



COLBY FREE PRESS

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New Brewster superintendent settling in

By Kevin Bottrell

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Janci Mills, the new superintendent and principal of the Brewster School District, is eager for the new school year.

Mills started work on July 1. The school has a lot of other new staff as well. Mills said so far she has enjoyed the mix of people, with older, experienced teachers who know traditions of the Brewster schools and new teachers who bring in new ideas.

Enrollment was Wednesday, and Mills

said there was a steady stream of students all day. She said she enjoyed meeting the students and parents.

"There's a lot of pride in the community toward the school," she said.

Mills said this is her first experience with the full range of students from kindergarten through 12th grade. Brewster even operates a preschool.

"It's the full rainbow of kids," she said.

Mills spent 20 years as a principal in the Hays School District, first at Felten Middle School and most recently at Roosevelt Elementary School before taking the job

in Brewster.

"I've been a Falcon and a Roadrunner," she said. "Now I'm a Titan and a Bulldog, so I'm no longer a bird."

Mills' husband Ed is president of Northwest Kansas Technical College. The couple live in Goodland, and for much of her career she has been commuting back and forth to Hays.

"We were always looking for an opportunity to work in the same space," she said.

Mills is originally from Topeka and attended Fort Hays State University. She said she was lucky enough to find a job in

Hays right after school.

Mills said she hasn't had trouble moving from a large district to a small one.

"Kids are kids," she said.

Like most Kansas districts, Brewster is dealing with less money coming in from the state. The Legislature cut base state aid per student to \$3,780 this year, and Mills said every district is having to look for ways to cut. Whether it is not filling a vacant position or combining bus routes, she said, schools are looking at every line item in their budgets. Brewster has an advantage, she said, since it doesn't have to use as many utilities on Fridays.

"It's a challenge," she said, "but there's always things you can do."

Brewster is sticking with a four-day school week again this year. School lasts from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., with the longer day making up the lost time. Mills said the Friday off is useful for activities or staff training, and the students don't have to miss school when there are Friday athletic events.

Mills said the idea is catching on in northwest Kansas, with similar-size districts like Weskan and Cheylin also using four-day schedules.

College plans yearly block party

By Christina Beringer

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The Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce has partnered once again with the Colby Convention and Visitor's Bureau and Colby Community College to sponsor the 10th annual Community Campus Block Party.

The free block party will be from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 16, in between the student union and the campus library. A free barbecue lunch will be available for students and vendors. Entertainment will be provided by the college radio station.

"We want new and returning college students to feel welcomed into the community," said Chamber Director Holly Whitaker. "And the event isn't just for out of town students, either; we encourage local high school graduates attending Colby Community College to stop by as well."

Students will not only be welcomed with a free lunch and a welcome packet, but they can also

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Barely able to see



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

Thomas County woke up to a thick layer of fog this morning. Visibility was less than 50 yards on K-25 north of Colby. The fog was widespread across northwest Kansas and southwest Nebraska, but it lifted by mid-morning. The National Weather Service is predicting highs in the upper 80s with possible thunderstorms in the evening. The thunderstorms could be slow-moving and may drop significant amounts of rain.

Secretary of State to keep up pressure on voting laws

By John Milburn

The Associated Press

TOPEKA — Secretary of State Kris Kobach said Wednesday he will renew a push next year to move up the start date for new Kansas voter identification laws.

Kobach said he would like to have people registering to vote for the first time in Kansas show proof of citizenship starting in March 2012, not January 2013 as the law now requires. He spoke before a meeting of a task force working on imple-

menting the new law.

The secretary of state said the goal was to prevent any non-U.S. citizens from registering to vote in Kansas and spoiling the integrity of the state's elections. The sooner Kansas can begin verifying citizenship, the more secure the elections will be, he argues.

"That's really the main legislative change I would like to see," the Republican said. "That way, the bulk of the registrations in the 2012 cycle will be properly analyzed for citizenship."

A bill that would have made that change was proposed during the 2011 legislative session, but was defeated after the initial law was passed.

