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Students encourage peers to buckle up



Michael Tubbs and his fellow Student Ambassadors conducted a survey of parents, teachers and student drivers last Wednesday and Thursday to see how many were using seatbelts. About 49 percent were buckled up.

By Kevin Bottrell

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The Kansas Highway Patrol and the Colby High School Student Ambassadors are teaming up to try and get more students to wear their seatbelts.

Seatbelts Are For Everyone, or SAFE, is a program sponsored by the Kansas Traffic Safety Resource Office. Todd Hileman, public resource officer with the Highway Patrol, is helping to administer the program with the Student Ambassadors, who held a kickoff assembly Tuesday. The program will run until the end of the school year.

Students will sign a pledge card saying they will always wear a seatbelt. That card will go into prize drawings. If they are caught driving without a seatbelt, they are ineligible for the drawings. The student can try again the next month. Any student who has kept to the pledge for the whole school year will have seven chances to win the grand prizes.

Hileman said he has enlisted the Colby Police Department and the Thomas County Sheriff's Office to monitor for students not wearing seatbelts.

Hileman said he would be giving away four Visa gift cards a month in the drawings, and the grand prizes at the end of the year will be a 32-inch television donated by Walmart and three iPads.

As a way to start the program, Hileman had several of the students sit by the entrances to the school parking lot last week and count how many students, teachers and parents were wearing their seatbelts. About 49 percent were buckled up, which Hileman said is about average.

Hileman said he's gotten donations to the program from Thomas County Attorney Kevin Berens, the City of Colby, the police and sheriff's departments, the American Legion, Colby Implement, Nextech, State Farm Insurance, Walmart, Colby Dodge, the Stramel Law Firm and the Traffic Safety Resource Office.

The resource office has sponsored the program in more than 40 school districts around Kansas. Hileman said he conducted the program in Oakley last year. During the program, he said, several students got into accidents, including one rollover. Hileman said the accidents would have been much worse, but the students were wearing seatbelts.

National Honor Society to induct new members

The Colby chapter of the National Honor Society will induct 19 new members at a ceremony at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 15, in the high school auditorium. Colby Community College President Dr. Stephen Vacik will speak.

Students being inducted include Lauren Bell, Beau Brown, Gabri-

elle Browne, John Faber, Kaitlyn Flanagan, Alex Juenemann, Keana Keck, Trek Keck, Jessi Kriss, Karly Kriss, Cameron McLaughlin, Tomi Miller, Daniel Myers, Dustin Reed, Molly Tolle, Zane Winger, Quade Woofter, Jaydon Bixenman and Skylar Barrett.

The students must have a 3.75

grade point average or higher, participate in community and school activities and have 10 hours of community service per semester. They were evaluated by the faculty council, which includes Linda Jones, Adviser; Roni Dietz, Donna Roberts, Joey Nickols, Gordon Rasmussen, and Rick Williams.

Veterans Day parade to begin at 4 p.m. next weekend

The annual Veterans Day parade will begin at 4 p.m. Friday, Nov. 11, at Fike Park.

The parade route will be south on Franklin Avenue to Second Street, then east to Court Avenue and then to the courthouse. Parade entries should line up on East Eighth Street. Veterans who need a ride in the parade should be at the Veterans of Foreign Wars post. All veterans who are carrying the flag should be at the park by 3:45 p.m.

At the courthouse, the Colby High School band will perform the national anthem. Post Commander Paul Ohlrogge will introduce State Commander Bobby Cox.

After the courthouse event, there will be a meal at the post.

In case of bad weather, the event will move to 5 p.m. at the post.

For information, call Dale Deaver at 443-1113.

First Presbyterian Church to celebrate 125 years in Colby

One of Colby's oldest churches will celebrate its 125th anniversary this weekend.

The public is invited to attend several activities Saturday and Sunday. There will be a free ice cream social at 2:30 p.m. Saturday. Sunday services will be at 10 a.m. with a history program at 1 p.m.

