



# COLBY FREE PRESS

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KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

Take Charge committee member Paul Bailey (above) spoke about conserving energy by unplugging electronics at the Big Splash Event on Saturday at the Colby Community Building. Kids from the audience (right) helped brainstorm other ways to conserve energy.



## Big Splash nets 8,250 points for Colby

By Kevin Bottrell

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The City of Colby's "Big Splash Event" on Saturday didn't get the participation the Take Charge committee was hoping for, but it still got Colby 8,250 points in the energy efficiency competition.

One hundred and two people — including volunteers — attended the Big Splash at the Community Building. The committee had hoped for at least 400. The first 200 were to get free admission to the

pool, and the first 400 free access to the Farmers and Merchants Bank Barbecue.

Committee member Paul Bailey led the Energy Bandit program. Energy bandits are electronics that still draw power when turned off.

Bailey recommended checking each electrical outlet in your house to see what is plugged in, and what could be unplugged when not in use. Power strips are also useful to help turn off appliances and electronics, he said, but even some of those still draw power when switched off.

Committee member Melany Wilks led three "Learning Tree" exercises.

Wilks had the audience divide up based on whether they agreed or disagreed with statements about energy such as "The world's natural resources exist for people to use," and "Protecting a country's natural resources is primarily the government's responsibility." Wilks then had several audience members tell why they agreed or disagreed with the statement.

The next activity was "Renewable or Not." Wilks divided the audience into five groups and gave a trash bag full of items

to each. The groups had to decide which of the items were recyclable and which were not. Wilks then had one member from each group come up and talk about a specific item, such as tin cans or batteries, and whether or not it can be recycled.

In the third activity, Wilks asked each group to come up with a list of ways to save energy and write them down on a large sheet of paper. The group with the most ideas got to leave for the barbecue first.

The city got 40 points for each person at the event for 4,080 points. Bailey came

to the pool in the afternoon to run the Energy Bandit program again. This way the city was able to get another 10 points for each person there for another 4,170 points.

The Take Charge Challenge ends on Sept. 30. The winner gets \$100,000 toward an energy-efficiency project. New points haven't been added in yet, and as of this morning Goodland is still in the lead. Cities get points for holding events like the Big Splash along with home energy audits and getting people to switch to compact fluorescent light bulbs.

## Small district school leaders meet

Six superintendents from small school districts gathered at Northwest Kansas Technical College on July 28 to talk about promoting their districts.

Superintendents Bill Steiner, Oakley; Janci Mills, Brewster; Rob Schiltz, St. Francis; Mary Ellen Welshon, Golden Plains; Dave Hale, Wallace County; and Dave Porter, Sharon Springs, met at the college in Goodland to speak with Dr. Paul Theobald, Woods-Beals Endowed Chair at Buffalo State University.

Theobald talked about recent research showing that graduates from small schools tend to be successful in college and beyond when compared to their large school contemporaries.

Theobald also discussed the contributions that small schools and communities have historically made, and continue to make, to the quality of American life.

"They represent a system of ethics and values that are dear to



Dr. Ed Mills (left), president of Northwest Kansas Technical College, listened to Dr. Paul Theobald, an expert on rural education from Buffalo State University, at a gathering of small school district superintendents on July 28.

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## Area champs take on region

The Tri-State Royal Champion of Champions competition finished off the week of the Northwest Kansas District Free Fair at Goodland.

There is no entry fee but the entry must be either the grand champion or reserve grand champion beef, sheep, swine or goat of its county fair, said organizer Ron Schilling.

Thomas County youth in this year's show were Taylor Todd, market lamb; Michael Schmidt, market goat; Kelly Sloan, market steer; and Weston Schmidt, market swine.

The Tri-State Royal celebrated its 50th year. The show was started by Wilmont Price and family in 1962. Dale and Zona Price took over after his father quit. For the last 20 years Ron and Marsha Schilling have or-

ganized the event.

Sponsors for the event include Eklund Insurance, S&T Communications, Sherman County Fair Board, Kennedy and Coe, CHS/United Plains Ag, Jesse and Doris Craft, Frontier Ag, Ketzner High Noon Feeds, The Scouler Company, Dan Brenner Ford, Western State Bank, Oakley Veterinary Service, First National Bank, Pam Ruff Embroidery, Vanderbilt's, Schilling Farm Services, Wallace County Farm Bureau, T-Bone Feeders, Cochran Farm Supply, Peoples State Bank, Western Sprinklers, Ag Power Equipment, Jim and Darla Mosbarger, Doug and April Hall, Sherman County Farm Bureau, Century Feeders and Goodland Greenline.

Winners are given a belt buckle.

## Education secretary considering test score waivers for states

By Donna Gordon Blankinship  
The Associated Press

Education Secretary Arne Duncan says he will announce a new waiver system Monday to give schools a break from student testing mandates in the federal No Child Left Behind law.

Critics say the benchmarks are unrealistic and brand schools as failures even if they make progress. Schools and districts where too few kids pass the tests for several years are subject to sanctions that can include firing teachers or closing the school entirely.

State and local education officials have been begging the federal government for relief from the mandates, but school starts

soon and Congress still hasn't answered the call.

The plan to offer waivers to all 50 states, as long as they meet other school reform requirements, comes at the request of President Barack Obama, Duncan said. More details on the waivers will come in September, he said.

The goal of the No Child Left Behind law is to have every student proficient in math and reading by 2014. States have been required to bring more students up to the math and reading standards each year, based on tests that usually take place each spring. The step-by-step ramping up of the 9-year-old law has caused stress in states and most school districts, because more and more schools are labeled as

failures as too few of their students meet testing goals.

Through the waivers, schools will get some relief from looming deadlines to meet testing goals as long as they agree to embrace other kinds of education reforms such as raising standards, helping teachers and principals improve, and focusing on fixing the lowest performing schools.

Duncan and Melody Barnes, director of the Domestic Policy Council at the White House, said the administration will encourage every state to apply and will work with them to meet the requirements.

Nothing in this plan for temporary relief from some aspects of the federal law will undermine what Congress is still discussing in terms of revising federal

education laws, Duncan said. The long-awaited overhaul of the law began earlier this year in the U.S. House, but a comprehensive reform appears far from the finish line.

"What we do in terms of flexibility can be a bridge or transition," he said. "We all want to fix the law. This might help us get closer to that."

The chairman of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, however, says he is worried about Duncan's waiver plan.

"I remain concerned that temporary measures instituted by the department, such as conditional waivers, could undermine the committee's efforts to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary

Education Act," said Rep. John Kline, R-Minn., in a statement, referring to the formal name of the No Child Left Behind law.

The Obama administration requested a revision more than a year ago. Duncan said another school year is about to start and state education officials have told him they can't keep waiting for relief from the mandates.

"I can't overemphasize how loudly the outcry is to do something now," Duncan

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