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League of Municipalities gets update

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Leaders from Colby and other northwest Kansas cities gathered here Wednesday night for an update on the state Legislature from the Kansas League of Municipalities.

About 30 people attended, including State Rep. Ward Cassidy, State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, Mayor Gary Adrian, Police Chief Ron Alexander, Thomas County Commission Chairman Paul Steele and much of the Colby City Council.

Adrian was recognized at the meeting as the northwest regional director of the league's new association of mayors. Don Moler, the league's outgoing executive director, and Kim Winn, the outgoing deputy director, were both recognized for their service.

Winn told the audience to keep in contact with members of the Legislature, which goes back into session on Monday, Jan. 13.

"Maybe you can't make it to Topeka," Winn said, "but keep in contact with your legislators."

Moler went over the league's policies and talked about bills the group opposed. Different versions of the same bills, he said, pop up year after year, much like the game of "whack a mole."

"It will be back; it takes on different forms," he

said of one bill, meant to stop local officials from lobbying.

The first point of the league's policy for the year, Moler said, is opposition to any law that restricts the use of public money to lobby the state government. Senate Bill 109, which was introduced this last spring, would stop any public money from being used to lobby the state.

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Clocks to change

If you think it's getting dark early this week, just wait until Monday.

Daylight Saving Time ends Sunday, and with the return to Standard Time, sunset will be an hour earlier next week, about 5:39 p.m. Monday in Colby.

While the "official" time change is at 2 a.m., few of us will be up to set our clocks back an hour then. Most people will change their clocks before going to bed, or in the morning. Just don't forget, or you're going to be early for something Sunday morning.

The day before the change, the Colby Fire Department will be using "Smoke Detector Saturday" as a time to change the batteries in smoke alarms. Fire fighters will be going out to change the batteries in people's smoke detectors that day. Call the department at 460-4454 to get on the list. Fire crews will ask you to pay for the batteries and any smoke detectors, but not the labor.

"Anytime that someone needs help with their smoke detectors, give us a call, either with placement or batteries," Chief Bob MacLemore said. Though Saturday's efforts are mostly focused on anyone who cannot get up on ladders, they are willing to help anyone who asks at any time of year.

The days will keep getting shorter for another few weeks, until the shortest day of the year on Saturday, Dec. 21, the winter solstice, when the sun will set here about 5:24 p.m.

Hall of Fame to add three

TOPEKA (AP) - Three retired members of the Kansas National Guard will be inducted into its hall of fame at a ceremony Sunday in Topeka.

The honorees are Lt. Col. Robert K. Webb, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Cornelius Vandermotten and Command Sgt. Maj. Jana L. Harrison.

Webb served 31 years in the military in active duty and with the Guard, retiring in 1987. Vandermotten is a native of Glasgow, Scotland, and spent more than 40 years in uniform, including two decades in the Kansas National Guard.

Harrison was the Kansas National Guard's first female command sergeant major. She is retired but serves on a training team that prepares soldiers for overseas deployments.



SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press
About 280 people filled the City Limits Convention Center Saturday night for Sacred Heart's annual auction. A group of local auctioneers, including Charles Rogers (above) sold the crowd on everything from artwork to parking spaces. Tim Hutfles examined a compressor (top left) before the bidding started. Bill and Peggy Miller (left) held a brief conference at their table about what to buy. After the auction Father Dana Clark estimated the church raised around \$75,000 for its work.



Preschool gets in gear for trick 'r treat

SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press
Nathan Cates (left), Levi Haines and Xander King went to class dressed as superheroes and transformers for Halloween. They and their classmates at Puddle Duck Preschool were out in the neighborhood Thursday afternoon trick or treating. They dropped in at the Colby Free Press office, where publisher Sharon Friedlander and office manager Melissa Edmondson dropped treats into each kid's bag.

Kansas students to get new school assessment tests

TOPEKA (AP) - Education officials are preparing to recommend new math and English tests next month to the Kansas Board of Education, aligning the state with new curriculum standards and giving it more flexibility for student testing.

Education Commissioner Diane DeBacker said at a meeting Wednesday in Topeka that she'll recommend the board approve using the Smarter Balanced tests in grades three through eight, *The Topeka Capital-Journal* (bit.ly/1h1guTA) reported. She says high schools will have flexibility in the type of assessment they use.

Federal law requires states to test students in math and English each year. Kansas' new tests will be aligned with the Common Core standards the state adopted in 2010 and will also include more writing requirements for students.

The new tests will be given to students starting in 2015. They will take them over several classroom periods.

Sue Gendron, policy coordinator for the Smarter Balanced group and former Maine education commissioner, said tests also will be given on computers or tablets.

DeBacker said the Kansas board will review her recommendation to use the Smarter Balanced testing and vote on adopting them in December. She discussed the changes Wednesday with teachers and administrators from about 20 Kansas districts.

Among the flexibility that would be given to high school students would be options for taking a variety of tests, such as the ACT college prep exam or Smarter Balanced. DeBacker would also like to see tests that assess students on career and technical skills, as well.

"We heard repeatedly from school officials that it's important that students at the high schools have an assessment that's relevant to what they want to do," she said.

These new tests are being developed

to meet federal rules aimed at preparing students success if they go on to additional education or a career requiring some level of technical skills. Kansas began a program in 2012 that allows high school students to take technical education courses through two-year colleges, earning industry certification in a variety of fields.

DeBacker said she thought Kansas could present a case to U.S. Department of Education officials that the state's testing proposal meets federal requirements for the state's waiver to get out of some of the No Child Left Behind mandates.

Gendron said the Smarter Balanced testing would put more emphasis on writing and also require students to show how they arrived at answers on the math portion.