The congregation for the First Presbyterian Church first organized on Nov. 7, 1886, a little over a year after the founding of Colby. Within a year it had filed incorporation papers with the secretary of state, raised money, bought land and built a church building. The congregation also started a school.

The church's 21 charter members were settlers from Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Nebraska and other parts of Kansas. In the first year, the congregation swelled to 29. Money was tight in those early years. In 1891 the congregation had to get pledges to pay a minister.

That first church, on the corner of First Street and School Avenue, was in the path of the westward expansion of the Union Pacific Railroad. In 1888, the land was decided to the railroad company and the building moved to Fourth Street.

By 1915, the congregation had



CHRISTINA BERINGER/Colby Free Press

The original First Presbyterian Church (above), built in 1887, is still used as a home, although it has moved from its original location to South Mission Ridge. The current church building (right) was completed in 1923, despite financial difficulties.

grown to 66, and a new building was needed. Money was scarce, and the building, located on Fourth Street, wouldn't be finished until 1923. The church still uses that building, which was recently voted as one of the Eight Wonders of Thomas County.

In that year the old church building was sold and moved to become the Pilgrim Holiness Church at Fourth Street and Range Avenue, and it was moved again in 1963 to South Mission Ridge, where it is

still used as a private residence.

During the Great Depression, membership declined and the pulpit often stood empty. The church pulled through using student pastors and a new full-time pastor was secured in 1941. By that time, World War II had started. Forty-nine church members served in the armed forces. Two, Robert G. Bellamy and Floyd A. Donn, didn't come home.

The church continued to grow in the 1950s and '60s, adding a



Christian Education wing and a house for the pastor. The congregation reached its largest in the 1970s. After that, the loss of older members and the migration of younger people to big cities contributed to a decline in member-

ship. In 2005, the congregation voted to pool resources with the Hoxie Presbyterian Church. Rev. Carol Rahn, the church's 24th pastor, commutes back and forth to serve both congregations.

The church continues to support

organizations like Hospice, Smart Start, More Fun Together (a singles group for older adults), after school programs, 24/7 Dads, girl scouts and the Genesis-Thomas County food bank.

Kansas schools see improvements in math and reading test scores over time

By John Milburn

The Associated Press

TOPEKA — Kansas students posted gains in math and reading scores on 2011 National Assessment of Education Progress tests, especially when compared to scores from 2003, education officials announced Tuesday.

State Education Commissioner Diane DeBacker gains were particularly strong in math and among English language learners. She said the state's performance on the national exam indicates Kansas schools are improving in their ability to

provide a breadth of knowledge to students and not just teaching to state standards.

"I believe the State Board of Education's decision to adopt Kansas Common Core Standards for English, language arts and mathematics, and the work our state has done in developing our Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant application will facilitate growth in that area over time," DeBacker said.

The state's fourth-grade scores were 224 in reading and 246 in math, based on a 500-point scale. Nationally, they were 220 in reading and 240 in math. Kansas

eighth-graders scored 267 in reading and 290 in math, while nationally they were 264 in reading and 283 in math.

Kansas is applying for a federal Race to the Top grant that awards states funding to implement programs targeted at improving achievement among students who historically have struggled to keep pace with requirements. Both the Kansas and national scores reflect continued achievement gaps between white students and minorities, as well as those students who qualify for free or reduced-priced lunches.

State officials reference 2003 figures as

a benchmark because that's when Kansas adopted new curriculum standards and was the first year the state had 100 percent participation from schools selected to take the tests.

However, Kansas has shown steady progress since 2000 in fourth- and eighth-grade scores, consistently ranking in the top 10 among states nationally. The test scores are generally considered the nation's report card because they assess student knowledge on generally accepted academic standards.

In addition to the 500-point scale, the scores also rate students based on com-

petency in each subject area, either below basic, basic, proficient and advanced.

Under the federal No Child Left Behind law, states are to reach 100 percent proficiency in math and reading by 2014 on assessments developed and administered by each state, though President Barack Obama is encouraging states to apply for waivers to allow for more time to reach

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