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Statewide races heat up as end nears

By John Milburn
Associated Press Writer

TOPEKA — Experience and support for the new federal health care reform law are the defining issues in a Republican primary for Kansas insurance commissioner, which will determine who holds the office for the next four years. Republicans also must pick nominees in the Aug. 3 election for governor and attorney general, but each of those races has a candidate who's expected to win easily. In the insurance race, most Republicans expect incumbent Sandy Praeger of Lawrence to defeat insurance agent Dave Powell of

El Dorado. No other party has a candidate, meaning the outcome of the GOP race will determine whether Praeger keeps the office. Powell has the endorsement of several "tea party" organizations across Kansas and said he would do his best "to mitigate the impact" of the federal health care act until enough Republicans are in Congress to either defund or repeal the law. "It's not good for Kansas; it's not good for our citizens," Powell said. Praeger, who was elected in 2002 after serving in the Kansas Senate, said the law has provisions that are good for the state. She's

working to implement some parts as the law begins to take effect. "There are some good provisions, certainly," she said. "I think some of the issues in 2014 and the market reforms in 2014 are going to be problematic and (we're) going to have to work to mitigate." Powell says his 33 years of writing policies and serving consumers make him better suited for office. "I've got the knowledge and I've spent the time in the field helping people and listening to their needs," he said. "That's what's needed with the train wreck that's

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Art group plans musicals, kid shows for fall season

By Vera Sloan
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The Western Plains Arts Council will bring a varied program of music and theater to northwestern Kansas during the fall and winter months, with several shows set for performances in Colby. "Since we are in an area where the arts and theater are not readily available, we try to bring some of the world to northwest Kansas," said Executive Director Pat Ziegelmeier.

Ziegelmeier said season ticket prices remain at \$40 for individuals, \$15 for a single student ticket, and \$90 for families, which includes parents and however many children there are. She said the council was especially fortunate to book "The Music Man," the "Brett Family Show" and a couple of others that will be passing through the area, adding that the council would not have been able to have even touched them otherwise. "If we were to drive to Denver to take in some

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Prize winner gets ready



VERA SLOAN/Colby Free Press
Cassie Wells prepared to show her market steer at the 4-H Dairy Bucket Calf, Breeding and Market Beef Show on Thursday. Wells won reserve champion in her class.

Duo caps picnic season



VERA SLOAN/Colby Free Press
Larry and Taylor McLemore were the final musical act for this year's Picnic in the Park, held Wednesday in the Fike Park.

2010 census returns down; workers still making rounds

The 2010 census is in its final stage, but information the Census Bureau sent to the Thomas County Economic Development office says returns here are less than adequate. Figures for the five surrounding counties are no better. Anyone who hasn't participated in the census yet can call (866) 872-6868, and give information over the phone through Friday. The bureau notes that federal law requires participation in the census. If you don't send back your form, you may receive a visit from a census taker. The employee who collects the information is sworn for life to protect your information under federal law. The bureau has a few tips if a census taker visits: • First, ask to see identification. All census workers carry official government badges marked with just their name, but they may also have a "U.S. Census Bureau" bag. A census taker will never ask to enter your home. If you're not certain about their identity, call the Regional Census Center to confirm they are employed by the Census Bureau. Answer the census form questions for your entire household, but note that you must be at least 15 to answer. • If a Census worker visits when you are not at home, they will leave a contact number. If no census taker has visited your home, or you have a question about your participation, call your census office. The phone number for northwest Kansas is (620) 682-

4190. Through mid-August, the Census Bureau says, workers will call households if they need to clarify any answers about the number of people living there. The calls are simply to clarify answers that have been given and to make sure everyone is counted only once, and in the right location. The caller will identify themselves as working for the U.S. Census Bureau and will state the purpose for the call, the bureau says. Caller ID should show "U.S. Census Bureau." If the text is not supported, such as on a cell phone, then the inbound toll-free number should show up. If you want to confirm you have been contacted by the Census Bureau, call (866) 851-2010 and use the eight-digit case identification number given by the worker to complete the interview. The interview will take about 10 minutes. Census takers do not ask for your Social Security number, bank account number or credit card number, as scammers might. They never solicit donations and will never make e-mail contact, nor will they ask about citizenship status. If an interviewer calls and no one answers, he or she will leave a message asking someone to return the call. The caller will leave a case identification number so someone in the household can call back and complete the interview.

Briefly

Clerk to close at noon Monday
The Thomas County Clerk's office will close at noon Monday so the staff can set up the Colby Community Building for the election. The office will be open regular hours, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., on Tuesday. For information, call the office at 460-4500.

Massage class plans open house
The Massage Therapy program at Colby Community College will hold an open house from 6 to 7 p.m. Monday in room 402 at Thomas Hall. The program won accreditation from the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage last semester. For information, call program director Debra Waites at 460-5427.

Cooking class offered for kids
Kids a Cookin' classes will be held for third,

fourth and fifth graders at 10 a.m. Tuesday and Aug. 10 at the 4-H Building, using produce grown in the Thomas County Coalition Community Garden. To sign up, call the Thomas County Extension office at 460-4582 by noon Monday.

Farm Service to explain reserve
The U.S. Farm Service Agency will have an information meeting on the Conservation Reserve Program at 1 p.m. Thursday in room 2 of the Colby Community Building. The meeting will cover the program's sign-up period, from Monday to Friday, Aug. 27, and who is eligible. For information, call Phyllis Tholen at 462-7671.

Museum plans '125' quilt show
A special quilt show celebrating Thomas County's 125th Birthday will be held at the Prairie Museum

of History and Art from Oct. 7 to 31. Quilts of any size, pattern or age with a Thomas County connection should be entered at the museum from Sept. 1 to 24. Call (785) 460-4590 for information.

Commodities here on Aug. 9
U.S. Department of Agriculture commodities will be distributed from 1 to 2 p.m. Monday, Aug 9, at the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program office in the Senior Progress Center. Anyone who's eligible may come and get commodities first-come, first-served. Items will include vegetable soup, apricots, beans, instant milk, spaghetti, spaghetti sauce and rotini. For information, call the volunteer program office at 462-6744.

Army has fans to beat heat
The Salvation Army has fans available for anyone

who needs them. Call Kathy Ryan at the Thomas County Health Department, 460-4596.

Signups open for kids' football
Signups are open for Colby Little League Football at the Sports Shoppe for kids in third to sixth grades. A \$100 fee covers equipment rent and other materials. Space is limited. The Shoppe is open from 9:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday to Thursday and 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For information, call Travis Branum at 462-8342.



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