

# Center helps people gain skills

BLIND, from Page 1

his eyes failed. "I realize that not many visually impaired patients are referred to the center," Sokari said. "If people were referred a lot earlier, they could do a lot to improve themselves. If I'd known about the center six years ago, I'd have been a lot better off."

At one point, he said he was so depressed that he had thoughts of suicide. Fortunately, compassion from the center staff and support from other clients helped him through the tough times.

Dr. Sokari said after four weeks of training at the center, he went from "zero literacy" on the computer to gaining the ability to use a computer for teaching and slide presentations.

"And my wife doesn't get mad at me anymore," he said. "Before, she even had to help me with the color of my shirt. I can even cook for myself now."

Joe Perez, Rehabilitation Specialist I, grew up in Scott City and often spent summers hoeing sugar beets in Sherman County with his family.

He was born with visual impairment. He demonstrated to the Business Advisory Council the use of a closed circuit television monitor for enlarging print and handwriting. The machine allows him to read books and letters.

"I can do anything," Perez said. "I can read anything. This device has



Joe Perez, rehabilitation specialist in Topeka, demonstrated to the Business Advisory Council the use of a closed circuit television monitor for enlarging print and handwriting. Photo by Eric Yonkey/The Goodland Daily News

been the biggest thing for my avenue for independence."

Perez said he provides computer training and assistive technology at the school. He consults businesses, colleges and potential employers. Access to the Internet has been helpful for the visually impaired.

In northwest Kansas, people may contact George Victor at the SRS of-

vice in Colby, for information about visually impaired programs. Most programs are free, Hemphill said. A sliding pay scale is applied to some programs.

"Any person may contact us," Hemphill said. "People experiencing any visual impairment should call."

The Topeka number is 1-800-547-5789.

# County delays farm lease

By Tom Betz  
The Goodland Daily News

County Attorney Bonnie Selby appeared before the Sherman County commissioners Tuesday to talk about bids on farm ground and a resignation letter from Dr. R. C. McCullough, the county coroner.

On the farm lease, Selby said she had not received any written bids from people who want to farm on land near the county landfill.

Commissioner Mitch Tiede said he had one verbal bid. Selby suggested that he ask the person to put it in writing before the next meeting.

Tiede asked if the county could develop a multi-year lease for the farm ground.

Selby said it could be a five-year lease. Tiede asked her to develop such a lease and to allow the farmer or the county to get out after the first year.

On the letter from Dr. McCullough, Selby said she had talked to him and asked him to reconsider.

She said he was upset because there had been two deaths in the county which had not been reported to him as the assistant coroner.

She said she had talked to Jay Jolly, Goodland Regional Medical Center administrator, about the problem, and felt it had been solved.

The commissioners said they would not take any action, and allow Selby to see if the doctor will remain the assistant coroner.

Selby said that there had been some

legal confusion over one of the tracts in the upcoming county tax sale, and asked that the commissioners allow Tract 53 in Edson to be pulled out of the sale.

The commissioners approved the tract from the sale.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Approved having County Treasurer Shelby Miller reissue several checks which have not been found. The total of the dozen checks was \$266, with the largest about \$50.

- Approved a request for a tractor pull at the Sherman County Fairgrounds. Berry Guyer appeared to sign the contract, and agreed the group would pay the electric and water cost. They asked that the county waive the rent because 4-H is providing the concession stand. The commissioners approved the contract and waiving the rental fee.

- Mary Messamore, dispatch department head, asked for a 10-minute closed session to discuss a personnel matter. The commissioners agreed and went into closed session with Messamore. Later in the meeting, the commissioners held a second closed session to discuss the same personnel matter.

- Approved the contract for County Health to be the surveyor of child care in the area. Dorendo Harrel, health department head, brought the contract for the commissioners to sign.

- Approved claim vouchers for April

totaling \$220,645.

- Approved reappointment of Melvin Sieck and Marvin Duell to the rural fire district board for three-year terms.

- Approved appointment of Dave Daniels as the county representative to the Southeast Colorado and Eastern Colorado Recycling program.

- Approved appointment of Bob Rohr, Rick McElwee and Cameron Paxton to the Smoky Garden board for three-year terms.

The next regular commission meeting will be 8 a.m. Tuesday, May 7, in the commission room on the main floor of the Sherman County courthouse, 813 Broadway.

# Group tours wheat crop

By Roxana Hegeman  
Associated Press Writer

WICHITA — Kansas farmers stomping through hundreds of fields on their annual wheat tour of the state are finding better-than-expected stands of wheat among the struggling crop.

"It is not too bad, but everywhere you go it is dry," Brett Myers, executive vice president of the Kansas Association of Wheat Growers, said on a stop near Garden City. "There is not an abundance of moisture anywhere we went."

# Church leaders' actions in Hong Kong under scrutiny

By The Associated Press  
INTERNATIONAL

HONG KONG — Police said today they are investigating allegations that three Roman Catholic priests here were found by church leaders to have sexually abused children, cases the Hong Kong church never reported to authorities.

Police superintendent Charles Wong said investigators "are trying to obtain further information" on the alleged molestations, which were first disclosed today by the South China Morning Post.

The Post report came amid a Catholic Church molestation scandal in the United States that led to an emergency meeting last week in the Vatican.

The English-language Post said it asked the leader of Hong Kong's 347,000 Catholics, Cardinal John Baptist Wu, about the allegations and received an e-mailed response that confirmed some details of three cases. The message was seen by The Associated Press.

The message, sent by the Rev. Lawrence Lee, chancellor of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese, on behalf of Wu, confirmed three cases of pedophile priests had taken place over the last 27 years.

