

# Sunflowers to go up over Goodland

PAINTING, from Page 1

over 15 mph, the sculpture will be lifted into place about 7 a.m. Farris' crew will then weld the easel's three legs, which are about 4 feet around, to steel plates attached to concrete posts in the ground.

Neufeld said it's hard to predict when the job will be done.

"There's a lot of little things that could cause a 15-minute delay here and a 15-minute delay there," he said, adding that it could take a few hours or all day.

Neufeld said if windy weather on Tuesday prevents the placing of the 40,000-pound painting, it will go up whenever conditions are right.

"We'll just go day by day," he said. A forecast from the National

Weather Service in Goodland says while a front will cool things off on Tuesday, the chance of rain or high winds is low.

Organizers do have time before people will be expecting to see the attraction.

Sunflowers USA, formed to bring the painting here, is planning an unveiling ceremony in August during Goodland's Sunflower Days. The Goodland Area Chamber of Commerce is inviting state lawmakers to attend. Backers are hoping the big painting will attract 89,000 people to this Sunflower Capital of Kansas each year.

There will be a crowd at the dedication, but Neufeld said he isn't expecting too many onlookers on Tuesday because Sunflowers USA didn't adver-

tise the event. Placing of the sculpture was delayed a week as Farris waited for good weather to paint the easel, and Neufeld said he didn't want to have to keep scheduling and rescheduling the event.

"We didn't want to worry about making a million phone calls," he said.

Cross won't be here to see the painting go up, but said he plans to travel from his home in Winnipeg, Manitoba, in August for the dedication ceremony. He said he wants to bring his girlfriend and family.

The former high school art teacher said he's been busy working with school children on art projects as part of an "Artist in School's" program he's involved in.

Cross said he recently helped an elementary class turn a map of the com-

munity into a 40-by-60 foot game board used in a game the class invented. The artist said he likes to work on a big scale.

"Go big or go home, I guess," he joked.

Cross plans to go big in seven cities across the world, erecting reproductions of each painting in Vincent van Gogh's sunflower series in places where the Dutch artist or sunflowers are important.

He said he will begin work on the fourth painting, which will go up in a park on the outskirts of Amsterdam, in April 2002. The painting will be ready for the Floriade, a large, six-month flower show held in the park.

Cross plans to put the rest of the series in Japan, South Africa and Argentina.

## Sign of change



Gary Salzbury, from Commercial Sign Co. of Colby, was installing a new sign for the Economy 9 Motel on K-27 in Goodland. The establishment had been known as Motel 6.

Photo by Lester Bolen/The Goodland Daily News

# School districts face challenge of hiring teachers

SCHOOL, from Page 1

qualified teachers.

Dale Dennis, deputy commissioner of education, said there is no question that districts are facing challenges.

"There is a significant problem to retain and recruit teachers," he said.

For example, of 13 math teachers who graduated from one state university, nine went into the private sector because of signing bonuses, better salaries and better benefits, he said.

"Schools cannot compete," Dennis said, adding that the starting teacher salary in Kansas is about \$27,500.

Many superintendents made the same point as early as March. Their boards began identifying areas to save money, including firing teachers, closing schools and eliminating programs such as elective courses and activities.

Senate Majority Leader Lana Oleen acknowledged that local school boards are likely to increase property taxes to take care of educational needs.

"That doesn't negate the fact that the state has a responsibility to fund 100 percent of an adequate education," said Oleen, R-Manhattan. "That whole issue of funding adequately needs to be

looked at."

Some districts, such as West Graham-Morland, Lenora, Nes Tre La Go, West Mineral and Havensville are planning to close schools. In effect, it is a form of consolidation, which legislators are reluctant to do themselves because of the lingering wounds caused by forced consolidation during the 1960s.

Dennis said all but about 10 of the 304 school districts use a local option budget, which increases property taxes, to augment state funds. Still, many find they are limited in using this authority because of the public's disdain for property taxes.

Oleen is a member of the Senate Education Committee and one of four architects of a plan early in the legislative session that would have pumped more than \$200 million into the school finance formula over three years.

The plan, funded with increases in sales, tobacco, alcohol and soft drink taxes, died in the Senate. Subsequent proposals of smaller scale also failed.

Gov. Bill Graves also proposed a \$100 million enhancement plan, which would have increased the base state aid per pupil and provided incentives for school and student improvement. The plan was defeated in the House. Ele-

ments of the plan were included in the Senate plans.

Legislators and education officials agree that the state must provide for a suitable education, but there are many definitions.

"I think the Legislature has set the standard. It's called qualified admissions," Oleen said, referring to the recommended courses for students who want to enter state universities.

The Kansas Constitution requires the state to "make suitable provision" for financing education, but the parameters are not listed.

The Legislature ordered a study to determine the cost of a suitable education. Outside consultants will make their report in January.

Last week, the State Board of Education approved a loose definition of a suitable education to serve as a guide for legislators and consultants.

Some board members felt their efforts were in vain and that the study will fall short of their criteria, which included providing for counselors, new technology, quality teachers and administration and a safe and orderly learning environment.

"I'm ambivalent about going to them with anything," said board member Steve Abrams. "How many ways

do they have to tell us: 'We're going to do what we want regardless of what you tell us?'"

Abrams and board member John Bacon said the Legislature should provide adequate funding so students are able to meet state accreditation requirements.

Others, like Val DeFever said "If we don't give them that direction, I think we're failing."

Oleen understands their concerns. "When your board doesn't get to set the dollars, it's very easy to think you're advisory," Oleen said.

What the debate really gets down to is money. School superintendents and education groups say districts need more; some legislators are skeptical.

The skeptics prevailed during this year's session, and many legislators patted themselves on the back for not increasing taxes.

Some knew better. The Legislature simply dumped the decision on local boards of education, and in many communities, taxes are likely to increase.

*Newsman John Milburn covers education for The Associated Press and has covered public education issues for 11 years.*

# Phone rates may increase

TELEPHONE, from Page 1

do this to avoid costly protracted litigation. They invited the commission staff to sign onto the agreement and the staff did.

But the agreement also would raise local rates.

Under the agreement, residential customers of Southwestern Bell would see monthly increases for local telephone service ranging from \$1.65 to \$2. Southwestern Bell has about 85 percent of the state's customers, according to the commission.

Southwestern Bell also would automatically include its \$1.15 per month charge for touch-tone dial service in every customer's bill. The few people who still use rotary dials don't have to

pay this charge.

Business customers would see rates increase from 85 cents per month to \$2.50 per month.

Rates for Sprint/United would increase from \$1.05 per month to \$1.50 per month.

But while local rates would go up, AT&T says it would reduce long-distance rates nearly 30 percent and Sprint LP from between 15 percent and 22 percent.

Powers, the commission's assistant counsel, said these reductions would force other long-distance carriers to reduce rates, too.

"It will do so through competitive pressures," she said.

She said the agreement was revenue neutral for the companies.

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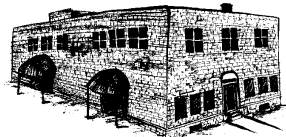
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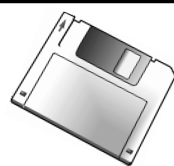


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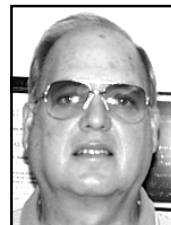
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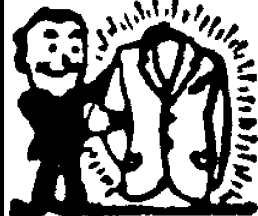
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