

## The flu virus has arrived in the county

By Karen Krien

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The flu has arrived in Cheyenne County.

"The influenza virus we all have been reading about is here in its full glory," said Dr. Mary Beth Miller. "And it is at epidemic levels."

On Monday, there were 34 students missing from the St. Francis schools because of the flu. In Cheylin, there were 34 students gone on Wednesday, Feb. 20. Loretta Rucker, secretary, said the school was pretty much back to normal with most of the students back to school this week.

Many of the patients in the hospital are suffering from the flu and the Good Samaritan Village nursing home is urging people with cold or flu symptoms to not visit as the staff is trying to keep the flu from spreading throughout the facility.

The doctors are finding both strains of A and B in their testings. Symptoms include: fever, chills, body aches, sore throat, cough and headache. It is not a stomach virus but a respiratory virus.

"Not everyone has every symptom," Dr. Miller said.

The doctors are trying to identify those patients positive for flu for two reasons: 1) if they can identify that a patient has the flu within 72 hours of onset, there is a medicine called Tamiflu that can shorten and lessen the course

of the illness.

"If we start it after that 72-hour period, the medicine may not help much," the doctor said.

The second reason is to identify who has the illness, then try and treat the immediate family, thus preventing them from becoming ill.

The medical staff is strongly encouraging anyone who is sick to be evaluated and treated if indicated.

"More importantly - STAY HOME!" Dr. Miller said.

"If you are sick, don't go to work, don't go to school, don't go to social activities.

"We are at epidemic status and unless we can slow the exposure, things are going to get worse."

Other recommendations in preventing the flu include good and frequent hand washing and to wear masks. Plenty of fluids, good nutrition, and good rest are all important in helping the immune system do its part to fight the illness.

Be aware that those people especially at risk are the very young, very old, pregnant, or on immune suppressive medicines such as chemotherapy or steroids. It is important for these people to avoid exposure and for those who are sick to make sure they are not exposing others.

"This is a dangerous virus and people can die with it if we don't take it seriously," Dr. Miller said.



TAMMI CARMICHAEL GIVES a cautious peck on the snout. Who else had to kiss this pig? See Page 6.

Times photo by Taylor Leibbrandt

## National Weather Service hosts severe storm classes

By Karen Krien

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In March 2007, a tornado moved through Cheyenne County near Bird City, destroying farm houses and outbuildings. Now, March is just days away and it is time to begin thinking about what to do in case another tornado strikes.

Typically, the first severe

thunderstorms rumble across the tri-state area in late March or early April.

Last year, the first tornado in the area developed on March 24 in Yuma County, Colo., and just a few days later on March 28, a record number of 16 tornadoes were spotted. The tornado which went through the Bird City area traveled 34 miles

starting in Sherman County.

Gary Rogers, emergency preparedness manager, says it's time to prepare for the severe weather season.

The National Weather Service Forecast office in Goodland is offering a storm spotter class in St. Francis starting at 6:30 p.m. on March 4 in the high school

cafeteria.

Whether people want to be a volunteer spotter or just want to learn more about severe weather, they are welcome to attend the classes which are free. The class lasts around two hours and some of the topics will be the severe weather climatology, a review of the tornados and other severe weather

found last year, storm structure and evolution, weather safety and how to report severe weather events.

Those unable to attend the St. Francis class can also attend classes in neighboring communities. Classes will be held in Atwood on March 10 at the Prairie Development Center; in Goodland on March 12 at the National Guard

Armory; in Benkelman at the High School Distance Learning Room. All classes begin at 6:30 p.m. (in Goodland, the class is set on mountain time).

For more information, contact the National Weather Service, Goodland, at 785-899-7119, or talk to Mr. Rogers, 785-332-2560.

## Bird City receives new lines

By Linda Schneider

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In Sept. 2006, construction began to rebuild, retie and replace power poles and the electrical wiring through the northwest portion of Kansas. This equipment had been damaged or destroyed by an ice storm that came through the area during the Thanksgiving holidays in 2005. The storm affected 13 counties and the area was declared a national disaster by the president.

