



Postal Service may be close to default

By Hope Yen The Associated Press

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Postal Service said Tuesday it has lost \$5.1 billion in the past year, pushing it closer to imminent default on a multibillion-dollar payment and to future bankruptcy as the weak economy and increased Internet use drive down mail volume.

The financial losses for the year ended Sept. 30 came despite deep cuts of more than 130,000 jobs in recent years and the closing of some smaller local post offices.

This comes on the heels of an announcement that the service is holding public meetings about closing the Salina mail processing facility and moving sorting operations from Hays, Dodge City and Liberal. Mail processing from Colby and Hays were recently moved to Salina as a cost-saving measure, and it was announced earlier this fall that the service was considering consolidating all mail processing in Kansas to either Denver or Wichita.

The service has not made any announcement about moving more mail sorting out of Colby.

Losses will only accelerate in the coming year, Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe warned, citing faster-than-expected declines in first-class mail. He implored Congress to take swift, wide-ranging action to stabilize the ailing agency's finances as it nears a legal deadline Friday to pay \$5.5 billion into the U.S. Treasury for future retiree health benefits.

Congress is expected to grant a reprieve, but that will only delay the day of reckoning for an agency struggling for relevance in an electronic age. Based on current losses, the Postal Service says it will run out of money - or come danger-

ously close - next September, forcing it to halt service.

"We are at a point where we require urgent action," Donahoe said.

In the event of a shutdown, private companies such as FedEx and UPS could handle a small portion of the material the post office moves, but they do not go everywhere. No business has shown interest in delivering letters everywhere in the country for a set rate of 44 cents for a first-class letter.

For the fiscal year ended Sept. 30, the post office had income of \$65.7 billion, down \$1.4 billion from the previous year.

Expenses totaled \$70.6 billion.

The loss of \$5.1 billion was less than a previous estimate of \$10 billion, but only because the \$5.5 billion payment - originally due Sept. 30 - was deferred until Nov. 18 with the approval of Congress.

In 2010, losses totaled \$8.5 billion.

Mail volume this past year totaled 168 billion pieces, compared with 171 billion in 2010, a decline of 1.7 percent. At the same time volume was declining, the post office was required to begin service to thousands of new addresses to accommo-

See "DEFAULT," Page 2

School board learns about career education

By Kevin Bottrell Colby Free Press kbottrell@nwkansas.com

The Colby School Board got a run down on how the district prepares students for life after high school at its meeting Monday.

Career service counselor Joni Clark-Leiker made the presentation. In the United States, she said, 40 percent of high school students completed some kind of post-secondary education. Of those, 20 percent are employed in their field and 20 percent are underemployed.

"We need to be making sure our students are not in that underemployed segment," she said.

In Colby, 30 percent of students go on to a four-year university, 50 percent attend a two-year college, 8.7 percent attend a vocational or technical school, 4 percent go right into the workforce, 3 percent are exchange students who return home and 3.3 percent are undecided. Clark-Leiker said the school has not tracked how many of these students complete their post-secondary education.

Clark-Leiker said career and technical education begins at the grade school level with six basic career areas. The career guidance staff helps the students gradually narrow their focus over the years until they reach high school.

Colby High School uses 10 ca-

reer clusters: agriculture, food and natural resources; business; finances; architecture and construction; human services; hospitality and tourism; health science; law and public safety; audio/visual, arts and communications; and information technology.

Within these, Clark Leiker said, the school breaks them down further into specific career paths. These are three-class sequences with an introductory, technical and application level classes. The introductory level is often done at the middle school or in the first year of high school. The application level is often on-the-job training. Clark-Leiker said the term the school uses is "professional learning experience."

"(It's) sending our students out into the workforce to get training we can't provide in house," she said.

The career paths must include an articulation agreement with a college, whether in Colby or elsewhere, so that the student will get both college credit for the courses and acceptance into the college-level program.

One such agreement is with Northwest Kansas Technical College in Goodland, which will award a \$750 scholarship to students who complete some of the three-class programs.

See "BOARD," Page 2

A tale out of Africa



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

Clyde Horinek (from left), playing a crocodile, chomped on the nose of the elephant's child, played by Drew Starbuck, during the fourth grade's musical "The Elephant's Child." The musical

told the story of how the elephant's trunk became so long. The snake, played by Kaity Nelson, encouraged the elephant to pull as hard as he could, which caused his trunk to stretch.

Pep band reunion



KAYLA CORNETT/Colby Free Press

Colby Community College alumni had the chance to play with the college pep band during the Ambassador Classic basketball tournament last weekend as a part of the school's Homecoming/Family Weekend.

Colby American Legion to talk scholarships Saturday

The Colby American Legion is looking to spread the word about scholarships local youth can obtain through the organization.

The Legion will be holding an event Saturday at the club, 1850 W. Fourth St. From 5 to 6:30 p.m. the Legion will have an all-members meeting, including the Legion Auxiliary and Sons of the American Legion.

At 6:30 p.m. the Legion will open the meeting to the public and talk about the many scholarships it

can offer to high school and college students. Legion Commander Monty Lewis said the Eagle Scout of the Year scholarship, for instance, is a \$25,000 scholarship, and others are anywhere from \$2,500 to \$10,000.

Christina Ostmeyer, who attended a national Constitution convention on a sponsorship from the Legion, and Michael Tubbs and Konnor Kriss, who attended the Boys State national convention, will speak about their experiences.

St. Francis Chamber of Commerce dissolves

By Karen Krien The St. Francis Herald karen.k@nwkansas.com

The St. Francis Area Chamber of Commerce board voted to dissolve the organization at its meeting Nov. 1, at the St. Francis Public Library.

The main reason the chamber dissolved was the resignation of secretary Gloria Bracelin. Bracelin had returned several years ago after there was no luck in finding a secretary. It was noted that the job did not pay enough to attract suitable candidates and there were few volunteers stepping up to help with the different events.

Les Lacy, hospital administrator, said he felt it was important to keep the events going in order to bring people into the community. Donna Stevens, business owner, was concerned about keeping

Main Street businesses open. On Saturday afternoons, she said, only three businesses are open.

Roger Jensen, city council member, reminded those present that it was the job of the Chamber to bring people to town by scheduling special events. However, it was the job of the businesses owners to provide specials and activities to bring the people into their stores.

Business owner Kari Meyer said she thought the Chamber was important and hated to see it dissolved, however, she said she had no time to take on more work.

It was suggested that the Chamber join with the Cheyenne County Development Corporation. The Development Corporation, a county-wide entity, is also struggling to keep afloat and will lose its coordinators at the first of the year. Museum staff could handle

calls, but the museum is only open part time and short on staff.

Many people will probably use the website. Jensen said the city was updating the website, which might help. A lot of calls, he said, could be covered through the website.

The Chamber headed up or helped with five events this year including Christmas activities, the Easter egg hunt, the car show and the fair parade.

One important matter that the Chamber has taken care of for years is the Chamber Scrip money. Many businesses and individuals give the scrip money as bonuses and gifts. The money can be spent in any Cheyenne County busi-

See "CHAMBER," Page 2

