. When they got to the house, Hankin said, they could tell looking through the window that there was a fire in the kitchen. Hankin said there was also a lot of smoke coming from the attic, around the eaves.

The Bartlett Grain elevator in Levant, directly east of the house, sent a truck carrying 1,600 gallons of water to help put out the fire, Hankin said. Inside, he said, firemen found flames in the ceiling as well as the kitchen.

Hankin reported the fire mostly out at 4:45 p.m. He said it was hard to tell if all the fire had been extinguished with all the smoke and heat build up in the house.

"I thought there was more fire in the attic space traveling through the joists of the ceiling," he said, adding that firefighters had to pull out ceiling tiles to put out the blaze.

Hankin said the department used between 500 to 1,000 gallons of water putting out the fire. The



ANDY HEINTZ/Colby Free Press

Firefighters had to get up on part of the roof to pump water onto the fire in the attic. Assistant Chief Sean Hankin said the department used more than 500 gallons fighting the fire.

engine, a large yellow truck, carries 750 gallons of water, and the tankers both 1,000 gallons.

Hankin said the cause of fire hadn't been determined Monday. Fire Chief Bob McLemore and others went to the house this morning to look for clues to the cause.

## Guard armory closings on track

TOPEKA (AP) — The state's adjutant general said preparations continue for closing at least 18 Kansas National Guard armories because of state budget problems, including those in Goodland, Phillipsburg, Russell and Garden City.

Maj. Gen. Tod Bunting told a Senate committee Wednesday that work on consolidating about a

third of the state's 56 armories was proceeding as planned. Fifteen of the facilities will be shut down by the end of February, he said, with the three to close several months later because they have programs tied to the school year.

"We don't like to close armories," he said. "Some of the communities are hoping we can change our minds."

Bunting told members of the Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee the realignment was triggered by a \$156,000 cut in the state appropriation for the Kansas National Guard in the current fiscal year and a proposed cut of \$264,000 in the upcoming year. The state expects its deficit

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## Briefly

### Lab results available Monday

Anyone who participated in the Wellness Laboratory Tests may pick up their results from 5 to 7 p.m. Monday outside the Little Theatre at the Colby Community Building. An explanation of the laboratory results will be given at 5:30 p.m. and again at 6:30 p.m. in the theater. In addition, the Lions Van will be outside the Community Building from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. providing various wellness screening exams. All exams are offered free of charge. For information, call Jeanene Brown, (785) 460-4850.

### Hearing set on emergency plan

Thomas County Emergency Management and E-Fm Consulting will hold the final public meeting for the Thomas County Hazard Mitigation Plan at 6 p.m. Thursday at the Thomas County Office Complex. A public comment period will run from Thurs-

day to Feb. 4, after which the plan will be set. Drafts can be viewed at the emergency management office or the Pioneer Memorial Library. For information, call Director Susan McMahan at 460-4516.

### County to start testing sirens

Thomas County will test the tornado sirens at noon on the first Monday of each month beginning Feb. 1, said Emergency Management Director Susan McMahan. The tests will continue all year if weather permits. For information, call McMahan at 460-4516.

### Students offer Monday massages

Physical Therapist Assistant students at Colby Community College will hold a massage clinic from 4 to 7:30 p.m. on Mondays the next two weeks, through Feb. 1, in the Pierre Henry Allied Health

## School board warned to prepare for worst

By Kevin Bottrell

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At its first meeting of the new year, Colby Superintendent Terrell Harrison told the Colby School Board to brace for more cuts, even as Gov. Mark Parkinson is coming out for a tax increase.

Harrison said the governor had outlined a plan to balance the budget by generating revenue instead of cutting more out of expenses. The governor is proposing an increase to the tobacco tax which would add about \$400 million, she said, plus a temporary increase in the state's sales tax.

"This is not replacing the mon-

ey already cut," she said, "just surviving this year."

The budget is a starting point for the Legislature, which began its session last week, she said. "The Legislature may or may not pass a budget that will include increased revenue."

The state Department of Education held a State of the State Education webinar to after the governor's address.

"It was not positive," Harrison said.

The department estimates a cut of \$286 from per-student state aid if there is no tax increase. That, Harrison said, would cost the district about \$500,000. Federal stimulus money will be running

out soon, she said, since a portion that was earmarked for the future is being used this year.

Other departments would see similar cuts, she added.

"It's amazing the amount of money being cut, not just from K-12 schools," Harrison said.

The superintendent said the department also warned that revenue estimates are down again, and that further cuts could come later in the spring. The department is recommending that districts prepare for cuts of up to \$600 in per-student aid, which would be almost \$1 million for the Colby district. Harrison said she is planning meet-

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## Wayward lambs found

By Kevin Bottrell

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The lambs stolen from the nativity scene in Fike Park last month apparently got too hot to hang onto after police released a photo of the crime.

Police Chief Randy Jones said Lester Haremza was driving on a county road about three miles northeast of Colby on Saturday when he spotted some wooden figures in a ditch on the side of the road.

Haremza found the five wooden lambs and brought

them to the police office at the Law Enforcement Center about 3:30 p.m.

Jones said Officer Ray Schwietzer went to the site and found a horse, a woman and a little girl taken at the same time. Jones said the horse and woman were broken in half, possibly when they were thrown into the ditch, and a few ears had broken off the lambs.

The officer found no tire tracks or other identifying marks at the scene, he said, but it was clear the statues had not been there long.

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## Oakley volunteer still rolling strikes at 89

By Vera Sloan

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Eighty-nine year old Josie West likes to bowl. But unlike the sheep rancher in the 1960s movie, "The Ballad of Josie" starring Doris Day, this Josie doesn't have "conniption" fits. In fact, to put it in her words, "I like everything I do."

Her only agenda is to stay busy, and she does a really good job of it.

West said she has been bowling at the Colby Bowl and Fun Center since 1973, and misses her bowling day only when weather conditions are too bad to be on the road. Even the thick fog Tuesday morning couldn't keep her from her appointed game.

Unlike most bowlers, she has two averages, a right-hand average and a left-hand average. That's not by choice. In September, she fell and whacked the "crazy bone" in her right arm, badly bruising it. And although she was unable to use that arm, she showed up the very next Tuesday to take a stab at being a left handed bowler.

Colby Bowl owner Vernon Schwanke, drilled holes in an eight-pound ball that would fit her left hand, and she was soon in business.

"It was gutter balls all the way when I started with my left hand,"



VERA SLOAN/Colby Free Press

Age is only a number if you're 89, work six days a week and play every Tuesday, rain or shine. Although a bum elbow has kept her from bowling the "normal" right handed way since September, she switched to her left hand, and may be the only one in northwest Kansas who can say they have a right-hand bowling average and a left-hand bowling average.

West said, "but it's getting better."

On Tuesday, still using her left hand, she bowled a 98, a whopping 43 pins over her left hand

average of 55. The nearly 90-year-old's right hand average before the accident was 165.

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