JERUSALEM — When senior Israeli officials talk these days about the United Nations, they use terminology they'd normally employ when discussing Yasser Arafat. Duplicious and double-dealing. An enemy of Israel, whipping up world sentiment against the Jewish state.

And those are some of the milder epithets being tossed around.

Israel's relationship with the United Nations, long fraught with tension and turbulence, has skidded to a sharp new low with the rancorous dispute over events in the Jenin refugee camp and

## around the world

how they should best be brought to light.

Among officialdom and ordinary Israelis alike, the confrontation is serving to fuel a larger sense of isolation and grievance, of being misunderstood and by outsiders who do not understand the harsh realities of daily life here.

Late Wednesday, the Security Council was meeting to decide how to proceed after Israel a day earlier set a series of preconditions that blocked the start of an already-delayed U.N. fact-finding team's mission.

Nearly three weeks after the worst of the Israeli-Palestinian fighting in the Jenin camp, a ragged shantytown in the northern West Bank, some of the most explosive allegations by Palestinians — including their central claim that hundreds of innocents had been systematically slaughtered by Israeli troops — have thus far found no credible support.

However, many human rights groups have raised questions over maltreatment, though perhaps not deliberate, of Palestinian civilians who lived among the gunmen who had made the camp their stronghold.

**NATIONAL**  
NEW YORK — Some admitted they had trouble sleeping. Others said they feared leaving the house. Most found their minds wandering back to images of burning towers and the horror.

Nine out of 10 New York City schoolchildren suffered at least one symptom of post-traumatic stress six months after Sept. 11, and almost 10 percent likely had the disorder, according to a study released Wednesday.

Mental health researchers participating in the report, which studied

more than 8,000 children at 94 schools, were particularly surprised to find that children throughout the city — not just near ground zero — showed symptoms of several psychiatric problems.

"The school system, above all, has to be cognizant of the fact that they are trying to do a job with students who are very troubled, very troubled today because of 9/11," said Christina Hoven, a Columbia University psychiatric epidemiologist who led the study.

In the 1.1 million-student public school system, an estimated 75,000 children likely showed six or more symptoms of post-traumatic stress — enough to be diagnosed with the disorder, according to the Board of Education study.

**BIRMINGHAM, Ala.** — A woman who became a poster child for critics of mandatory sentencing has been freed from prison, five years into a sentence of life without parole that she was given for a first-time drug offense.

About two hours after a judge reduced her sentence to time served on Wednesday, Theresa Wilson, 34, walked out of the Jefferson County Jail, arm-in-arm with her husband.

"You've gotten a second chance. Don't blow it," Judge Tommy Nail said at her hearing.

In 1998, Wilson was ordered to spend the rest of her life in prison be-

cause of a law that branded her a "drug baron" when she sold a morphine mixture for \$150. The 1986 law mandated the sentence because the mixture weighed more than 56 grams.

The Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals last year ruled 3-2 that the life sentence for a first drug offense was cruel and unusual punishment, sending the case to Nail for a new sentence.

Wilson will be on probation for three years. She declined to comment as she left the jail with her family.

**NEW YORK** — Half the country's population is breathing unhealthy amounts of air pollution, according to a survey by the American Lung Association.

The findings, released Wednesday as part of the group's annual "State of the Air" report, show that more than 142 million Americans live in places with high levels of ozone air pollution, commonly known as smog.

The report examines ozone air quality data taken by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency from 1998 to 2000. Nearly 700 counties that were monitored across the country are ranked according to how often their air quality reached "unhealthy" levels of air pollution.

The areas with the worst pollution were Los Angeles-Riverside-Orange County, Calif.; Bakersfield, Calif.; Fresno, Calif.; Visalia-Tulare-Porterville, Calif.; Houston-Galveston-Brazoria, Texas; Atlanta;

Merced, Calif.; Knoxville, Tenn.; Charlotte-Gastonia, N.C.; Rock Hill, S.C.; and Sacramento-Yolo, Calif.

**WASHINGTON**

**WASHINGTON** — Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov says he hopes rumors that Secretary of State Colin Powell may resign are not true. "I still intend to work with him and I hope he will continue to work in our mutual interests," Ivanov said at a news conference Wednesday at the Russian Embassy.

"I very highly value my relationship with Secretary Powell," Ivanov said. "I very highly respect him."

Ivanov said he was the object of similar rumors last year while he was meeting Powell for the first time.

Senior U.S. officials have flatly dismissed any suggestion that Powell was resigning in a bureaucratic struggle with Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld as wrong and rubbish.

But one senior official told The Associated Press Rumsfeld had a tendency to "micromanage" on issues that was distressing to Powell. At the same time, though, the official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said there was no personal animosity between the two Cabinet officers.

**WASHINGTON** — Democrats who control the Senate and the Republican majority in the House are offering competing election-year plans to provide prescription drug coverage for the nation's elderly.

Both are far more expensive than the program President Bush recommended, extra dollars that both parties hope will turn into votes in November's midterm congressional elections.

House Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Ill., said the Republicans hope to get their plan through the House by the end of May. In the Senate, Majority Leader Tom Daschle, D-S.D., set a target of August for passage. Deeply partisan differences would have to be negotiated away before any legislation could go to Bush to be signed into law.

"Democrats are going to be pursuing this very aggressively," Daschle said Wednesday.

The Democrats' proposal would cost \$400 billion to \$500 billion over 10 years, the Republicans' \$350 billion over the same period.

The president requested a prescription drugs plan that would cost \$190 billion over 10 years.

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