

Getting them ready



Norton Lions Club member Ed Witt placed four Pinewood Derby racers in their slots for Saturday's Cub Scout's district competition. The club helps sponsor the Norton scouting program and provides the track. Full story will be in the Friday Telegram.

—Telegram photo by Carolyn Plotts

School eyes wind turbine

By JOEY FALKOFF

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Within the next two years, Colby High School may be a model for environmental efficiency.

The Colby School board approved a motion made by member Gerry Fulwider to pursue a grant from the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) in 2009 that could land a wind turbine on the grounds of the high school.

NREL is in the second year of a three year program in which five schools are selected annually as sites for the turbines.

The Denver-based company provides each school with \$20,000 in grant money so long as that participating school puts in \$1500 and supplies the labor. When the grant is up, the school is on the hook for the maintenance costs, but the turbine is there to stay.

"It would be a real competitive grant, but we sure could put together a competitive package," said Fulwider. "I would say we have a real good chance with the exception of only five being granted a year."

One thing the high school does have going for it is its location. Requirements for the turbine suggest that it be high off the ground and away from the building.

"The high school is up on a hill, and we certainly have the space to fit it in," said Fulwider. "There are a lot of schools that just wouldn't have as good of a location."

More than it would be a financial benefit, Fulwider said the proposed turbine is a sign of good faith.

"It's only going to produce \$400 worth of energy a year," said Fulwider. "It's really a symbol of wind energy and the educational component of it. It would sure look so nice."

Science and math teachers would reap the benefits of the turbine by being able to incorporate it into their curriculums.

"It's one of those things that would be neat to have," said Colby High science teacher Brad Wildeman.

"It would really pay for itself in the future. Kids could understand how electricity is made from wind. It would be cool."

"We need to do a good job of incorporating how our science department will use this," said Fulwider.

One local school that has already invested in wind energy is Quinter.

Quinter didn't receive any great money for their turbine, but the school board gave the okay to purchase one last summer.

Woofter Construction out of Colby installed the turbine last fall, and they've been thrilled with it ever since.

"I think it's a great thing. Why would you not do it?" said Quinter superintendent Allaire Homburg. "We've got a lot of wind and we're in a great area. I've locked in the price of electricity for next 30 years for a portion of what we use. Right now it's a wash, but as prices continue to skyrocket I expect to make our money back in 10 years."

Homburg also mentioned Moscow and Natoma as other area schools he knows are in the process of getting one.

"It's expanding very rapidly," said Homburg. "The learning benefit is extraordinary for upper level math and science. It's almost worth the price just for the learning possibilities. Throw in the electricity and it's a great thing."

Fulwider had hoped to apply for

this year's grant, but the deadline is April 1. The grant application requires letters of support from community members, science teachers and a utility company. Plus, the board still needed to check with city to make sure the turbine would still be within the city limits.

Doing all of that, in addition to coming up with the \$1500, was not feasible in the one-week time-frame, so the district will shoot for next year.

Fulwider said he will begin soliciting letters and gathering information for the application just before Christmas.

In other board news: *Colby Middle School teachers Sherry Kinderknecht and Andrea Schuette donated \$200 worth of books to the elementary school library

*Colby High principal Rocky Robbins said the school is neck-deep in the Kansas Assessment tests until April 2. The top 10 percent of the school's senior class will attend the University of Kansas Honors Program in Oakley. Colby High has already qualified 13 of its 16 forensics team members for state.

*Middle school principal Robb Ross announced test scores were up 4 percent in eighth grade reading from the Kansas Assessments. Attendance is back up around 95 percent this week after a flu epidemic had it down to 85-90 percent before spring break.

Also, 85 students are out of for middle school track, which is more than half of the seventh and eighth grades.

*Elementary school principal/superintendent-elect Terrel Harrison said she will start interviewing elementary school principal candidates this week.

Bill step closer to reality

By TOM BETZ

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With some last-minute efforts by County Clerk Janet Rumpel, a Senate committee last Tuesday amended and passed a bill to give Sherman County citizens the right to decide in November if they want to elect commissioners countywide rather than by districts.

The bill (HB2307) was introduced in the House last January, and passed 120-2 on Feb. 19. It was sent to the Senate, where it languished in the Elections and Local Government Committee.

Sen. Ralph Ostmeier (R-Grinnell) told Sherman County commissioners that committee Chairman Sen. Tim Huelskamp (R-Fowler) had told him the bill could be passed this week.

Rumpel said she received a faxed message Monday with amended language that had been approved by commissioners last March. She said she talked to Huelskamp and Brad Bryant of the secretary of state's office just before the committee meeting Tuesday to make sure the language was correct.

