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Happy Mother's Day

Hang on to that chicken



Colby Community College student Rusty Bohrer had to push fellow student Toni Nelson through an obstacle course blindfolded at the Ag Olympics on Wednesday, while Nelson had to keep hold of a live chicken. Other events included a three-legged race and a hay-bale roll.

KATHRYN BALLARD/Colby Free Press

Area veterans participate in Honor Flight

By Vera Sloan

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As soon as Jennie Niblock learned there would be an Honor Flight leaving from Garden City in April, she knew she wanted to accompany her grandfather Bob Barton on that flight.

Barton, who will be 94 in July, was a willing traveler on the Honor Flight, a program that takes veterans to see the war memorials in Washington D.C. Niblock, a nurse practitioner at Family Center For Health Care, went along. She said the veterans feel like 18-year-olds on the trip and come back with smiles. Barton said the trip was "just great."

Barton was drafted in 1942 into the U.S. Army, where he served in the infantry, and was discharged in 1945. He trained at Fort Benning, Ga., was stationed at army camps in Texas and New Jersey before shipping to Europe, and received a Bronze Star and three battle stars while serving in Germany.

As an infantryman, Barton was greeted by hundreds of thousands of cheering Germans in cities after the war was over. His unit helped capture thousands of German soldiers.

He was a member of an infantry division that captured a town in Germany where they discovered the bodies of 1,016 civilians that had been burned when the Germans knew the Americans would be taking the town.

During his nine months in combat, Barton said he never knew which foxhole would be his address.

Barton was also a mechanic, and was chosen to work on Gen. Dwight Eisenhower's jeep.

Several other Thomas County veterans went on the April Honor Flight:



George Elliott, an artilleryman with the 1st Infantry Division, was one of several Thomas County veterans who went on an Honor Flight in April.

George Elliott

George Elliott of Colby said when he graduated from the University of Iowa on Dec. 6, 1941, as a member of Reserve Officer Training Corps his obligation was to serve in the military for one year and one day.

"I had no clue what was coming," he said, "I went from graduating one day, to 'where the hell is Pearl Harbor' the next day.

"Well, my first three years, (a far cry from a year and a day) were spent in the States," he said, "and then I went to England and on to France and Germany where I followed Patton all the way."

Elliott was in the field artillery of the 1st Infantry Division, which saw near continuous action during the Allies' march across Europe.

Famous battles Elliott lived through were the Battle of the Bulge in Belgium, and the battle for The Bridge Head in Remagen, where they crossed the Rhine with

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Legislature leaves budget unresolved for weekend

By John Hanna

The Associated Press

TOPEKA — Kansas legislators broke off negotiations Friday over a \$14 billion budget, with dozens of big differences unresolved and the House and Senate still haggling over building up the state's cash reserves.

Three senators and three House members met for only a few minutes before deciding to suspend talks until Monday on the spending plan for the fiscal year beginning July 1.

Lawmakers can't wrap up their business for the year until the negotiators agree on a budget and each chamber approves the spending plan in an up-or-down vote. Monday will be the 87th day of the Legislature's session, out of 90 scheduled.

"It's just getting a little frustrating with the fact that we're running out of days to work," said lead Senate negotiator Carolyn McGinn, a Sedgewick Republican and

chairwoman of her chamber's Ways and Means Committee.

The next budget will trim overall spending by between 5 percent and 6 percent. It's also certain to cut general aid to the state's 289 school districts, something that drew a public rebuke Thursday from Kansas Democratic Party Chairwoman Joan Wagnon, a former state revenue secretary and House member.

Lead House negotiator Marc Rhoades shied away from saying the budget talks hit an impasse.

"It's just that we've reached a point — a plateau — where we have to figure out what the next moves are," said Rhoades, a Newton Republican and chairman of his chamber's Appropriations Committee.

The next budget will cut overall spending by between \$770 million and \$870 million to meet the state constitution's requirement of avoiding a deficit. Much of the decrease in spending will be triggered by the disappearance of federal economic

stimulus funds.

House Republicans argue that the next budget also must provide cash reserves of at least \$50 million at the end of June 2012.

