

weather report

82°

at noon



Today

- Sunset, 7:52 p.m.
- Tomorrow**
- Sunrise, 5:33 a.m.
- Sunset, 7:53 p.m.

Midday Conditions

- Soil Temperature 69 degrees
- Humidity 37 percent
- Sky clear
- Winds south 15 mph
- Barometer 29.92 inches and falling
- Record High 94° (1941)
- Record Low 27° (1953)

Last 24 Hours*

High	89°
Low	57°
Precipitation	none

Northwest Kansas Forecast

Tonight: Mostly sunny, low 50s, light wind. Tomorrow: Mostly sunny, high mid 90s, low mid 50s, northwest wind 5-15 mph.

Extended Forecast

Wednesday: dry, high 90-100. Thursday: high 85-95, low 50s. Friday: high 80-85, low 45-55.

(National Weather Service)

Get 24-hour weather info. at 162.400 MHz. * Readings taken at 7 a.m.

local markets

Noon

- Current wheat — \$2.92 bushel
 - New wheat — \$2.94 bushel
 - Posted county price — \$2.86
 - Corn — \$1.80 bushel
 - Posted county price — \$1.66
 - Loan deficiency payment — 33¢
 - Milo — \$2.86 hundredweight
 - Soybeans — \$3.89 bushel
 - Posted county price — \$3.83
 - Loan deficiency payment — \$1.07
 - Millet — \$6.00 hundredweight
 - Sunflowers
 - Oil new crop — \$5.90 cwt.
 - Oil current crop — \$6.65 cwt.
 - Loan deficiency prmt. — \$2.94
 - Confection current — \$15/\$7 cwt.
 - Pinto beans — \$14 (new crop)
- (Markets provided by Mueller Grain, Sigo Sun, Frontier Equity Co-op and 21st Century Bean. These may not be closing figures.)

afternoon wire

Late news from the Associated Press

1 p.m.

KU student killed overseas

LAWRENCE — A University of Kansas student one week from graduating was killed while conducting research in Costa Rica, the school said.

Shannon Martin, 23, of Topeka, died around 3 a.m. Sunday, said Lynn Bretz, interim director of university relations. Bretz said Costa Rican authorities are investigating the death as a homicide but have not released any details, including the cause of death.

Bretz said Martin last was seen by fellow students who were studying in Golfito, Costa Rica, walking alone toward her host parents' home. Fourteen U.S. university students, including two from the University of Kansas, were studying in the southern coastal town of 18,000 people.

Martin was pursuing degrees in biodiversity, ecology and evolutionary biology.



Snake play

Handlers sometimes get bitten

By Rachel Miscall

The Goodland Daily News

"The Kiss of Death" is one of rattlesnake handler Tim Gunther's specialties.

With one hand, the Colorado auto mechanic holds a rattlesnake above his head, letting the reptile slither inches from his face and flick its forked tongue at his nose.

The crowd of about 40 watches, amazed, then claps as he puts the snake down.

Gunther, one of several professional snake handlers who traveled to Sharon Springs this weekend for the 10th annual Rattlesnake Roundup, said he has also performs "the Pyramid" and "the Crucifix." He said the stunts involve the performer kneeling or laying in the center of a snake-filled pit while other handlers pile the slithering, rattling creatures on his head and body.

The thought makes some people cringe in fear, but this snake handler, who works with a company called Fangs and Rattlers, said he usually feels right at home in the pit, with rattlesnakes crawling at his feet and striking at his cowboy boots.

"There's been a couple of nervous times in the sleeping bag," Gunther, from Fort Collins, said, "but for the most part it's not a big deal."

The Fangs and Rattlers snake handlers, dressed in jeans, T-shirts and cowboy boots, ended their last show Sunday evening with a stunt involving a man, a sleeping bag and about a dozen deadly snakes.

Laddie Norman, a Texan who said he has been working with rattlers for 20 years, held his head and arms still while the lower part of the sleeping bag moved around his legs.

As Norman laid in the pit — surrounded by Plexiglas, wire and the crowd — one of his partners reminded him about the time he earned his nickname, "Pumpkin Head."