He said with the effective date moved up, it would be easier to prevent non-citizens or other ineligible people from voting.

"If you don't have the screening in place, it's almost impossible to find the people once they're on the rolls of almost a million voters," Kobach. "For us to find that individual is searching for a needle in

a very, very large haystack."

The new laws also require voters to show photo identification at the polls beginning in January 2012. Kobach has said he hopes to have regulations drafted by this fall.

Critics have argued that efforts to require proof of citizenship or showing photo identification will suppress voter turnout, particularly among Democrats and minority populations.

Kobach disputed that.

"These rules are designed to ensure that

everybody has the right to vote and that everybody can vote," he said. "If somebody forgets their photo ID on election day, there will be a very clear process for how you rectify that situation."

A 17-member task force is reviewing the law and developing forms, policies and regulations to implement it before the 2012 election cycle. The task force is also developing the policies and procedures that election officials and poll workers

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Veterans group passes through Colby on cross-country bike ride

By Tom Betz

The Goodland Star-News
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The timing was good, but a bit delayed for the Vet Hunters Project bicycle platoon when they arrived Tuesday evening in time to attend the Goodland Veterans of Foreign Wars meeting.

Todd Morgan, bicycle team leader, and Steve Krieder, active duty Army Master Sergeant, were two of the group of about nine bike riders who rode into town and spent the night at the Sgt. Derrick Lutters Armory before heading out Wednesday on their trip east to St. Louis and the American Vets national convention.

The riders got a late start out of Goodland on Wednesday because of the morning rain. They passed through Colby on U.S. 24 in the afternoon.

The Vets Hunter Project is an effort to raise awareness of the number of homeless American veterans, and the group is always on the look out for them the homeless to try to help them get housing and started on a path back into society.

Morgan and Krieder agreed to be interviewed Tuesday evening while another portion of the bi-



TOM BETZ/Goodland Star-News

Riders from the Vet Hunters Project paused in Goodland after coming into town late Tuesday evening. The riders left Goodland on Wednesday, passing through Colby in the afternoon.

cycle platoon were being interviewed by Bryce Kesler of KLOE at the radio station.

The platoon had ridden in from Denver and spent about two hours

at the VFW where Morgan said he enjoyed some dancing and had a good time. It was well after dark when the bikers and their support group left the VFW and rode out

to the radio station for the interviews. The bikes are equipped with lights for night riding, and the platoon leader shouted out what was

coming as the bikes made their way into the radio station parking lot.

Morgan is from Los Angeles County, Calif., and said he was on the bicycle ride because he feels homeless veterans and all homeless are not getting the attention they need.

The Vets Hunter Project bicycle platoon left Bell, Calif., last Wednesday, and had planned to be in Goodland on Monday. Morgan said they have had to be creative taking the route across the country, and where they have found homeless veterans they have taken the time to do what they could to help them.

Morgan said they found homeless veterans in Las Vegas and some homeless vets in Denver. He said while in Denver they had met with the veterans policy official from Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper's office and urged the state to work on a program to help homeless veterans.

Riding with the group is Morgan's 71 year old father, Steve, who is a retired U.S. Navy veteran. He said he likes riding and meeting people along the trip.

Master Sgt. Kreider said he is stationed in Connecticut, but got involved with the Vet Hunter Proj-

ect when he was stationed in Riverside, Calif., for two years, and took leave to fly out and join the bicycle ride. He said he met Jose Ramos, Joe Leal and the other organizers while in Riverside and they bonded.

He said the Vet Hunter Project was an off-shoot of an effort started by Ramos about seven years ago to create a Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day. He said Ramos rode across country seven years ago asking states to create such a day on the last Sunday of March, marking the day the last U.S. combat troops left Vietnam in 1975.

Master Sgt. Kreider said the wound from that war has not been forgotten, and after talking to the people in Colorado they hope that state will join California, Connecticut, Delaware, Minnesota and Wisconsin in passing legislation to create the Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day. He said making this day a national celebration is one of the things the group will talk about with Veterans Af-

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