That's actually a relatively low figure because guidelines developed in the past would lead to cash reserves of more than \$450 million. Few legislators want to build a cushion that large now because it would come at the expense of schools, social services and other government programs — or force tax increases.

But Rhoades said the state needs at least a small cushion in case revenues don't meet expectations. The state expects to collect \$6 billion in revenues to help finance state government, along with federal funds, special fees and other funds, and a 1 percent shortfall would amount to \$60 million.

"They say they are always off at least 1 percent. It could be to the good, which would be great, but it could be to the bad,"

he said. "To the bad, we're under water."

McGinn said senators agree on the need for cash reserves but don't want to have a target govern all spending decisions. She also noted that the state's tax collections in April were \$22 million more than anticipated.

"We're looking at good public policy and a way to run the state and be as efficient as we can," she said. "I really think that perhaps they should focus on our core services."

Wagnon had a news conference Thursday to criticize the potential cuts in aid to schools. She said the reductions being considered would mean teacher layoffs, larger classes and higher fees for parents. She said the budget could be a "death knell" for rural schools.

The Senate's version of the budget would cut the state's general aid to schools by \$226 per student, or about 5.6 percent. GOP Gov. Sam Brownback proposed a \$232-per-student cut, and the

House passed a \$250-per-student cut.

The current aid figure is \$4,012 per student. Any of the proposals would drop the figure to its lowest mark since the 1999-2000 school year.

"It's time to contact legislators and express your priorities before these decisions are finalized," she said. "I am appalled at the state of funding for public schools."

Wagnon said legislators could consider any number of revenue-raising measures, such as rethinking past corporate tax breaks, to head off such deep cuts.

But the GOP-controlled Legislature isn't considering any such proposals, seeing them as tax increases, something Republicans strongly oppose.

McGinn said senators are trying to keep the education funding cuts as small as possible. Rhoades said that if lawmakers don't reduce education funding, "The cuts would have to come from some other place."

Briefly

Meal, auction to benefit family

There will be a pancake feed, bake sale, silent auction and "slave" auction to benefit the family of Dalen Schlageck from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday at the Veterans of Foreign Wars hall. Money raised will help the family with medical and funeral expenses. Thrivent Chapter Activity will provide a matching donation. For information, Call Julie Ross at 443-1811.

Dance the night away Saturday

There will be a singles and couples dance from 6 to 10 p.m. Saturday at the Meadow Lake Golf Course clubhouse. Craig Stevens will provide music. For information, call Lue Duffey at (785) 269-7057.

Get your child screened Monday

The Northwest Kansas Educational Service Cen-

ter will hold free early childhood screenings on Monday at the Colby United Methodist Church. The screenings test infants, toddlers and preschoolers on speech, sight, hearing, movement, learning and social skills and more. To make an appointment, call Amy Hutfles at 460-5111.

Department to distribute food

The United States Department of Agriculture will distribute extra commodities from 1 to 2 p.m. next Monday at the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program office in the Senior Progress Center. Commodities are given according to income guidelines and distribution is first-come, first-served. Participants are asked to not arrive before 12:30 p.m. Commodities include cereal, corn, peaches, canned beef, juice and cranberry sauce. For information, call the program office at 462-6744.

Diabetes class is Tuesday

Citizens Medical Center Inc. will hold an diabetes class, "Continuing Your Journey with Diabetes," at 7 p.m. Tuesday in the Citizens Medical Center conference room. This class is free for a limited time, but registration is required. For information or to register, call Courtney McCarty at 460-1237.

Seniors plan potluck Tuesday

The group More Fun Together plans a potluck 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.

Hospital plans open house

Citizens Medical Center will hold an open house

for the new renovations and expansions from 4 to 7 p.m. Tuesday at the hospital. The hospital will also be showing off its new digital mammography system. Refreshments will be served. For information, call the hospital at 462-7511.

Support group meets at church

The Al-Anon/Alateen Family Group is now meeting from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m. Wednesdays at the Colby United Methodist Church. This is a 12-step program for people dealing with alcohol or other addictions in the family. For information, call Jim Mardock at 460-2761.

