



Grant will help group plan fat fight

The Thomas County Healthy Communities Coalition is one of 40 teams throughout the United States chosen to join in the second phase of a national effort to combat obesity.

A \$4,000 grant will support data collection and computer equipment needed for the Collaborate for Healthy Weight program.

The Thomas County Health Department will be using this grant to target

family planning patrons and give them help to maintain a healthy weight.

Administrator Kasiah Rothchild said members of the department, the hospital, the county Extension office and the Regional Prevention Center of Northwest Kansas will get training and technical assistance with national experts to learn about improving health and obesity.

After they're trained, Rothchild said, they will start out by applying that knowl-

edge to help Thomas County family-planning patrons.

"Then it could be applied in the future to a broader population group instead of just a small target group," she said.

The program, sponsored by the National Initiative for Children's Healthcare Quality and the federal Health Resources and Services Administration, includes 40 new teams of health-care professionals and community leaders, from Pasadena

to Philadelphia. The new groups join 10 teams that have been working since June to improve obesity prevention and treatment in their towns.

The teams comprise representatives from the health care, public health and community sectors, working together, using quality-improvement methods to identify, test and implement high-potential changes.

"We congratulate the 40 teams joining

us in this unique community-based effort," said Charles Homer, president of the National Initiative for Children's Healthcare Quality. "We are confident that they, building on the accomplishments of our initial 10 teams, will pioneer breakthrough solutions to this serious public health problem."

"We know they will help build momen-

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Senator blocks secretary's bill on citizenship

By John Hanna
AP Statehouse Correspondent

TOPEKA — A key state senator is blocking a committee vote on Secretary of State Kris Kobach's legislation to require new Kansas voters to prove their U.S. citizenship ahead of this year's presidential election, possibly dooming the measure.

Chairwoman Terrie Huntington said today that she doesn't plan to have her Senate Ethics and Elections Committee meet again this year. The committee had a hearing on Kobach's bill Thursday, its last scheduled meeting of the year, but adjourned without acting on the measure.

"The committee, it's not their choice to meet again," Huntington said. "We are through."

Legislators enacted a law last year requiring people registering to vote for the first time in Kansas to provide proof of their citizenship, but it doesn't take effect until January. Kobach wants to move up the effective date to June 15, arguing it should be in place ahead of the surge in registration that will precede the November presidential election.

Kobach's bill passed the House last month, but even some of his fellow Republicans in the Senate have been cool to the proposal. He contends it will prevent illegal immigrants and other non-citizens from registering, combatting election fraud.

Critics of voter ID laws say they are meant to keep turnout down, particularly among students, mi-

norities, the poor and the elderly. Kobach's office said it found 32 non-citizens registered to vote in Kansas last year, out of about 1.7 million registered voters. There have been fewer than 10 reported cases in Kansas over the past decade in which a non-citizen voted or attempted to vote.

Kobach didn't immediately respond to a cellphone message today seeking comment, but he's said the committee could easily meet again, even if it convened in a hallway, as committees occasionally do when lawmakers' schedules are hectic.

His conservative GOP allies also could ask the Senate to pull the bill from Huntington's committee, but that would require a vote of 24 of 40 members, rather than the 21 votes needed to pass a bill. Together, moderate Republicans and Democrats, who generally are skeptical of Kobach's proposal, control the chamber.

Kobach has expressed frustration as a \$40 million computer upgrade at the state Division of Vehicles has become a crucial issue for senators wary of his proposal. He has said it shouldn't be an issue, arguing that the state could move forward regardless, even if the upgrade would make administering the proof-of-citizenship rule easier.

Kansas will require all people seeking or renewing a license to show whether they're U.S. citizens. When the second phase of the upgrade is done, the division is

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Decorating the downtown



Colby Community College art students are doing chalk drawings around town to advertise the 2012 Artwalk, from 6 to 9 p.m. Friday, April 20. Doing the chalk drawing on the sidewalk in front of Horlacher Jewelers were (from left) Ashton Domsch

REBEL JAY/Colby Community College of Brewster, April Weisshaar of Burlington, and Meagan Zodrow of Hoxie. They were doing a Norman Rockwell drawing of a clock worker.

Paper wins statewide photo award

The Colby Free Press won an award in the annual Better Newspapers Contest sponsored by the Kansas Press Association and shared in another for a special section put out by Nor'West Newspapers.

Managing Editor Kevin Bottrell won second place in sports photography for a softball photo taken while working at the Free Press in April. Bottrell was promoted to editor and

general manager of The Goodland Star-News in January.

Articles, pages, photographs and ads from 2011 were submitted in January and the winners were announced last week.

Nor'West, which owns the Free Press, won third place in the special section category for its County Tax Section. Writers from each of the company's six newspapers examined and

compared property taxes throughout northwest Kansas. The section was published September.

Nor'West owner Steve Haynes won third place for editorial writing. Haynes' editorials appear in most company papers, including the Free Press.

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STEVE HAYNES/Colby Free Press

Crews from Simon Contractors of Cheyenne, Wyo., and North Platte, Neb., got right to work this morning, blocking off K-25 and starting to demolish the old bridge over the North Fork of the Solomon River about three miles south of town. A backhoe operator removed the guard rails, then plucked the posts out of the ground before starting on the pavement.

Construction closes bridge just south of Colby on K-25

By STEVE HAYNES
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Headed south? Think again. Workers closed K-25 just south of Interstate 70 this morning, then got right to work tearing down the old bridge over the North Fork of the Solomon River about three miles south of town.

State and county officials have prepared two main detours for

traffic going south. The "official" all-weather detour, marked by the state, uses I-70, U.S. 83 and K-96 to route traffic on paved state roads through Oakley and Scott City to Leoti. It bypasses both the bridge work and a repaving project on K-25 north of Russell Springs.

Both stretches of the highway will be closed for about three months, though the contractors hope the work will take a little less time. Weather permitting, the road should be open through both proj-

ects by the first part of July.

Thomas County crews have graded County Road 20, the south extension of Country Club Drive, from I-70 to County Road N, also known as Route 388. From there, traffic can go east toward Mingo or west a mile back to K-25. The county packed the base and surfaced the road with asphalt millings, turning what had been a mud pit into a passable detour.

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Paving on U.S. 40 will delay traffic

Crews will begin repaving a 35-mile section of U.S. 40 across Logan County today.

The project starts at the Wallace-Logan County line and extends east to the U.S. 83 junction west of Oakley. Venture Corp. of Great Bend is the contractor. Workers will mill 2.5 inches off the existing pavement, inlay 2.5 inches of material, then overlay one inch of new asphalt over the entire width.

Flagger and a pilot car will guide one-lane traffic through the

work zone during daylight hours. Delays of 15 minutes or less can be expected. Kristen Brands, district public affairs manager for the Kansas Department of Transportation, suggests that people plan their travels accordingly, especially those commuting to and from work or school.

"Please use caution, pay attention to the work-zone signs and respect workers while driving through any road construction zone," Brands said.

The project is part of T-Works, the state transportation program passed in 2010. Weather permitting, the work will be done by May 27.

For questions, contact construction engineer Stuart Withington at (785) 672-3113 or stuartwi@ksdot.org in Oakley, or Brands at (785) 877-3315 or kristenb@ks-

