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Cleaning up after the storm



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

City crews began the laborious process Monday of picking up the piles from Colby's first significant snowfall of the year. Colby got anywhere from 1.7 to 2.5 inches of snow from Thursday's storm, which the crews plowed up into piles for later removal.

State senator to take over committee

By Kevin Bottrell
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State Sen. Ralph Ostmeier of Grinnell has been chosen to head the Senate Natural Resources Committee when the Legislature comes back into session this month.

Ostmeier, a Republican whose district includes Thomas County and the entire northwest corner of the state, said he was pleasantly surprised to hear he'd gotten the job. Natural resources, he said, was one of the committees he had expressed an interest in to the Senate leadership.

Many committee assignments were being shuffled after Senate Majority Leader Derek Schmidt was elected as Kansas Attorney General this year. Senate President Stephen Morris had mentioned to Ostmeier that the chairmanship of

natural resources was a possibility, as long as Ostmeier supported Jay Emler of Lindsborg for majority leader. Ostmeier, however, decided to support Sen. Terry Bruce of Hutchinson for the job.

"I liked Jay as chairman of the Senate Ways and Means Committee," Ostmeier said. "I felt he was doing good work there."

When Emler won the post of majority leader, Ostmeier said, he didn't think he had a chance at being picked for the committee.

"I know how the game is played," he said.

However, the leadership decided to give the chairmanship to Ostmeier, who was vice chairman two years ago.

Ostmeier said he is pleased and excited to be on the panel. The natural resources committee handles a lot of issues critical to western

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Colby engineer co-authors book on micro-irrigation

By Vera Sloan
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Research Irrigation Engineer Freddie R. Lamm of the Northwest Kansas Research and Extension Center in Colby, is co-author and senior editor of a book that is considered to be the leading international reference for micro-irrigation.

The 15-chapter, 618-page book, "Microirrigation for Crop Production-Design, Operation and Management," covers drip and micro (low pressure) sprinkler irrigation. Chapters come from contributing authors from the United States, Israel and

Spain, and the book has recently been translated into the Macedonian language.

Lamm's contributions on subsurface drip irrigation will interest western Kansas farmers.

"There's not a lot of subsurface irrigation in Kansas yet," Lamm said, "but as water tables lower, it will probably become a lot more popular. The investment is high, but the payoffs will offset the extra cost."

"Right now, Kansas has somewhere between 12,000 and 20,000 acres of subsurface drip irrigation. Thomas County has some acreage under SDI."

He said there are many advantages to

what experts refer to as deficit irrigation, a strategy in which irrigation is applied during drought-sensitive growth stages of the crop. These include less evaporation, no run off, a decrease in runoff from precipitation on fields that already have been top watered, less water usage, more efficiency from nitrogen because there is no leaching, he said, and these are just some of the advantages. Plus the ground surface stays dry to allow for tillage when other irrigation methods leave the surface too wet.

Lamm said farmers who practice deficit irrigation will be more able to stabilize their yield at a regular level over the

sprinkler method.

He said the book was six years in the writing, with lots and lots of research. Eighty-nine pages cover subsurface drip irrigation.

"I was contacted by one of the other co-author-editors out of Phoenix through the USDA," he said. "He asked if I'd participate in a revision of a previous book, but there are so many chapters and information, they made it into a new book," he added. "All three editors, are from the United States. (Lamm, from Colby, James E. Ayers of California and Francis S. Nakayama from Arizona.)"

Researchers in crop science, agronomy,

irrigation, food science and environmentalists say micro irrigation, the fastest growing segment of the irrigation industry worldwide, could increase the quality of the food supply through improved water and fertilizer efficiency.

Lamm will have called Colby home for 32 years as of May. He earned bachelor's and Master of Science degrees at the University of Missouri in Columbia and a doctorate from Kansas State University.

He is married to Donna, and three of their four children are in college. Elaine is a graduate student at K-State, Henry is

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Republicans plan for long-term rule

By John Hanna
AP Political Writer

TOPEKA — Coming off its first clean sweep of congressional and statewide races in Kansas since 1964, the state Republican Party has drafted a plan for maintaining that dominance in politics for at least another decade.

