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County tax sale coming next week

By Vera Sloan
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For the first time since 2001, Thomas County will hold a public auction to sell real estate with delinquent taxes at 10 a.m. Friday, Jan. 14, in the district courtroom at the courthouse.

"The very most difficult thing about a tax sale is to notify, or at least attempt to notify, all parties of interest," said County

Attorney Bruce Flipse.

Kansas law provides that once taxes on real property are delinquent for three years, the property can be foreclosed on and then go on the auction block to recoup back taxes.

"Thomas County hasn't had a tax sale in nine years," Flipse said, "and a big part of the problem lies there. When you don't keep up with people for that many years, there are people who move, some are deceased and the heirs are scattered.

"Many times, heirs don't even know they own a fractional interest in a mineral right under some piece of land somewhere. Out of 33 parcels left out of 81 original parcels at the beginning of 2010, only four involve real estate. The other 29 are fractional interests in mineral rights." As of Monday, Flipse said, three of the 29 had redeemed their mineral interests, so there could be 30 total tracts or parcels in the sale on Jan. 14.

According to the law, the county treas-

urer sends out notices each year that taxes are due. If taxes aren't paid for three straight years, then the county has the right to foreclose. Flipse said the process works like any other lawsuit: you name the defendants and serve them notice. They have the right to redeem the property by paying off the back taxes.

If the property owner doesn't pay, however, then a journal entry is filed in District Court declaring the county's right to sell the property. An attempt is then made

to notify all owners.

The first attempt is for the county to publish a delinquent tax list in the official county newspaper once a week for three consecutive weeks. Public notification, however, doesn't always prompt people to pay their taxes.

Flipse said his office uses the sheriff's office to personally serve the lawsuit whenever possible, and when people

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Clarissa Unger posed for a picture on a trip to Powerscourt Gardens, a large estate in County Wicklow, Ireland. The gardens are about half an hour from Dublin, where Unger attends Trinity College.

Colby woman attends Irish college

By Kevin Bottrell
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When Clarissa Unger came back to Colby for Christmas break this year, she was struck by how easily her hometown shakes off a snowstorm.

Unger has been living in Ireland for the past four months, studying comparative European politics at Trinity College, Dublin. The country does not usually get much snow, and Unger said she was surprised by how long it took Dublin to recover from the storms in December. The city shut down for two days, she said,

after only a little more snow than what Colby got last week.

Unger graduated from Colby High School in 2005 and the University of Kansas in 2009 before heading to Ireland. Trinity College is considered the best in the country, she said, and its political science department one of the best in Europe.

Unger said the college feels a lot like American universities, but much smaller. Her classes the last semester had only a dozen students.

"I absolutely love it," she added.

Unger lives in the center of Dublin and, since she doesn't

own a car, walks almost everywhere, something most of the city's residents do. Despite the recent snows, the weather is mostly good for walking, she said.

Her classes last semester focused on politics and policy in Europe, especially the European Union. The fall was a fascinating time to be studying in Ireland, she said, because she witnessed the country's financial collapse. There was a big economic boom in the late 1990s and early 2000s, she said, which led to a lot of loans being given out by banks. When people defaulted on the loans, the banks collapsed, taking the economy down with them.

The European Union bailed out Ireland, a move that was unpopular among the Irish, she said. The Irish government introduced "austerity measures," which raised taxes and cut spending. Unger said she expects to see an upheaval in the upcoming elections.

As a visiting student, Unger said, she's noticed that her Irish friends have been affected by the collapse far more than she has, especially when it comes to finding a job after college.

"I don't know any Irish students who don't expect to have

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Kansas delays school payments

By John Hanna
Associated Press

TOPEKA — Kansas delayed half of the aid payments due to school districts at the start of the new year for a few days because of concerns about a short-term cash crunch, an official confirmed Tuesday.

Elaine Frisbie, deputy state budget director, told the Associated Press that \$98 million that normally would have reached school districts Monday won't get to them until the end of this week. The state paid the other half on

time. She said the state decided to be cautious after tax collections in December were about \$22 million short of expectations. Postponing part of the aid to schools allowed the state to avoid a delay in meeting other obligations, such as paying bills from health-care providers for services to needy Kansans under the Medicaid program.

