



Snow storm here dumps 10 inches

By Sam Dieter
Colby Free Press
sdieter@nwkans.com

Traffic backed up here this weekend as a snow storm closed roads across western Kansas. Interstate 70 eventually was closed westbound from Hays to Denver, though eastbound lanes were open east of Colby.

The wet, sticky snow got deeper the farther west you went, however, with 15 inches in Goodland and up to 16 in parts of eastern Colorado. Colby reported 10 inches, Brewster 8 and Oakley 5 from the storm.

"Usually our spring storms have a lot more water equivalent," said Scott Mentzer, National Weather Service meteorologist in charge of the Goodland weather station.

That helps explain the large amount of snow that fell this weekend, he added. Almost all the snow melted off the roads Sunday, but it was heavy enough to snap limbs off trees as it fell. Colby Public Works Director Omar Weber said some branches

were heavy with snow snapped off and hit electric lines or blew into them when the wind picked up. That shut the power off at different times and places around town Saturday.

"We had a couple of different circuits that kicked out," Weber said, adding that perhaps the majority of Colby lost power at one time or another, including the Community Building, and around Court Avenue and near Davis Avenue.

With the freeway closed most of the day, the Kansas Highway Patrol and Thomas County sheriff's office had no major accidents during the storm, but hotel parking lots filled up Saturday as the highway west closed down.

The Kansas Department of Transportation closed I-70 from here to the state line at 3 a.m. Saturday, just a couple hours after snow started falling in Colby. Shortly after 3 p.m. that day, the highway was closed from here to just east of Denver. As

See "SNOW," Page 2



Snow weighed down tree branches and covered a snowblower (above) in Brewster on Saturday. Marc Alwin (far left) of Brewster used a blade attached to his garden tractor to clear his driveway Saturday evening. A few days before, he had been using his tractor to plow his backyard garden. Heavy snow knocked a branch off a tree and onto a car (left) Saturday near downtown Colby. Ten inches of snow was reported here over the weekend.

HEATHER ALWIN
SAM DIETER
Colby Free Press



College to join Hays 'reverse transfer' program

By Kayla Cornett
Colby Free Press
kcornett@nwkans.com

The Colby Community College trustees agreed last Monday for the college to participate in a statewide "reverse transfer" agreement with Fort Hays State University.

College President Dr. Stephen Vacik said Fort Hays' Ed Hammond came to a meeting of the Council of Presidents of

state Board of Regents colleges, and proposed the agreement.

Vacik said a reverse transfer would be for students who have 45 hours or more from a two-year college who had not completed a degree from that two-year college. If they transfer to Fort Hays and complete the rest of the hours in their program, the student would get degrees from both Fort Hays and the two-year college.

All of the community colleges in Kansas would participate in this agreement

with Fort Hays, he said.

"This process will be automated," Vacik said. "Unless a student opts out, it will basically automatically be done for them."

He said the presidents also talked with Hammond about doing this with all of the Regent schools, which includes 35 colleges and universities.

"We may end up having a reverse transfer agreement from all the two-year colleges from all the Regents' institutions in

state, which would be big for us," Vacik said.

It's not going to cost the students or the college anything, he said. The colleges also agreed to share nonconfidential academic information between the schools.

The trustees voted to have Vacik sign the agreement on behalf of Colby.

In other business, the board:

• Heard from Vacik about an eduKan meeting on March 6. EduKan is a joint program designed to help students com-

plete a degree online. He said they worked on a strategic plan, which he sent out to the board members. A faculty pay schedule was approved, Vacik said, as well as a tuition increase from \$130 a credit hour to \$135 effective in the fall.

He said enrollment for eduKan has grown every year and continues to grow. The Colby program received a good audit and staff raises were proposed, but were

See "COLLEGE," Page 2

City to finish up landscaping work

By Sam Dieter
Colby Free Press
sdieter@nwkans.com

City Manager Tyson McGreer was told to draw up a plan to finish up landscaping work near the Colby Aquatic Park at Tuesday night's City Council meeting.

"We're quickly approaching grass-planting (season)," McGreer told the council. "There's still a lot of work to be done on that park."

The council members got a sketch of the suggested landscaping improvements to the area.

It calls for planting fine fescue grass inside the trail that circles the pool area, and buffalo grass around the outer edges of the whole city block.

McGreer and the council agreed after

some discussion that he should decide on a plan along the same lines as the sketch and prepare bids for the grass seeding and sprinklers.

Members pointed out that both the price of buffalo grass and the time it takes to grow can vary widely. The council decided to use that grass, although several people said that rye grows faster.

McGreer said the landscaping work has already been bid for the area inside the new walking trail loop north of the Aquatic Park.

Council members discussed other improvements planned for the playground and walking trails, which have been called South Franklin Park in recent meetings.

The sketch of the park includes a limestone amphitheater and stage inside the walking loop, for instance.

"The amphitheater has changed locations

about 50 times since this was drawn," McGreer noted.

The council also discussed where to place restrooms, with Councilman Dave Voss asking if they could be attached to the pool building or placed nearby.

"This has mushroomed and ballooned faster than any of us thought it would," Councilman Mark Beringer said.

He added that projects have been done near the Aquatic Park in a year which the city expected to take from 10 to 15 years.

McGreer said the project could be paid for out of the city park budget. The city has been setting aside money to pay for park improvements for several years, McGreer said, and there is still a lot left.

"We don't need all these years to pay that project off," he said.

Grainfield woman rolls car off interstate

A Grainfield woman wound up below a bridge on Interstate 70 Friday morning after her car went out of control into the median, crossed back over and down an embankment, rolling into a creek, but her seat belt may have saved her from serious injury.

The Kansas Highway Patrol reported that Jolinda A. Dechant, 20, was eastbound just east of the Mingo exit on the Interstate at 11:12 a.m. when she drifted into the median near mile marker 63.9. Dechant overcorrected, the patrol said, turning the 2002 Ford Explorer back across the highway, off the south side of the road and

into a creek bed.

The car went airborne and rolled, landing at the bottom of a small bridge where the highway crosses the creek, facing northeast. Emergency crews had Dechant, who was wearing a seat belt, sitting outside the Explorer before taking her to Citizens Medical Center.

She had been released by that afternoon.

