

Is everybody ready, now?



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

In between quarters at Thursday night's game, the Harlem Ambassadors brought their honorary youth ambassadors out onto the floor for activities such as musical chairs. The youth ambassadors were chosen at the morning assembly at Colby Grade School. Each one had to pledge to be drug free and finish college.

Wintering crows cause city to suffer

BLUEFIELD, W.Va. (AP) — Like a bad penny, the crows have returned to Bluefield.

Large flocks of crows are roosting in the southern West Virginia city, just as they did last winter.

Mayor Linda Whalen told the *Bluefield Daily Telegraph* one solution would be to cut down trees where the crows are roosting along Bluefield Avenue.

"It would be unfortunate to resort to that," Whalen said. "There are no easy options to rid us of the birds, and we are not equipped to deal with them."

The birds have even tried to peck their way into the *Daily Telegraph* building through the skylights, copy editor Amy Persinger said.

"I didn't know what it was at first," Persinger said, "because it was so loud. It sounds like someone was beating on the roof with a stick."

"Once dusk settles on Bluefield Avenue, the crows darken the sky."

Crows gather in large groups during winter because it increases the odds of finding food and protecting themselves from predators, said Jim Phillips, a naturalist

at Pipestem Resort State Park. In this case, he said, the birds may be roosting on Bluefield Avenue because it's close to the Mercer County dump.

"I know there is a large roost that feeds at the landfill during the day, and it might be the same roost," Phillips said. "They could feed at the landfill during the day and then roost in the trees at night."

Cutting trees would work, but Phillips suggested electronic noisemakers and solar-powered lights that flash red at night to mimic the eyes or predators. The devices are known to drive away deer and predators such as weasels, he said.

"I've used them in my garden and I've heard of farmers using them to protect chickens, which has been quite useful."

State Department of Natural Resources wildlife biologist Todd Dowdy said solutions are limited when crows roost in a city. Chasing them away often merely push the birds to another area, where they remain a problem, he said.

"You can harass them, but they'll just go to another part of town," he said. "You sort of get stuck with them."

Can parenting include being a child's friend?

Parents who want to be their child's friend are encouraged to be patient.

When a child has grown, matured, become his or her own person and no longer needs parental authority, friendship becomes possible, said Charles A. Smith, Kansas State University Research and Extension child development specialist.

In family life and during a child's growth and development process, however, Smith encourages parents to be consistent, reasonable, respectful and available, while also functioning as an authority figure and setting limits in the family.

Saying "no" to a child can be difficult, but it's important that a well-thought-out "no" remain a "no," rather than backing down in the interest of friendship, Smith said.

And, while it's unlikely that parents will always agree, it is

helpful if parents are most often on the same page and supportive of each other and the family, the child development specialist said.

More information on managing family relationships successfully is available at K-State Research and Extension offices throughout the state and online: www.ksre.ksu.edu. Smith also maintains a family-friendly, ad-free educational Web site: The WonderWise Parent @ www.k-state.edu/ww-parent/, and is the author of "Raising Courageous Kids: Eight Steps to Practical Heroism."

Practice lead safety in winter projects

Is a home improvement or a do-it-yourself renovation project on your list for winter? If so, here are a few things the Kansas Department of Health and Environment would like you to keep in mind whether you are doing the work yourself or hiring a contractor.

New regulations regarding lead-based paint in housing went into effect last spring. The Lead-Based Paint Renovation, Repair and Painting Rule is a federal regulation affecting contractors, property managers and others who disturb painted surfaces. The rule applies to houses, apartments and child-occupied facilities built before 1978. Its main purpose is to protect people from being exposed to lead dust and prevent lead poisoning.

"The most common sources of lead exposure in and around the home are lead-based paint and household dust," said Tom Langer, director of the department's Bureau of Environmental Health. "It is extremely important to follow the correct 'lead-safe' steps for renovation projects as

lead can affect the brain and vital organs and it is especially harmful to children."

If you are thinking of hiring a contractor to work in your home, here are some things to keep you and your family safe and healthy.

- Make sure the renovator has been properly trained and is certified by the department as qualified in dealing with lead-based paint hazards when remodeling or renovating homes — they must show you their credentials and provide you with information about the hazards of lead-based paint in your home.

- Visit the state website for a list of accredited professionals in your area that are Kansas lead certified, www.kshealthyhomes.org/contact_lead_professionals.htm.

If you are doing it yourself and your house was built before 1978, here are some things you should do.

- Expect all painted surfaces in the home to have been covered by lead-based paint even if the top coats are latex paint.

- Follow the steps to work "lead-

safe" that are detailed in free publications and videos available from the Kansas Healthy Homes Program.

- Keep dust to a minimum! Remember a little bit of dust can contain a large amount of lead and it takes very little to poison yourself or your children.

- Keep all non-workers outside of the work area.

- Wear protective clothing and shoes while doing the work.

- Use a properly fitted respirator equipped with HEPA filters.

- Do not eat, drink, or smoke in the work area.

- Do not dry-sand, sandblast, or power-wash to remove lead-based paint.

- Do not use high-temperature heat guns or open flames on lead-based paint.

For detailed information and a complete home renovation check-

list as well as do-it-yourself video, please visit: www.kshealthyhomes.org/homeowner-training.htm.

Lead is a naturally occurring element that has no taste or smell and is a highly toxic heavy metal poison. Lead can affect the brain and vital organs and is especially harmful to children and to adult reproductive systems. Once it gets into your body, lead can stay there for a long time and can build up in your body if you are in contact with even a small amount for a long time.

For safety tips visit: www.kshealthyhomes.org or contact the Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Prevention Program at lead@kdheks.gov or (866) 865-3233.

Ag scholarship program open

Monsanto and the National Association of Farm Broadcasters have issued a call for applications for the 2011 Commitment to Agriculture Scholarship Program.

High school seniors pursuing a career in agriculture are eligible to apply for a \$1,500 scholarship award. These scholarships help provide financial assistance to students based on academic achievement and leadership skills.

To qualify, seniors must come

from a farming family, plan to enroll as a full-time student in an agriculture-related program and commit to pursuing a career in agriculture. Applicants are evaluated on their academic record, leadership abilities, extracurricular activities and an essay. FFA membership is not required.

Applications are available online at www.monsanto.com/scholarships and must be submitted by Tuesday, Feb. 15.



This is personal.

My mother died of colon cancer when she was only 56.

Terrence Howard, actor/musician



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