The state GOP wants to increase its already large majorities in both houses of the Legislature, boost the percentage of voters who register Republican, set up a "farm system" that recruits business leaders early as potential candidates and hold quarterly forums to connect business leaders and party activists with elected officials.

The goals are outlined in an eight-page strategic plan from state Chairwoman Amanda Adkins, and the ultimate aim is giving Kansas a state government that's consistently controlled by probusiness, antitax, small-government conservatives — and results in the policies that implies.

The work by party officials

comes as some prominent Kansas Republicans are pondering how to capitalize on the rise of the tea party movement and as downtrodden Democrats ponder their future after a bad election.

Gov.-elect Sam Brownback, who takes office Jan. 10, said the state GOP showed last year that it could operate as a unified party. But he said it wants to sustain that success.

"An infrastructure needs to be put in place," he said last week during a brief interview while taking a break from his transition. "You maintain a high level of activity and leadership."

The Legislature's top Democrats are skeptical of the GOP efforts, saying long-term dominance of state government by one party is likely to make it less accountable.

And Democratic Gov. Mark Parkinson has argued repeatedly in the weeks leading up to his departure from office that Kansans

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Police seeking information on break-in

Colby police are looking for a suspicious man caught on a security camera outside Casey's General Store on West Fourth Avenue the same night as an attempted break in.

The photo was taken at 2:18 a.m. Tuesday from a camera mounted on the front of the convenience store, formerly Kabredlo's. Few details can be seen in the photo, but police say the figure is likely a man of average height wearing a jacket and baseball cap. It is unknown if the man in the picture is the burglar. Police are asking anyone with information to call them at 460-4460.

Police investigator Richard Barrett said the burglar tried to break the glass front door with a piece of cinder block, but didn't get inside. A manager contacted the police department later that morning when they found the damage, and officers pulled the camera footage.

It was the second burglary or attempt at Casey's in a month,

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This man was caught on a surveillance camera Tuesday outside Casey's General Store, the same night someone tried to break in. Police are looking for information about his identity.

Briefly

Blood drives here this week

The American Red Cross will be collecting blood from noon to 6 p.m. Tuesday and 7:45 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Wednesday at the Community Building. Go to redcrossblood.org or call (800) 733-2767 to schedule an appointment. Walk-ins are welcome. The agency needs volunteers to help at the drives. Call coordinator Bev Vaughn at 462-3861 or 443-1467.

Coach to talk at library program

Pioneer Memorial Library's *Booked for Lunch* at noon Wednesday will feature Colby Middle School coach Matt Ludwig talking about his own book, "Can You Hear What I Hear," about his experiences growing up with diminished hearing. Enjoy the talk and a light lunch for a donation. For information, call the library at 460-4470.

County to mark medic's retirement

The Thomas County Emergency Medical Service plans a retirement party for Martin Rinehart, who has served 18 years as a medical technician, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tuesday at the courthouse. For information, call Dawnelle Umberger at 460-4585.

Head Start looking for kids

Head Start, a tuition-free preschool, is accepting applications for its 2011-2012 school year. The school accepts applications all year long for kids aged 3 and 4. For information, or to get an application, call 460-6067.

Youth league meeting Wednesday

A parent-player meeting for Youth League Basketball will begin at 8 p.m. Wednesday at the Colby

United Methodist Church. Coach Matt Ludwig said the cost is \$20 per player, and games will begin the following weekend. For information, call the church at 462-2761.

Hospital plans childbirth classes

Citizens Medical Center will offer four weeks of childbirth classes from 7 to 10 p.m. Thursdays starting this week. Women due to deliver before May should attend with their labor support partner. The next classes will begin April 7. For information or to register, call Jeanene Brown at the hospital Education Department at (785) 460-4850

College pool closes for the week

The Colby Community College indoor swimming pool will be closed until Tuesday, Jan. 11, due to a

lack of life guards. Director Kip Nelson suggested checking the website www.colbycc.edu to see if the schedule has changed, or calling (785) 460-5476.

Pets available for adoption

Looking for a pet? Colby Animal Clinic has two 6-month- to 1-year-old cats — one gray and white, short-haired male and one gray, long-haired female — available for adoption. Lost or strayed animals are often brought to the clinic. Call or stop by 810 E. Fourth St. All animals have current shots, and costs are minimal. For questions, call 460-8621.



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