James White, a 53-year-old Texan who has been handling snakes for 44 years, told how Norman was performing the Pyramid three years ago when a snake coiled around his head reached out and bit him. White said Norman's head swelled to the size of a pumpkin.

Norman smiled, but outside the pit later, he said it was a painful experience.

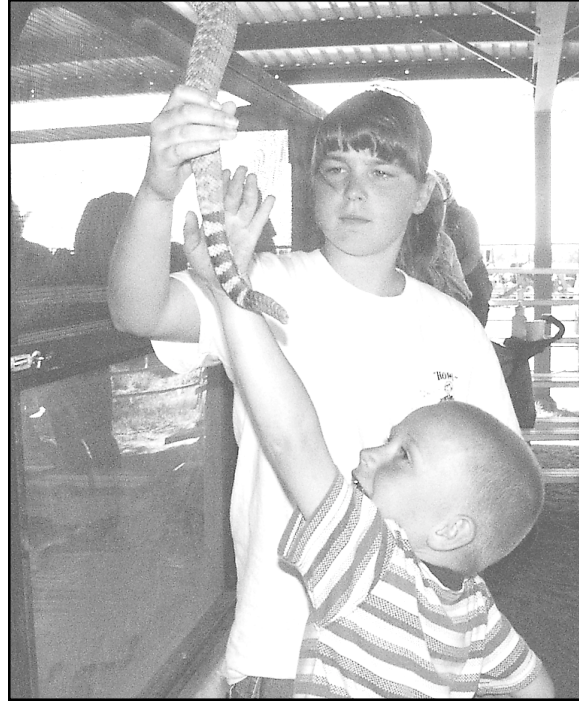
"It ain't no fun," he said. "It feels like someone is using a needle to inject boiling water into you."

He said he didn't go to the hospital, but instead went home and "toughed it out." Norman said he didn't let the bite — his only one in 20 years — stop him from performing with snakes.

"If you fall off the horse," he said, "you get back on."



Tim Gunther, a Fort Collins, Colo. rattlesnake handler who performed this weekend at the 10th annual Rattlesnake Roundup in Sharon Springs, showed the crowd one snake's fangs. Judie Withers, an organizer, said the event was well attended. Photos by Rachel Miscall/The Goodland Daily News



White said he got right back on after a rattler sunk its fangs into his right hand on Easter Sunday at a show in Oklahoma. He said he spent two days in the hospital, paid \$6,000 in medical bills and still has trouble moving

Danielle VanLaeys, 14, and Aaron Hutson, 7, stroked a live rattlesnake's scales on Sunday while a professional handler held the reptile. VanLaeys, who lives in Sharon Springs, said though she's known people who have been bitten, she's not scared of rattlesnakes.

his hand.

That was the first bite in his 44-year career, he said, adding that he's not worried about getting bitten again. White said he can usually tell when a snake is about to strike by paying attention to the reptile's body language.

"If the snake tenses up in your hand," he said, "you know he's fixin' to do something. I try to pay attention to every snake in the pit."

There were about 300 writhing rattlers in the pit Sunday. The reptiles, caught by licensed hunters, were sold after the two-day event.

Gunther, who has never been bitten in the eight years he's been handling snakes, said his fascination with reptiles and his love of meeting and educating people keep him performing.

White, who said he taught himself how to handle snakes, said he enjoys helping people overcome their fear of the slithering creatures. Of course, he added, it's also the thrill of doing something dangerous.

"I guess we are some form of cheap thrill seekers," he mused.

College to award degrees

Technical students to graduate this week

By Janet Craft

The Goodland Daily News

Over 250 students will graduate Wednesday night from Goodland's Northwest Kansas Technical College, with 22 getting the first advanced degrees from the newly promoted college.

"This will be a historic moment," said President Larry Keirns, "in the fact that we will be issuing associate in applied science degrees for 22 students."

Keirns said there will be 265 students graduating at the 7 p.m. ceremony at the Max Jones Fieldhouse in Goodland.