It's the first time since the state's fiscal year began July 1 that the state has delayed aid payments

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Breann Mackley adjusted a display at her new children's boutique in Southwind Plaza.

New children's store to open Thursday

By Vera Sloan
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A children's clothing store, Marie Lane Children's Boutique, will open its doors to the public on at 11 a.m. Thursday at 1105 Taylor Ave. in the Southwind Plaza.

Owner Breann Mackley said she grew up in Colby and graduated from Colby High School in 2003. She said she is excited about her new store, which has clothing for infants to size 5 toddler.

"I've always wanted to do a kids' store," Mackley said, "plus I have an addiction for buying for my own two children."

Mackley said she also feels it is good for the community to have an alternative place to get items

like baby clothes other than big chain stores.

She said she and her husband Preston, a physical therapist at Tina Harris Physical Therapy in downtown Colby, are parents of Rilan, 4, and Tatum, 4 months.

She said she carries Levis, Ralph Loren, Puma and Baby Togs, as well as other well-known brands.

Shoppers will have a choice of diaper bags, kids' jewelry and headbands for babies. And moms will be happy to know there is a play area for tots.

She said she plans a grand opening from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, with the first 50 shoppers to get 10 percent off their purchases.

Hours will be 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturdays.

Winter wheat looking poor across Kansas

By Roxana Hegeman
The Associated Press

WICHITA — Much of the winter wheat crop in Kansas, the nation's largest producer, is in poor shape after a December that brought little, if any rain, the state's Agricultural Statistics Service reported Monday.

Dighton grower Ron Suppes said only a fourth of the wheat he planted this fall at his western Kansas farm had enough moisture to germinate before winter set in, and now there's

no snow to protect the dormant crop from wind and freeze damage.

"I'm not too optimistic right now for a wheat crop in our part of the country," Suppes said Monday.

He's had crop failure six out of the past 10 years.

"The last two years haven't been too bad," Suppes said, "but now it looks like we are headed into another crop failure."

He's not alone. Nearly one-third of the state's winter wheat crop is in poor to very

poor condition, while 40 percent is listed as fair, Kansas Agricultural Statistics Service reported. Only 25 percent of the state's winter wheat was rated as good and just 2 percent excellent.

Other states also released dismal assessments Monday of their winter wheat. In Oklahoma, 19 percent was rated as poor to very poor. Nebraska reported 14 percent.

Justin Gilpin, the executive director of the

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Briefly

Youth league meeting tonight

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

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.

Hospital plans childbirth classes

Citizens Medical Center will offer four weeks of childbirth classes from 7 to 10 p.m. Thursdays start-

ing 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.

Free-throw contest open to kids

The Colby Knights of Columbus will hold its annual free-throw contest at 1 p.m. Sunday at the Colby Grade School gym. The contest is open to boys and girls 10 to 14. There is no charge, but proof of age is required. Winners advance to the district contest. For information, call Dewey Augustine at 443-1548 or 460-2924.

Food sign up ends on Monday

Prairie Land Food sign up is open now until Monday at State Farm Insurance, 905 E. Fourth St. De-

livery will be Saturday, Jan. 22, at the Sacred Heart School gym. For information, call 460-3579.

Hospital offers blood-sugar class

Citizens Medical Center will offer Journey for Control, a class about monitoring blood sugar for diabetics, at 7 p.m. Tuesday at the hospital. Class size is limited, but there is no charge. For information or to register, call dietitian Courtney McCarty at (785) 460-4849 or education co-ordinator Jeanene Brown at (785) 460-4850.

Seniors plan potluck Tuesday

The group More Fun Together plans a potluck dinner for people 50 or older who are alone, widowed, divorced, separated or who have partners in nursing homes at 6 p.m. Tuesday at the First Presbyterian Church. Bring a dish to share. Table service

and beverage will be provided. For information, call 462-6342.

Chronic disease topic of series

Citizens Medical Center will hold the next sessions of the Kansans Optimizing Health Program, a six-week chronic disease support workshop, from 1:30 to 4 p.m. on Mondays, Jan. 17 to Feb. 21, in the hospital's conference room. The class meets for 2 1/2 hours once a week. There is no cost, but the hospital encourages a \$30 donation to cover materials. Enrollment is limited. To register, call dietitian Courtney McCarty at (785) 460-4849.