A project is headed up by the Midwest Energy. The company was approved for a grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Project to provide for 238 miles of poles and line replacements.

"The grant covered 75 percent of the cost, but it was still a costly project," said Al Pfeifer, a spokesperson from Midwest Energy in Hays.

Not only were power poles and lines retied, but in areas where the power line was more susceptible to the formation of ice, a new and stronger conductor line, the T-2 conductor, was put into place.

Two such areas were along a 1-mile stretch of highway east of Bird City and the other, a three and one half mile stretch east of McDonald.

With only one power line, the ice was able to form in an upside down "teardrop" which would act like a wing in the high winds and cause the lines to "gallop," or whipping up and down, increasing the chances of breakage, Mr.



PAR WORKING CREW finishing up Phase I of the Federal Emergency Management Agency Project to replace power poles and tying power lines damaged in ice storm.

Times staff photo by Linda Schneider

Pfeifer explained.

To remedy this, two lines were strung together and twisted, this broke the "plane" so that ice would be unable to form, making it a stronger conductor line and the chances of breakage were reduced.

Midwest contracted PAR Electrical Contractors out of Kansas City, Mo., to do the work. There have been times when Midwest would release PAR temporarily from their contract. Recently, the company returned to St. Louis, Ill., to help with repairs

from the ice storm that has done a lot of damage.

"We are ahead of schedule by a year, so we released them to go to St. Louis," said Mr. Pfeifer.

The management agency Phase I of Midwest Energy construction is nearly completed up to K-167, just west of Bird City, being the end. However, Phase II of Midwest construction will begin shortly; materials are now being ordered for the construction.

Phase II construction is from an ice storm in the areas from

## Students travel for nursing program

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Three

Cheyenne

County high

school students

traveled to Hays

on Wednesday

and Thursday

to attend the

Nightingale Experience, a nursing

education program

hosted by Fort

Hays State University and Hays

Medical Center.

Elizabeth Gienger and Jami

Pevler, both juniors at St. Francis

Community High School; and

Naomi Reeh, a sophomore at Cheylin

High School, Bird City, participated

in the experience. The event, which

is geared toward sophomores and

juniors, included 24 girls and one

boy.

The girls said they had planned

to go into nursing but, after the

experience, they were even more

sure that this was what they wanted

to do.

"It made me want to go into

nursing even more," Elizabeth said.

Jami has been exposed to nursing

for years as her mother is a registered

nurse. Elizabeth has a cousin who is

in the nursing program and they had

talked about it. Naomi said her father

had cancer and her mother had taken

care of him. While he was sick, she

had helped and this had triggered her

desire to go into the nursing field.

The university began the program

around 10 years ago in an effort to

persuade young people to go into

nursing to help combat the shortage

of nurses in Kansas and throughout

the United States.

The first day the girls were on

campus, there was orientation and



Reeh

they innovated the air passage and gave IVs on a "dummy" patient; they listened to heart and lungs and saw a video of a live birth.

The students spent the night in the dorms but were up early (6:30 a.m.) for a day of experience in Hays Medical Center.

The girls remarked how excited they were and how nice the hospital was. They followed nurses working in different areas. They watched surgery where they were cleaning the plaque out of arteries. Both Naomi and Elizabeth were able to observe in the intensive care unit. Elizabeth thought this was one area where she really didn't want to work because there wasn't much going on.

Naomi said there were two people in the unit when she observed and one was in critical condition, waiting to be flown to another hospital. Jami was to follow the nurse in rehabilitation but said she saw little. Naomi was also able to observe in the obstetrics department, noting that there was only one baby and she was about ready to leave the hospital.

In all, there were 10 different areas where the students were able to observe but the students were divided and only able to observe in a few different areas. They said they would like to go back again.

Elizabeth has applied to work at the Cheyenne County Hospital this summer. Jami said she doesn't plan to work at the hospital but, when she graduates, go directly into nursing school. Naomi is considering volunteering at the Good Samaritan Village and possibly earning a certified nurse aide certificate.

The girls still have another year before they graduate — plenty of time to decide where they are going to continue their education.