The committee approved the amended bill and passed it out to the Senate floor to be passed as amended. It was on the calendar to be passed on Thursday.

Because it has been amended, the bill will have to go back to the House before it can be sent to the governor for her signature.

The amendment sets out the procedures for setting the election and calls for the commissioners to pass a resolution to allow citizens to vote on the issue in November.

The bill says the Sherman County Commission will consist of three positions numbered 1, 2 and 3. Candidates may live anywhere

in the county.

"Each registered voter in Sherman County shall be permitted to vote for each candidate for the position of county commissioner," the bill says.

If approved by the House and signed by Gov. Kathleen Sebelius, the bill would become law after being published in the register. Sherman County is the first Kansas county to ask for this kind of flexibility in how commissioners are chosen, said Rumpel, and the bill does not affect any other counties.

Demand for a change was sparked by a heated county commissioner race two years ago

involving Commissioner Chuck Thomas of Edson. Darin Neufeld, an engineer for Evans, Bierly, Hutchison and Associates, ran as a write-in candidate both in the Republican primary and general election. Thomas narrowly survived both challenges.

In public forums held before the primary and the general elections, candidates were asked if they would support having commissioners voted on at large. Most said they would support an election on the issue.

After the election, the commissioners asked Rep. Jim Morrison (R-Colby) and Ostmeier to run the bill through the Legislature.

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Fire, blackout Culprit was a raccoon

(Continued from page 1)

sponded to a grass fire in total darkness.

The cause of the fire and the blackout, he said, was a raccoon that had crawled a power pole and got into electrical lines.

"Thanks to the dispatchers thinking to call firemen on cell phones and landlines, the rural fire department was able to respond to extinguish the grass fire without incidence," Chief Otter said.

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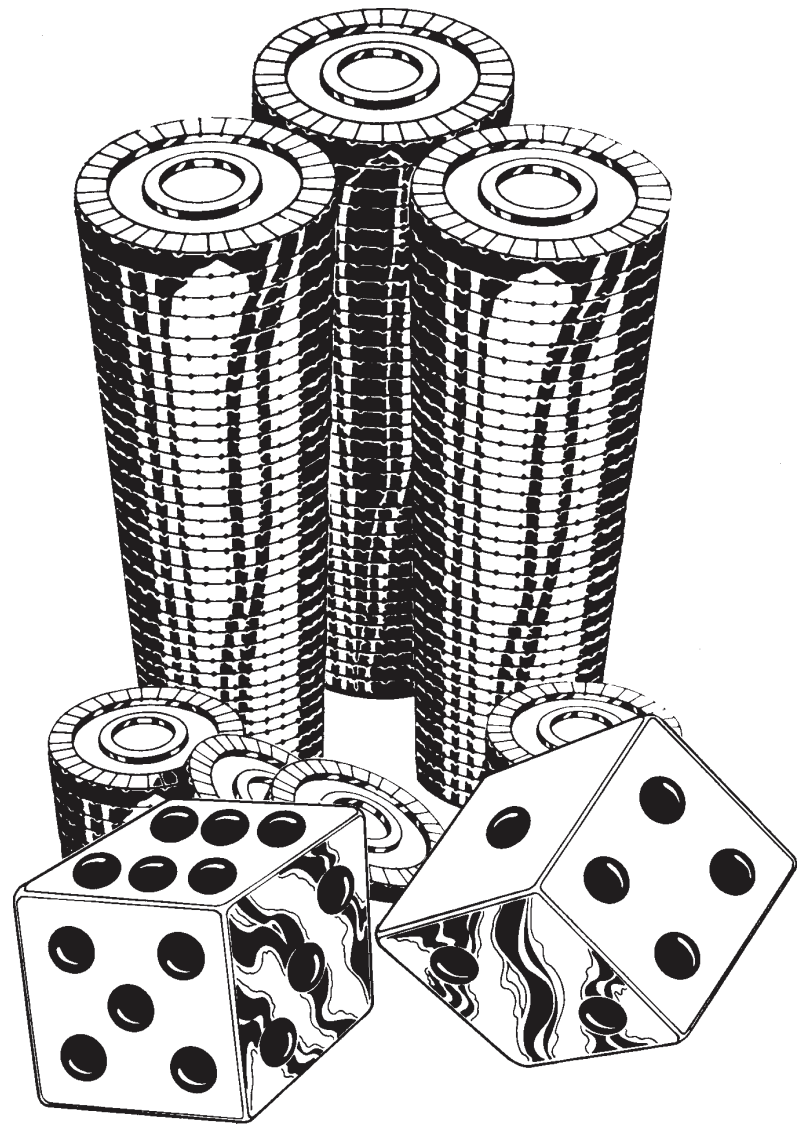
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