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Drought starts to grip plains fields

By Kevin Bottrell
Colby Free Press
kbottrell@nwkansas.com

With 2 1/2 months of unseasonably dry weather and no end in sight, Thomas County and much of western Kansas are being listed under drought conditions.

The U.S. Drought Monitor at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln lists most of the county as under moderate drought. The northern third of the county has been a little wetter, and is listed as "abnormally dry," a shade under the drought category.

Moderate drought means the area has seen two to three inches less moisture than usual, the monitor says. (See drought.unl.edu/dm/DM_highplains.htm)

So far this year, Thomas County

has recorded 18.22 inches of rain or snow compared to its normal 20.34 inches. The K-State Experiment Station recorded only 0.22 inches in October and 0.21 in November.

The National Weather Service is predicting predicting only flurries through the weekend. The Drought Monitor say that the drought should increase in western Kansas through February.

Thomas County Extension Agent Clint Milliman said the area has been getting close to drought conditions for several months.

This is a critical time for the wheat crop, he said, because it hasn't gone dormant yet. Wheat goes dormant when the soil temperature gets below freezing ev-

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College looking for energy prof

By Andy Heintz
Colby Free Press
aheintz@nwkansas.com

The Colby College board approved advertising for a full-time "small wind" instructor/test site manager at a meeting on Monday in Thomas Hall, ramping up for a program set open in the fall and planned to attract 15 to 20 new students.

Paula Davis, vice president of academic affairs, recommended the board hire someone to teach courses, some of them advanced, for the new sustainable/renewable energy programs starting next fall.

Two regular instructors are

scheduled to teach energy tracks. Tom Moorhous, a history instructor, and Derek Reilley, Title III activity director and online developer at the college.

While the program doesn't officially start until the fall, the college has been offering wind-energy courses since last spring when Moorhous taught Introduction to Wind and Alternative Technologies in March. He taught a one-credit-hour Introduction to Wind class and a three-credit-hour Introduction to Energy Technologies class in August and during the fall.

Davis said Introduction to En-

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Could market hit new big peak?

By Stan Choe
AP Business Writer

NEW YORK - Could the Dow-Jones set a record high next year?

That question would have seemed crazy early last year, when fear and panic enveloped the stock market and the Dow Jones industrial average plunged to 6,547 on March 9. Many investors thought it would take a decade or longer to get back to the record of 14,165, set Oct. 9, 2007.

Now we could be on the verge. The Dow has soared 76 percent the past 21 months, and it would have to climb just 23 percent from Thursday's close of 11,499 to set a record.

That's a big jump, but the Dow has risen 23 percent or more six times since 1985, or roughly 1 in 4 years. Two other years, the Dow just missed with a gain of 22.6 percent. Add them and the number becomes eight years out of 25, or roughly 1 in 3.

Many analysts don't expect a 23 percent gain in 2011, but they agree conditions are in place for the rally to continue.

"There are some really compelling reasons out there that say the Dow could approach its highs," says Randy Bateman, chief investment officer for Huntington Asset Advisors. "You've got a

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Excited kids plop down on Santa's lap

Jayla Rush (above), 6-year-old daughter of Clay and Jessica Rush, a kindergartner at Sacred Heart Catholic School, clutched a stuffed animal Santa gave her Thursday at Santa City as she told jolly old St. Nick what she wanted for Christmas. Her brother, 2-year old Jayton (below), got a good look at Santa while sitting on his lap. Mrs. Claus was nearby to greet all the kids who came in. More than 1,300 people visited Santa City, in Fike Park, last year. The building is filled with bright Christmas trees and lights and other holiday decorations.

ANDY HEINTZ/Colby Free Press



Briefly

Everyone invited to sing carols

The College Drive Assembly of God Church, 245 W. College Drive, will have a Christmas Carol Sing-A-Long at 6:30 p.m. Sunday night. All singers and those who want to just sit and listen are encouraged to attend. A fellowship time will follow.

Donations needed for gifts

The Adopt a Grandparent program needs donations to help buy gifts for seniors. The program, created by Ronda Faber and others, buys Christmas presents for residents at Colby Care Center and Prairie Senior Living Complex. Gifts will be delivered on Monday. For information or to donate, call Faber at 460-6548.

Sacred Heart has holiday show

Sacred Heart Catholic School will put on a program of Christmas music at 7 p.m. Monday in the

school gym, featuring second through fifth graders. For information, call the school at 460-2813.

Trash crews to take 'eves' off

The Colby Sanitation Department will not pick up residential trash on Christmas Eve, next Friday, and New Year's Eve, Friday, Dec. 31. Routes will be picked up the day before both weeks. Have your tipper cans to the curb by 8 a.m. The department will not pick up commercial trash next Friday and Saturday or Friday and Saturday, Dec. 31 and Jan. 1. For information, call the Public Works office at 460-4420.

County elevator needs repair

The elevator at the Thomas County Courthouse will be out of service Tuesday and Wednesday, Dec. 28 and 29, so a new motor starter can be installed.

For information, call County Clerk Shelly Harms at 460-4500.

Hill City artist's work at museum

Works by Hill City artist and teacher David Chalfant are on exhibit at the Prairie Museum of Art and History through the end of December. His sculptures and paintings have been shown in regional and national shows. For information, contact the museum at 460-4590 or museumed@st-tel.net.

Youth league to form in January

A parent-player meeting for Youth League Basketball will begin at 8 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 5, at the Colby United Methodist Church. Coach Matt Ludwig said the cost is \$20 per player, and games will start the following weekend. For information, call the church at 462-2761.

St. Jude's kids needs old cards

Don't throw those used greeting cards away. The Colby Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary has a drop-off box at the library. Kids at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis need them for projects. For questions, call Hazel Duffey at 462-3476.

Hospital auxiliary needs help

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