For Keirns, who will retire as president on June 30, it will be his 35th ceremony.

The speaker will be Kay Melia of Goodland, retired radio station manager and host of the morning radio program "The Gardener."

Melia was chosen because he is the only person living in Goodland who was a member of the board of education when the bond issue was passed in April 1963 to build the Northwest Kansas Area Vocational-Technical School, as it was called back then. Melia was a school board member from 1963 to 1965. His speech is called "For Your Consideration."

Even though the college has students who finish their training every month, this is the only formal graduation ceremony that will be held. It's for all students who will graduate this year from any of the college's 13 departments, including auto body repair, automotive technology, carpentry, cosmetology, communications technology, communications network technology, electrical technology, electronics technology, engineering technology, medical assistant, office/computer technology, truck and tractor diesel mechanics and welding.

In early March, a student from each department was picked by their peers as "Student of the Year." A panel of judges picked one of the 13 to be the overall "Student of the Year." That name will be announced at Wednesday night's ceremony.

Rep. Jim Morrison will receive special recognition at the ceremony, Keirns said.

Diplomas, credentials and associate degrees will be handed out by college board members Jim Hayes of Leoti and Dan Wasson of Oberlin.

The ceremony is open to the public and will probably last about an hour and 15 minutes, Keirns said.

Driver killed in accident

A 39-year-old Goodland man was killed Saturday night after he lost control of his car on a gravel road and it rolled into a ditch.

Sheriff Doug Whitson said Kenneth Bennetts, who worked at the Sherman County Good Samaritan Center, was driving a 1997 Ford Taurus north on County Road 17 about 7 p.m. when the car skidded into the west ditch, rolled and landed on its wheels. The sheriff said the accident happened almost a mile north of County Road 55.

Whitson said Bennetts, who was not wearing a seat belt, was pronounced dead at the scene. The sheriff's department, Highway Patrol, city fire and rescue squad and an ambulance crew responded.

The sheriff said Bennetts, who lived at 5840 K-27 with his wife and three children, was about four miles from his home when the accident happened. An obituary is on Page 3 of today's paper.

Lawmakers leave schools looking for money

By John Milburn

Associated Press Writer

TOPEKA — School superintendents believed this was the year the Legislature would boost their budgets with a big increase in funding. Now, some are wondering how to cover their costs.

Several studies, including one from a task force assembled by Gov. Bill Graves, had suggested that Kansas' public schools badly needed more dollars — perhaps hundreds of millions more. And they all concluded that time was right.

"We all thought this was the year to do something big for education," said Sen. Dwayne Umbarger, R-Thayer, chairman of the Senate Education

Committee.

In January, Gov. Bill Graves proposed raising school funding by \$67 million — enough to increase base state aid by \$50, to \$3,870 per student.

But Graves himself called that proposal "inadequate." In March, he proposed adding \$112 million to that figure by raising sales and motor fuels taxes.

From the Senate came two tax plans, one worth \$236 million over three years, the other for \$150 million over two years.

But the political will to increase taxes for education never materialized. Some lawmakers pointed to reports from around the state of credit card misuse

by school officials, seemingly extravagant purchases in wealthy districts and large cash balances held in rainy day accounts.

And a \$206 million hole in the state budget didn't help.

"It's an issue that we all collectively failed miserably on," Graves said after the session.

Many Republicans contend the "school industry" should be grateful for the increase in a year when other agencies' budgets were cut or grew only slightly. They maintain that the school finance formula is flawed and that more money is not the solution.

Democrats say the \$50 per pupil increase — which ties for the highest

since 1992 — falls short of the state's obligations, setting up an education crisis.

Educators agree.

"It's not even keeping up with inflation," said Diane Gjerstad, lobbyist for Wichita schools. "That's what is so frustrating for districts."

For many districts, the \$50 increase per student will barely cover increases in utilities, textbooks and health insurance, she said.

Hays superintendent Fred Kaufman said the total \$2.35 billion budget approved by legislators for elementary and secondary schools means there will be little growth in education in Kansas this year — and none in his district.